



**The Lost Diary
of
Fitzwilliam Darcy**



Madeline James

The Lost Diary
of
Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy
The Squire of Pemberley
in
The County of Derbyshire
Period: 1796 – 1799

By Madeline James

The Lost Diary of Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy

MADELINE JAMES

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I would like to thank my daughters Kate and Natalie for all their help and encouragement. I particularly wish to acknowledge Kate's "discovery" of the manuscript as I dedicate this work to them both, not forgetting my beloved Benedict.

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London, 25th June 1796

The idea of writing a diary came to me last night. I was dining with Lord Belvoir. He was at Oxford with me and we had not seen each other in years. He came to London for the end of the Season, as he explained, "To satisfy my mother's wish and to start looking for a future Lady Belvoir. But mind you, Darcy, I have no intention of finding such a person for a few years yet!" He laughed in his hearty way, just as I remembered it. I asked him why he was reticent to comply with his mother's wishes. Instead of replying he took me in to the library and showed me a volume lying on the table.

The binding was old-fashioned, thick leather, hand embossed title and a heavy brass clasp holding it all. I was intrigued, for the title simply said: "To My Son and Heir". He asked me to open it. It was an account of his father's early years at Eton, then Oxford, then his travels in Europe some thirty years or so ago. There were rather good drawings of people, of places he visited and throughout there was a pleasant feeling of intimacy and honesty. I was hooked and wished I could take the volume with me to keep on reading.

Belvoir laughed again as he watched me absorbed in this literature. "I haven't even started my writing, so unless I do and place some anecdotes from my bachelor life, there will only be my married state and a list of children! Not good enough, is it?"

I had to agree with him. His father's diary was beautiful and a good family record for the future. I resolved there and then to do my best and record my own thoughts and meetings or visits. As to drawings, well no teacher has ever encouraged me to keep practising, especially at portraying people, but if the mood takes me I shall try to do some sketches. I know that many ladies keep diaries, but as to their content, I am in ignorance. Lord Belvoir's attempt at distilling the essence of what he was experiencing seemed an excellent guide to me. It

shall be my inspiration. And since I actually enjoy the exercise of writing and find it easy to put pen to paper, I do hope to persevere for long enough to leave my heir a small volume, too.

London, 1st July

The commotion in London this morning was most unpleasant. Some cart had blocked the way on Piccadilly. With all its wares spread around, merchants screaming, grooms trying to keep impatient horses still, I felt like leaving London there and then.

Chanced upon Philip Brew at my tailor's later. His story, if it's to be believed, of winning a substantial bet at Newmarket was so involved and euphoric, even my tailor, a good and quiet man, tipped me a wink. Brew intends to grace Almack's tonight, so I decided to miss that venue myself. I am in no mood for it. Brew will be insufferable and there is no one else who I care to meet.

Bingley left town yesterday with his sister, which gives me another reason not to go to Almack's. They are visiting an aunt in Hampshire. What with Brew in town, I think I'll pay an unexpected visit to my sister, Georgiana in Ramsgate.

London, 3rd July

If it wasn't for my father's love for that man, I would have had him whipped. As the rain threatened, I took my carriage and four and arrived in Ramsgate late afternoon yesterday. Mrs Younge told me that Georgiana had gone out for a walk and would I wait for her in the salon. Having spent hours in the carriage I declined and went for a walk myself.

As I turned the corner towards some shops along the main street, I stopped dead. George Wickham was standing outside one of the shops with his hand outstretched towards Georgiana who had walked out into the street and with her gentle smile put her own hand on his waiting arm. They were very easy with one another and there was no mistaking the intimacy between them.

I lengthened my stride and crossed the street to confront the wretched man.

“How come Wickham, I find you here?” I asked almost shouting, for my nerves were stretched.

“Delighted to see you,” he replied and tried to maintain a dispassionate expression on his face. Had I known him superficially I could have been taken in, for he did his best to appear unperturbed.

“Answer my question, Wickham,” I persisted.

“Are civilities no longer your mode?” He answered.

“No, not to you!” I answered plainly. “What brings you to Ramsgate?”

“Business. I have things to attend to.” Again, he was trying to be composed and agreeable, his flowing speech most nonchalant.

“Please, then attend to your business and let me remove Georgiana to her lodgings.” At that I noticed Georgiana blushing profusely. I extended my hand to her, yet she made no move. I watched her struggling to compose herself and unsure if she wanted to go with me. My thoughts began to be wild and I had to school my expression.

I kept my hands extended and took another step towards her. Suddenly she threw herself into my embrace and began to sob.

Comforting Georgiana, I watched Wickham. He maintained his gaze on me and at last said, “Georgiana, I shall come to speak to your brother later on. Do not worry.”

Fighting the terrible thoughts which were coming furiously into my head as I listened to Wickham addressing Georgiana thus, I held her closely. What had he done to her? Was I too late? Had he disgraced her already? Barely able to keep my voice under control, for Georgiana was still in my embrace, I asked him not to fail us and arrive at Georgiana’s lodgings no later than an hour hence.

He walked off quickly, but his proud step did not waver. With Georgiana under my arm, we walked slowly to the house. She did her best to compose herself, but said nothing and in a way I felt relieved.

At last in her lodgings I asked for an interview with Mrs Younge first. She told me that Mr Wickham had arrived in Ramsgate a week ago and was leaving on the morrow.

“Did you allow Georgiana to go out with him?” I asked simply.

Her reply, “Yes, I saw no reason why he could not take her out,” seemed to me the height of impudence, but I kept my thoughts to myself and told her that in view of her obvious neglect of her duties, Georgiana would be leaving Ramsgate that very day. She would also not be returning to her school. However, I told her that I was expecting Mr Wickham to call and as soon as my interview was over, Georgiana and I would leave.

“Meanwhile, Mrs Younge, please allow me privacy with my sister here while you have her things packed.”

Mrs Younge was not pleased. She immediately told me the sum I owed her and that was to include the remaining weeks. I paid her all of it, not wishing to have any unpleasantness from her, but I made it clear that she had failed in her duties entirely.

Since I still did not know the exact nature of Georgiana’s involvement with Wickham, I thought it prudent to say as little as possible.

At last the lady left and Georgiana came in. She was now more her usual self, but I could read worry on her gentle features.

“Please tell me, dearest sister,” I asked her, “how can I help you? You seemed so distressed.”

She burst into sobs. At last she began to speak in between further tears.

“George wants to marry me ... He says you would never agree to it ... I love him ... We were to go away tomorrow ...

he told me, he has organized it all ...”

With extreme self control I kept quiet until Georgiana finally stopped. Her tears dried. I came towards her and took one of her hands. “Georgiana, have you ever doubted my love for you?”

She had not.

“Georgiana, do you know why I would have opposed your marriage to Wickham?” I continued.

She was quiet at first, but then said, “I suppose I’m rather young?”

“Yes,” I said, “and what else?”

“You don’t respect him.”

“Yes, but did he tell you why I don’t respect him?”

“No, he said that you don’t like him and ... that when you were both small boys you were jealous of our father loving him as much as he loved you.”

I had to tell her the truth. “Yes, Georgiana. Wickham is right in supposing that as a boy I may have resented, on occasions, father treating him as if he was also his own son, but as I grew up, I realized, I was wrong. Father loved him as he loved many people. He was kind and generous to many people. George Wickham often got into his bad books, but father forgave him and tried hard to teach him to be good. But George always wanted to go his own way, he didn’t like anyone telling him what he should do.”

Georgiana listened, but I could not tell if this meant much to her. So I asked.

“Do you believe me when I say that George is wrong in trying to tell you that I dislike him? I dislike his behaviour. If he would reform, he would become an excellent fellow. He was taught well enough.”

“I love him.” Georgiana replied quietly. I could barely hear her.

“Georgiana, are you prepared at your age of not yet sixteen to elope with George Wickham and break all ties with me, your only brother, and all your relations, because this is what would happen?”

“No, I don’t want to lose you, Fitzwilliam.” She answered and I saw my chance.

“Then, dearest Georgiana, may I suggest a compromise? I will give my blessing to your union, if George will wait for you until your nineteenth birthday.” Saying this, I was praying that either Wickham would reform truly, or that Georgiana’s affection for him would diminish. I dislike to gamble but what choice did I have?

“Yes, you could welcome George back into the family and everyone would be happy.” Georgiana must have been thinking of her aunt Lady Catherine de Burgh who knew of Wickham’s many escapades and approved of my latest decision to give him as a final payment £3000 in lieu of the living my father promised him.

“Yes, just so,” I said. “If George agrees to reform and be part of the family again, I see no reason why in three years time, if your feelings for him are still unchanged, you could not marry.”

When Wickham arrived at the house, we were both ready to see him. He wanted to see Georgiana on her own at first, but I refused. Also I could not allow either Wickham or Georgiana to start the conversation, so I told him what both she and I had agreed.

He looked at me with narrowed eyes. He bowed to Georgiana and in a dramatic voice said, “Georgiana is young, she has time to wait. I cannot. When a man loves, you know Darcy well enough, he cannot wait for years.” He made another bow, took his hat and departed without another glance or word to Georgiana.

I knew then that he was insincere in his regard for her. Oh, how I was thankful that she was spared and he had left in such a fashion!

Georgiana cried again. I told her to be strong and that if George Wickham changed his mind and tried to contact her, she had to promise to tell me. She nodded forcefully as she cried. Georgiana is a sensible girl and well brought up. Wickham departing as he did had slighted her, and I was pleased to see that she realized that.

We left Ramsgate with all speed. I tried to speak to Georgiana about Wickham's various misdemeanours, but she cried so much, that I doubt my meaning reached her.

Since we had left Ramsgate very late, I decided to break the journey and we stopped for the night at an inn known to me. Georgiana's maid helped me to understand the situation better. For when Georgiana refused to eat her supper, I asked her maid, Susan, to come and see me once her mistress was in bed.

Susan explained that Mrs Younge invited Wickham twice for dinner. She also suspected that there had been correspondence between Georgiana and Wickham because she seemed to expect him in Ramsgate.

I asked her how long it had been going on and she thought it was at least the last three months.

That timing brought to my mind Wickham's letter to me in March this year, when he heard that the living became vacant. Having given the fellow £3,000 I thought it impudent of him to turn to me again. From the letter it became clear that he was in debt again and had neglected his law studies, as they were, as he said, "unlikely to bring me profit and enjoyment!"

I replied that my position had not changed towards him and that having provided him with sufficient funds I could not consider his request. The fact that he now thought he would be more suited to join the Church required real proof of improvement in his character or behaviour.

I must now suspect that he saw a way of hurting me for my refusal to him. Georgiana is too young to truly know him and so he must have resolved to gain her affection and with it the £30,000 which is her dowry.

Colonel Fitzwilliam, joint guardian with me, must be informed. I remember him saying that his mother, the Countess of Barrow, wanted to have Georgiana for the summer. I wish now I had never allowed Mrs Younge to take Georgiana to Ramsgate. I do not wish to think ill of my sister in declining Lady Barrow's invitation. But as I recall now the circumstances, I suspect that some device was used to fix her stay in Ramsgate.

London, 5th July

Georgiana's sensibilities have not recovered. One minute she agrees with me on some point and the next she rushes out from the room full of tears. It seems that I still do not understand how to speak with her to make her feel at ease with me. I've just written to John Fitzwilliam to apprise him of what has happened. As her guardian he needs to know. I can trust him to keep the news. I have also written to Wickham stating clearly that he is not welcome at Pemberley or here in London ever!

London, 10th July

My aunt, Lady Barrow, most kindly sketched a note to Georgiana inviting her again to Roxbury Hall. This must be Fitzwilliam's prompting. I need to find out his pretext. Georgiana is tempted for there will be two younger sisters of Fitzwilliam as well as another relation a year older than Georgiana. I hope she accepts the invitation, for it is painful for me to watch her distress. She doesn't even want to go anywhere near her pianoforte. This, I must admit, I have never seen. She is normally always eager to practice and can happily stay at the pianoforte for hours.

I have promised total discretion and will not mention to Lady Barrow what had happened. It is agreed between us that whatever Fitzwilliam has said to his mother, we will comply with the story.

London, 14th July

Today Georgiana left for Roxbury in Oxfordshire and I promised to visit her there shortly. Fitzwilliam is coming to

London on some errand and will stay with me. I might make the journey to Roxbury with him.

Met Philip Brew in Whites. That fellow cannot keep his tongue. The story today was about some “exquisite creature” he had met last night at the opera. If he had sense, he would say little about the lady, for now half the gentlemen in Whites were scheming how to meet her.

London, 18th July

Went to a ball of the Duchess of Biddeford with John Fitzwilliam last night. Philip Brew was there and his “exquisite creature”. The lady was passably handsome, but with no conversation. I did dance with her once for she almost made me put my name on her card. John F. danced with her twice. Fitzwilliam is not very careful in his acquaintances, but I must remember that Christina Whitton, for this is her name, has a respectable dowry of £20,000.

I asked Fitzwilliam what he talked to her about.

“The weather, my dear cousin, the weather!”

“And did she say anything striking about it?” I went on.

“She said that for July, London is uncommonly dull,” he explained.

“I thought this was her first season?”

“You may be right, Darcy.” I could see that he was none too pleased.

I let the matter of Miss Whitton rest. The season is over. The Duchess of Biddeford likes to end the season with a grand ball. I am glad it’s over. All these scheming mamas can be rather trying. But what with Bingley, and now seemingly Fitzwilliam too, on the lookout for a wife, it behoves me to support them.

Roxbury, Oxfordshire, 20th July

Lady Barrow is quite impossible in the way she pushes both her girls to my notice. There is enough of that at Rosings when I visit my other aunt, Lady Catherine de Burgh, and her

daughter Anne. One has to have one's wits about one not to give any sign of interest. I hope I have perfected the disinterested pose. Most of all I never start any conversation with a young lady. That is a good barrier – until a fond mama corners a fellow with a sly remark, then it can become bothersome and requires good presence of mind to extricate oneself from unwanted attention.

My well proven stratagem is to appear preoccupied with something I've seen in a distance, bow politely and move away without a reply. This works extremely well at balls and Almack's, but staying with friends, or worse still with relations, it does not always provide enough of an excuse.

Today, Lady Barrow pointed out a rather well done sampler to me and said, "Do you think it well executed, Fitzwilliam?"

In all honesty I said, yes. To which she replied, "My daughter Louisa did that, she is so talented, you must admit."

So I said, "Indeed."

But my aunt would not rest. She went on to tell me how well Louisa plays the pianoforte and before I had a chance to escape, she called Louisa to the instrument, and asked her to play for me!

Louisa plays well, but I have heard Georgiana play better. Louisa is only seventeen, yet my aunt seems determined to marry her off. She certainly will not succeed with me. The girl is blond, as is the fashion, but her eyes have no sparkle. If my aunt won't stop this matchmaking game, I shall tell Fitzwilliam that I've no mind towards matrimony with Louisa and will leave.

Louisa's friend, Rosemary Bellbrook, who is also here at Roxbury, is more handsome, but very forward. We were barely introduced when she came up to me and told me how much she enjoyed Georgiana's company. She then went on to tell me about her family. She described all her brothers and sisters, then continued without a pause how her father is the High Sheriff of their county. I was exhausted listening. Finally, I stopped her by saying that although her account of the family

had been very good, I would prefer to discover things about them if and when an opportunity would arise on meeting them in person.

She blushed and said, “Oh!” and I moved away.

Roxbury, 23rd July

We had an excellent day’s sport. Uncle keeps his woods well stocked.

Roxbury, 27th July

It was Georgiana’s birthday on July 25th and Lady Barrow organized a small gathering, or so she had told me, for the evening. There were various notables from the countryside hereabouts with their wives and children. Unbeknownst to me a group of musicians had been installed in the ballroom and after, I must admit, a very tolerable dinner, we were led in to the ballroom. I and Georgiana must have been the only persons present who were surprised.

“Fitzwilliam,” my aunt said in apology, “you worry too much. Georgiana will acquit herself well, especially since she is the centre of attention.”

I was going to say in reply how shy and retiring Georgiana is at the best of times, and especially now as she is still in low spirits – but this I must excuse for my aunt is still ignorant of what had happened at Ramsgate. Thus I said nothing. And so it was. I ended up taking Georgiana to the library where we had a quiet game of cards and then read. She was so pleased to be rescued from the crowds that she gave me a kiss; it must have been the only peck on my cheek since she was a little girl. This moved me and I resolved to be a more attentive brother.

John F. found us some two hours later; the only person who missed our company. He’s a good sort of a fellow and I’m now reconciled to the fact that my father made him a joint guardian to Georgiana.

I remember my father’s will so clearly. “And I appoint my only son, Fitzwilliam George Darcy together with Colonel John Fitzwilliam, second son of my wife’s brother, the Earl of

Barrow, as joint guardians of my only daughter, Georgiana Emily Darcy.”

My dear father then went on to explain that should his demise come when I would be under the age of twenty five, he felt it only prudent to provide me with someone he knew I could rely on to given me advice and support.

I’ve always found John F. of easy disposition, level-headed and agreeable in company. When I first came to London, it was he who was my mentor and guide to the ton. At that time I was barely twenty one, yet he managed to protect me from too many youthful excesses. I wonder if my father knew? Would that be why he appointed him in the will? I continue to communicate with him, even though I am now no longer legally obliged to do so.

He has never been known to gamble and nor have I. I feel a person who has no inclination to the game of hazard is always dependable. Some call it dull! But I find no reason to support such a judgement. If dependability is to be equated with the dullness of spirit, then irresponsibility and frivolity must be called the death of it!

Roxbury, 30th July

“Colonel Fitzwilliam,” said Lady Barrow’s matronly friend, Mrs Pincton-Lewis, “you must marry. Are you not almost thirty?”

I watched as John sketched an elegant bow and with a smile replied, “Madam, if only there were young ladies about who were as direct and full of fun as yourself, I would not hesitate a moment.”

“Come, come, Colonel,” continued the intrepid matron, “your clever talk will not distract me. What’s wrong with say, Miss Forrester? Her dowry of £30,000 is surely sufficient?”

I was thanking the Lord that it was Fitzwilliam who was cornered and not I, for I would not have had such elegant words, when John smiled again and said, “Madam, your interest in my welfare is most commendable.” He made another bow, excused himself and left the room. Fearing that

the good lady would turn her attention on me, I followed him out.

“You know, Darcy,” he said, “as I get older it’s getting harder to stay in society with marriageable girls about.”

“So I see,” I replied.

By that stage we had entered the sanctuary of the library and John sat down. He said it was time he told me what had happened to him. As I listened, I prayed that the Lord would spare me from experiences such as his.

Being the second son, his father chose the Army for him. Happy enough to comply, he thought little of the future, dedicating himself to army life with every intention of succeeding. It was two years into his military service when, at a ball in London, he was introduced to Miss Heather Stevington. Her parents had three daughters and were keen to marry them off quickly. Apart from his army pay, Fitzwilliam has little to call his own. His parents have given him a small farm which is tenanted. The income from that keeps him well dressed, but could not be sufficient to support a wife and any children.

Miss Stevington reciprocated his feelings and for well over two years refused all offers for her hand. But her mother was not blind, and one day asked Fitzwilliam to come and see her. The object was to tell him that his position in society was well accepted, but that his means precluded any possibility of marriage with her daughter. She then requested that he would cease all contact with Heather. He was then twenty five and, as he told me, hopelessly in love with Miss Stevington.

“Has the young lady married?” I asked out of curiosity.

“No,” came the short reply.

“Do you still see her in society?”

“I haven’t for a year now. Someone told me that her mother died and she’s keeping house for her father. All her sisters are married.”

What could I say to bring him comfort? “What if you met her now and your circumstances were greatly improved?”

“I would propose.”

“So, your feelings are still engaged?”

“Yes.”

“It must make things most awkward?” I spoke as much to myself as to John.

“At first I thought I would not be able to live a normal life, be interested in anything, anyone....” John shrugged his shoulders. “Then the pain eased a little and I began to hope that I could forget her. Yet, every time I saw her in company, it was as if the wound opened up again... Now, I’m resigned and simply no longer interested in thinking or planning any kind of married life.”

Roxbury, 2nd August

Bingley writes that he met a Mr Morris at his aunt’s in Hampshire. The fellow inherited an estate called Netherfield in Hertfordshire that he has no interest in and is looking for a tenant for it. There is a sizeable house and a medium size estate. Bingley is enthusiastic already and has asked if I would accompany him to Hertfordshire to see the place.

It gives me a good excuse to leave Roxbury and the persistent stares from some young ladies who have no decency to leave a fellow alone. I might also be useful to Charles, for he has had no experience of country living. Knowing him he will have already decided that he would take it!

Roxbury, 4th August

Georgiana cried when I told her I was leaving. She must still be of tender spirits. I suggested that she goes to Pemberley and that once the business with Netherfield is over I would join her there, but she has decided to stay at Roxbury for the time being. Aunt suggested that Georgiana joins Louisa with her lessons. I think this is a capital idea. Mrs Younge cannot provide her with any more education. The woman must be avoided and when I think how she allowed Wickham to get near to Georgiana, I am of the opinion now that he must have bribed her! Georgiana says they were very easy with each other.

Fitzwilliam has been gone these last two days and male company is scarce. Uncle keeps a good cellar, but his friends are of my father's generation; sometimes it's impossible to tell them anything. They dismiss me as "that young Darcy boy" and continue their discourses as if I was not among them. I shall leave tomorrow.

London, 7th August

London is empty, but it allows me to have easy access to my tailor and I had an excellent day's worth of business with Hoares. Middleton, my man of business, has reported favourably on the scheme I have asked him to investigate. Hoares are also in agreement. With a small investment of £10,000 I should be able to treble the money within five years.

Bingley arrived today. He cannot stop talking about Netherfield. His impetuous nature has come to the fore again. I am glad I've come earlier for I now have time to devote to his interests. Mr Morris' London agent is to provide us with the accounts and Mr Morris is joining us at Netherfield on the 9th.

London, 10th August

I must say that Netherfield estate is pleasantly situated. There are no woods nor the splendid vistas of Pemberley, but the countryside is undulating, the roads are well hidden from view and the gardens have been well tended. Its close distance to London must also be an advantage.

The house surprised me with the respectable size of the rooms. The farms are all tenanted so Charles will have an easy life. His steward has been associated with the estate for over twenty years and the accounts seemed all proper. I advised Bingley not to sign until his man of business examines the figures for himself. But he would not wait. He agreed with Mr Morris there and then to take possession in time for Michaelmas!

Both of his sisters are pleased. Mr Hurst, the husband of the older one, has apparently a decided partiality for Hertfordshire, although his own estate is in Bedfordshire. Bingley thinks that the closeness to one of his sisters is an added advantage. Miss Bingley will keep his house.

London, 12th August

Miss Bingley is expected in London tomorrow. Charles tells me that she was getting ready to move and will most likely make a long list of purchases to be made for country living.

I am glad that I have to go to Pemberley, for I cannot abide Miss Bingley's chatter at times. She is one of those ladies who must be heard and has views on every subject, irrespective of their merit. This lack of self control and belief in the power of persuasion is very trying, particularly so when Bingley tolerates his sister's behaviour with complete lack of censorship. I promised Charles that I would return to London and then to Netherfield shortly after he takes possession.

Met John F. in Whites. It came to me to invite him to the little speculation I have put together. He is agreeable to invest £1000, a sum he says he can afford. This is not much, but I have told him that I would guarantee his investment. He was prodigiously pleased.

As I conversed with him, it came to me that the fellow must still be in love! I dearly wanted to find out what was so beguiling about Miss Stevington but felt it prudent not to talk about it again. Three or four thousand pounds will not guarantee John's happiness and marriage, but if the scheme works, we might enter into another. Bingley's fortune has come from speculation.

Pemberley, 1st September

With his move to Netherfield, Bingley was not able to accompany me to Pemberley. I have a great deal of estate business in front of me. Barely have I come home and I have already received five invitations to dine. Some might feel relieved spending time in company rather than dining alone, but I find it trying. I cannot excuse myself or my neighbours will consider me aloof.

Pemberley, 22nd September

My steward, Mr Dutton is doing a good job, although I feel a little guilty to leave him on his own all these months at a

time. He told me today that he was young once and so I was not to “fret”. He added that my time will come to settle down.

We have decided that it is important to proceed with major repairs and renovations to the West Wing. The budget is agreed. He is trying to tell me to trust him to do it well.... I do, but I still feel guilty. Poor Mr Dutton. If he would only marry, I would not have such a conscience leaving him alone to cope with not only the business of the estate, but now the renovations too.

I like both of my men. Mr Middleton in London is very astute. He so often perceives an aspect others would hardly consider important, yet it proves vital later. I can truly say that he saved me from a very embarrassing business transaction on at least two occasions, and with it saved me a great deal of money. Mr Dutton on the other hand is such a quiet, yet competent man that I always feel as if I do not deserve all his attentions. He must now be almost forty and whenever I politely enquire of Mrs Reynolds, our housekeeper, if there are any romantic attachments, the answer is always in the negative. He seems to live for his work.

Pemberley, 27th September

It has been decided that the West Wing will become our main guest wing. A separate door at the ground level leading to the servants’ quarters should speed up attendance. Even with the reduction of five small rooms and the incorporation for the enlargement of the remaining chambers, we shall have ten excellent guest bedchambers. Mr Skittle, the architect, has just left us. His plans are detailed enough for Mr Dutton to proceed with little worry. The builders have worked on the Earl of Highclere’s new house and come with good experience. The plaster work will be adjusted where necessary. Only the rooms for the most distinguished guests will have a new plasterwork, the design of which is most pleasing and I have complimented Mr Skittle accordingly.

Having visited Lord Highclere’s house, I am at ease that the workmanship will be to a good standard, and with Mr Dutton’s supervision, I am in no doubt that all will be done

properly. Highclere went to Italy for two years, not returning once. This is recommendation enough for me.

Netherfield, 10th October

Here I am in Hertfordshire, having arrived from Pemberley two days ago. Miss Bingley and Mrs Hurst are providing excellent board. The house is comfortable and we spent most of yesterday shooting. The beaters were skilled and the game plentiful, so Bingley has nothing to worry about. He seems to have acquired a certain amount of assurance, a good thing too, for he was easily down. I must suppose that being a country squire makes him feel comfortable. I understand that. Pemberley is not only my home; it is almost a part of me. I admit, I cannot imagine being without it.

Charles told me that he had already met most of the neighbours. His door was hardly shut for the first week, with callers eager to make his acquaintance. He says that they are all extremely good men and that he cannot see why Netherfield could not become his home forever!

There was nothing I could say, but I shall make my point before long. It is one thing owning a property and another being a tenant. He could buy a place like Netherfield. But first he needs to learn that being a country squire suits him.

Netherfield, 11th October

Bingley suddenly mentioned today that he has promised his local acquaintances that he would attend a country dance in the Assembly Rooms in Meryton, a small market town nearby. My protestations that such an evening would bore him stiff met with determined rebuff. Charles is so determined to be agreeable to everyone in the neighbourhood. Even Miss Bingley was not giving me support. She said that if they were to be made welcome by the local society, they would be expected to attend such functions! I had no further arguments to make. We are to attend tomorrow

Netherfield, 12th October

I have just spent one of the most tedious evenings in my life. The Assembly Rooms at Meryton were full and the

windows shut. The atmosphere was thick with heat and pungent smells. There was nobody I knew there. Bingley enjoyed dancing and kept encouraging me to do the same. But how could I? Dancing with any young lady would immediately add consequence to her and I was not prepared to do that. He danced twice with a Miss Bennet, a very pretty young lady, I had to admit it. She had grace, good poise and a classic profile.

Seeing Bingley's partiality to Miss Bennet, I began to observe her mother. One usually can tell all one needs to know about the daughter by the conduct of the mother. Mrs Bennet, I concluded, was a lady who could not keep still nor could she hold her tongue. Her head darted from one place to the next, she laughed much too loud. My sensibilities were enraged and at one time I almost felt like turning my back to her as her gaze travelled over me with impudently searching eyes. Miss Bennet is one of five daughters, Bingley told me. Would that be why Mrs Bennet is so fidgety?

In his enthusiasm for Miss Bennet, Bingley left his partner on the floor for a moment and tried to get me to dance with one of Miss Bennet's sisters. I glanced at her, but she did not inspire me enough to make a spectacle of myself in front of all these strangers. I told Bingley that she was not handsome enough to tempt me. That was the best way to make it clear to him to return to his partner and make no further attempt to cheer me. Perhaps in different circumstances I would have been tempted, for she seemed well composed.

As the evening progressed I had ample opportunity to observe the younger Miss Bennet. I danced only with Bingley's sisters and then seated myself in reasonable comfort next to Mr Hurst. Miss Elizabeth Bennet, for I understand this to be her name, was well attended. Both young and older men asked her to dance. She seemed animated in her conversation and I saw no resemblance to her mother in either her behaviour or manners. I write all this, for it astounded me. This must be my first instance of finding a daughter who does not imitate her mother.

Then I mused about Mr Bennet, whom I have not yet met. Charles mentioned him to me in glowing terms. “You will enjoy Mr Bennet’s company. He is so droll, so eccentric in the way he sees the world.” Had it been London, or some other grander place hosting the Assembly I would have had the chance to put Bingley’s assessment to the test. As it was, Mr Bennet, being a sensible man, chose obviously not to accompany his family to this dismal gathering.

Netherfield, 14th October

We are to dine with a local notable, Sir William Lucas and his family. Again, an excellent day with the gun. Bingley kept mentioning Miss Bennet and wondering if by some chance she would be present at Lucas Lodge.

Netherfield, 15th October

I found the evening at Lucas Lodge more tolerable than I had expected. I had a chance to observe Miss Elizabeth Bennet a great deal. She is somewhat different to other females, rather unconventional, always eager to converse and surprised me by refusing to stand up with me. Sir William had the idea that we would make an excellent couple. I was willing to oblige, but she flatly refused. And, as if my company was irksome to her, bowed to me politely and walked away. There was a strange smile on her lips which I could not read. I followed her progress through the room. I watched her carriage which I could not fault. Although there was assurance in the way she bore herself, there seemed to be a distinct lack of pride. Again I marvelled how I knew this to be true and indeed so appealing!

Miss Bingley noticed my particular preoccupation and thought I must be bored. She was decidedly put out when I told her that I found great pleasure in admiring Miss Elizabeth Bennet’s fine eyes. I stopped at that, for I could have gone on to explain that I found her whole person rather pleasing and that I was more than put out that she would not dance with me. Furthermore, I wished to talk to her. She was spending a lot of time chatting to various guests, but appeared to be avoiding my company.

I did manage to talk to her father, Mr Bennet. He asked me with a smile barely hidden, "Mr Darcy, your visit to Hertfordshire must be of short duration. Surely there is little of amusement here?" I laughed and he joined me. I then apologised for making him feel that I was bored.

"Oh, no, Mr Darcy. I am used to meeting young men of the ton making fleeting visits to their relations hereabouts and then departing as soon as they possibly can."

"I assure you, Mr Bennet, that although I have been spending some months in London earlier, I came here from Derbyshire."

"Ah, yes, Derbyshire." And with these words Mr Bennet moved away. I had no further opportunity to speak to him, and I was not looking for one. Charles's recommendations cannot be relied upon.

Netherfield, 17th October

Miss Jane Bennet is now under Charles' roof. She arrived yesterday on horseback in the pouring rain and by evening she was so ill that the apothecary sent her to bed. This morning before we had finished our breakfast, her sister Elizabeth Bennet came into the house enquiring after her. Bingley's sisters were beside themselves with indignation. Miss Elizabeth Bennet had walked alone for three miles and arrived covered in mud. (I must presume that the Bennets are so poor that they do not keep a carriage.) I observed the scene with amusement. Miss Eliza Bennet, as Bingley rightly remarked, showed us that she really cared for her sister. Her exertion to come as soon as possible confirmed this. But Miss Bingley would have none of it. She thought it irresponsible. I had to admit that I would not have allowed Georgiana to do likewise, but I could understand why Miss Eliza Bennet would do it. From my knowledge of her so far, she seems to show an independent spirit.

Bingley's sisters were considerably surprised when they discovered that Miss Bennet's relations were connected with trade. I think that their mother's brother does well in London. Yet, in spite of the disapproval of the Bennet family's

connections, this did not stop either Miss Bingley or Mrs Hurst from spending a great deal of time with Jane whom they find exceptionally pleasant. Some ladies' ways and thoughts seem very vexing.

We dined as usual at six thirty and Miss Eliza Bennet joined us. There was an interesting conversation between us all when Miss Bingley opposed Miss Eliza's view on when a young lady could be described as being accomplished. Miss Bingley concluded that the younger Miss Bennet was attracting my attention by presenting herself and generally her sex in a mean manner. I do wonder if this was prompted by the scene at Sir William's the other evening when I admitted to admiring Miss Eliza's fine eyes? I stated firmly, in reply to Miss Bingley's arguments, that any form of cunning was despicable. I doubt though if Miss Bingley understood my full meaning.

Miss Eliza B. shortly left us to see her sister and I missed her presence. She returned to announce that Jane was worse and Bingley wanted to send for a London physician immediately. With his fears allayed by Miss Bingley and Mrs Hurst, Charles calmed down and postponed the decision on calling another doctor till the morrow. By which time, Mrs Hurst assured him, there would be clear signs that Miss Bennet's life was not in danger. We retired and I was sorry that there was no further opportunity to engage Miss Eliza B. in another lively discourse.

Netherfield, 18th October

Soon after breakfast Mrs Bennet arrived accompanied by two further daughters. I have never heard a lady move so swiftly from first praising her eldest daughter to denigrating all other females, and then onto Bingley's "sweet room" and his short lease of Netherfield. Miss Eliza Bennett tried to steer the conversation away from her mother by saying that she comprehended Bingley's character. It appears that she amuses herself studying people's characters. I suggested that the country did not provide enough variety for her studies. Miss B. replied that people alter so much that, "there is something new to observe in them forever." This struck me as an interesting

observation. Mrs Bennet then took the stage by extolling the virtues of country living and accused me of thinking that “the country was nothing at all”.

Miss Eliza B. tried to come to my rescue and I watched her with admiration explaining to her mother, in simple but firm terms, the error of her judgement of me. This was to no avail. Mrs Bennet would not be bested and their dining with twenty four families was evidence enough that I saw and understood little of country life!

To make me feel even lower the woman then compared me to Sir William Lucas who was, “So much the man of fashion! So genteel and so easy! – He has always something to say to everybody!” Of course, by Mrs Bennet’s meaning, I am not a man of fashion, I am neither genteel nor easy and I say nothing in company. To dismiss me further she spoke clearly and slowly: “and those persons who fancy themselves very important, and never open their mouths, quite mistake the matter.”

I do not know if Mrs Bennet is capable of understanding that her behaviour is deplorable. I have been subjected once or twice to some strictures from various matronly ladies, but never as vile as Mrs Bennet’s extravagant claims. The impact of Mrs Bennet’s words had touched her two older daughters present. I watched as Miss Eliza Bennet blushed and quickly changed the topic, yet her mother would have none of it, and this time denigrated Sir William’s daughters. Bingley tried to take their side by pronouncing Miss Charlotte Lucas, “a pleasant young lady.” To this Mrs Bennet had an easy answer by extolling the virtues of her own Jane, who when only fifteen was admired by a gentleman in town who wrote some poetry about her beauty.

Miss Eliza Bennet astonished me again by replying that poetry drove love away. I tried to contradict her by saying that poetry was considered to be “the food of love”. Again she amazed me. She very aptly summarised that love can be nourished by poetry when it’s already strong, but if it is slight, she said, “I’m convinced that one good sonnet will starve it entirely away.” I enjoyed not only her sentiments, but her turn

of phrase. Her expressions as she spoke stay with me even now as I write.

The visit finished with the youngest Miss Bennet reminding Charles that he had said he would have a ball at Netherfield. As usual Bingley immediately complied.

Miss Bingley tried to torment me again with witticisms on Miss Eliza Bennet's "fine eyes", but her remarks washed over me and I was not inclined to answer.

Later after dinner when we were all assembled in the drawing room, Caroline Bingley would not leave me alone. I was writing a letter to Georgiana and she would interrupt, complement me on my writing, and be her usual nuisance. Many ladies think that paying compliments can give a man an encouragement to affection. It is a poor fellow indeed who needs a woman's constant complements to be at peace with himself!

The conversation then turned to the appearance of humility. I was clear in my views that the appearance of humility may be the result of carelessness of opinion and sometimes an indirect boast. Bingley was most animated in our discourse and Miss Eliza Bennet quite profound. She surprised me again with the quickness of her mind and perception of the core of the argument. Her views on friendship interested me greatly, but with three such different perspectives, from Charles, Miss Eliza B. and my own, it was impossible to establish the common ground, and I was encouraged to finish my letter to Georgiana instead.

Miss Elizabeth Bennet interests me, I must admit. I observed her every conduct among our company and my verdict is positive, no flaw, very accomplished, very commendable. No trace of Mrs Bennet in her. I am pleased to note this. I thought, I would enlist her efforts at the pianoforte, but Miss Bingley took the hint first and together with Mrs Hurst gave us a good diversion. The mood was right for dancing and I asked Miss Eliza if she would join me in a reel. She refused and replied in a way that nobody I know could have done it; "I do not want to dance a reel at all, and now despise me if you dare". I answered, "Indeed I do not dare",

but I wanted to add, "I hope you would change your mind about dancing, if only to please me". But the words remained unspoken.

Netherfield, 19th October

Caroline Bingley must have noticed my fascination with Miss Elizabeth Bennet for she would not rest until she told me of all the consequences of having Mrs Bennet as a mother-in-law. Mrs Bennet's brother, Mr Philips, is an attorney and she proposed I would hang his portrait next to one of my ancestors who was a judge. Miss Bingley then suggested that it would be impossible for an artist to catch the expression on Miss Bennet's "fine eyes". To this I was obliged to reply that even if this was impossible, then the shape and colour, the remarkably long and fine eyelashes could well be copied. Just then Mrs Hurst and Miss Eliza met us on the walk, and my heart jumped with expectation of further converse with the younger Miss Bennet. However, she would not stay with us, and on the pretext of there not being enough room for four walkers on the lane, left us before I could think of a way of stopping her.

Miss Jane Bennet was well enough after dinner to join us in the salon. Bingley was most attentive and spent the whole evening by her side.

Miss Bingley decided to promenade the room on the arm of Miss Eliza. I knew why she chose this mode of behaviour, for she wanted to draw my attention to her good figure. This soon turned into another animated exchange between Miss Bingley and Miss Eliza Bennet. Miss Bingley pronounced it impossible to tease me or laugh at me since I was perfect! Miss Eliza then, in what I begin to recognise as a style uniquely her own, protested strongly that she dearly loved to laugh. But her meaning was clear. She would never ridicule someone wise or good. "Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me," she said and then turning to me added, "but these, I suppose, are precisely what you are without."

Before I knew where her thoughts were moving, she plainly accused me of being vain and proud. Yet, within seconds she was saying to Caroline Bingley that I convinced

her enough to pronounce me without defect. Naturally, I was obliged to correct her and admitted those parts of my character that I know to be at fault. She appeared particularly struck by my saying, "My good opinion once lost is lost for ever." With animation she cried out that this was a failing indeed. Yet, how could I think ill of her when she soon added, "you have chosen your fault well. I really cannot laugh at it."

I thought I was on safe ground again and said in general terms that in every disposition there is a tendency to some particular evil. Miss Bennet's reply stunned me. "And your defect is a propensity to hate everybody," she said. Had I liked the lady less I might have been severe, but instead I replied with a smile, "And yours is wilfully to misunderstand them."

When Miss Bingley suggested a musical diversion I was relieved. I have indeed paid too much attention to the intellect and beauty in Miss Bennet's "fine eyes".

Netherfield, 20th October

Miss Jane Bennet, in spite of Bingley's protestations, was determined to leave his hospitality. It took some considerable persuasion to make her agree to stay another day. Misses Jane and Elizabeth Bennet are to leave tomorrow after the Sunday service.

Miss Eliza B. and I were left alone for at least half an hour. I made sure I was completely captivated by my book and did not once glance in her direction. I think it best that I show no further consideration. Charles Bingley gives more civility to Jane Bennet than two gentlemen of fashion would wish to convey to any young lady. It is his choice and he has no need of my help in making himself agreeable to the Bennet family.

Netherfield, 21st October

In his sermon the vicar spoke of loving your neighbour. His long discourse touched on relations between men and women. Without meaning it I looked towards Charles and saw how he admired Miss Bennet's profile. The lady was perfectly composed and did not once glance in his direction although she must have been aware of his notice. My gaze then strayed a little further and I was unable to shift my eyes from Miss

Eliza Bennet's features at such an advantageous angle to me that I could both admire her beautiful eyes as well as the most pleasing symmetry of all her features.

It was some time later that I became aware that Caroline Bingley was staring at me with a pitying smile on her face. If only Miss Bingley would choose another gentleman to occupy her thoughts! My friendship with Bingley and the respect I have for him precludes me from being severe with her, but her attentions are deeply unwelcome.

Netherfield, 22nd October

I am content that both Miss Bennets have left, but I see that Charles is not. His sisters are very complementary about Jane Bennet and it must be of some comfort to him. I caught myself thinking of Miss Eliza B. at least twice this morning and then again at dinner, for conversation was stilted and predictable.

London, 25th October

I left Netherfield yesterday. There is business to be attended to in London and I have asked my steward to report to me on the progress of the renovations of the West Wing at Pemberley. I want to choose new wall hangings and purchase a new set of furniture for the Green Suite. Lady Catherine de B. has been trying to discern when I wanted to do this.

I would not mind her telling me her own ideas and suggesting fabrics, but I will not be put in a situation where her daughter Anne's help would be offered in such a way that I would be forced to declare myself. Aunt de Burgh is fixed on that topic.

Lady de Burgh reminds me every time I come to Rosings what a splendid estate she has and how my consequence would be enhanced if I added it to my lands in Derbyshire. I have no intention, however, to marry "the estates". My heart's desire is to find an agreeable young woman who would be pretty enough, yet amusing enough, as well as clever, to provide me with congenial company and healthy offspring. I cannot imagine the drudgery of endless years with a creature one could not admire or respect.

Anne de Burgh is a kind young lady, but sadly lacking in any accomplishments; this being a natural consequence of a sickly constitution and many childhood illnesses. Never have I found her agreeable even when we played together as children. Aunt de Burgh would inevitably disrupt the play and Anne always meek, always followed her mother's wishes. By the time I was twelve, I simply refused to have anything to do with her which my mother must have found displeasing, for Aunt de Burgh made comments about it. As I grew up I sometimes wondered how it was possible to have such different sisters as my mother and Lady de Burgh. I was just sixteen when my mother finally explained that Lady Catherine was her half sister. My grandfather's first wife died in childbirth, but the child survived (my Aunt de Burgh). My mother's father (John Stephen Fitzwilliam the Sixth Earl of Barrow) married for the second time my grandmother, Lady Cecilia Greenwood, the youngest daughter of the Earl of Greenwood. Within three years of that marriage a son was born, but he sadly died when he was two. Then came Uncle George, the current Earl of Barrow. My mother was born two years later.

Having now listened to John Fitzwilliam's love for Miss Heather Stevington, I see that he is the sort of man I admire. I would never like to be the subject of other people's jokes and condescending remarks that my bride brought me only acres! Since Cousin Anne has little beauty, this kind of comment would be inevitable.

London, 7th November

Instead of going to warehouses I am having some furniture made specially. The patterns are new and I rather like them. There is a certain finesse in the light approach and sitters' comfort is taken into account. If Georgiana were older I would have loved to have asked her opinion.

I had a letter from Bingley yesterday reminding me of the date of the Netherfield ball. I did promise him I would be there and he would take my absence very much to heart. There is one consolation though, I have now met many of Bingley's neighbours including all the Miss Bennets. I might find

dancing at Netherfield more agreeable than the Assembly Rooms at Meryton.

Netherfield, 16th November

What impudence, what bad luck to chance upon the last person I wanted to see! Charles and I were riding through Meryton when he noticed Miss Bennet and her sisters. He immediately jumped off his horse and I thought I would follow when my eyes rested on none other than George Wickham who was with them!

If my self control had been any less I would have ordered him to keep his distance from the innocent young ladies. But I managed to reign in my temper and turned my horse to walk off. On reflection I should have said something to Bingley who remained with the assembled company for some minutes before joining me at a gallop across his woods.

Wickham was not wearing regimentals and I began to hope that he was just a passing phantom. Charles told me later, however, that he had issued a general invitation to the ball to all the officers stationed in Meryton. I have since discovered that Wickham has joined the militia and thus is included in the invitation.

Netherfield, 18th November

Charles becomes increasingly interested in finding excuses to ride in the direction of Longbourn. We are dining there tomorrow for he accepted Mrs Bennet's entreaties to "grace" her home, and she added, "You may bring your guests too". Caroline Bingley has a headache and thus I may look forward to an evening free of her teasing.

Later:

I cannot settle for the night so I decided to continue my writing. We've had tolerable company and tolerable food at Longbourn tonight. Mr Bennet's estate is on a small scale, for he owns the village of Longbourn and, I think, nothing else. The house is comfortable rather than grand with that feeling of adequate servants, but little else. I found Mr Bennet's sense of humour rather droll. Bingley was right in his assessment of the

man. At first I thought Mr Bennet was suffering from the effects of too many ladies surrounding him and had developed some strange ways, but having now spent more time in his company, I begin to appreciate his sense of humour. I can see where Miss Eliza B. gets her wits from.

I heard her singing for the first time tonight. Something happened to me as I watched her at the instrument. I cannot quite describe it, but her voice is still ringing in my ears and I feel restless, a sort of longing ... I wish Mrs Hurst had not got up so soon and took her stand by the pianoforte. Perhaps Miss E.B. would have sung another song?

Netherfield, 27th November

I could not believe my eyes when I saw Miss Eliza Bennet approach the receiving line. She was radiant and eagerly surveying the gathered company. There was that something special in her deportment, the dress that matched her beautiful eyes and perhaps a feeling of anticipation. I had difficulty controlling my gaze for she seemed to embody an absolute perfection. One feels the lack of artifice which I so admire. And I cannot think of another young lady who could be said to possess such a true spirit of fun and genuine interest.

As soon as I could, I went to her to secure my dance. She appeared surprised to see me – of that I am certain. She considers me proud and conceited, and this must have put a black mark on me in her estimation.

Our conversation during the dance did not disappoint me. I was happy at first to simply rejoice in dancing with her and I could see that many had noticed us. I take no merit for that, for it must have been Miss Eliza Bennet's superior dancing, her looks and easy manners that drew attention. Sir William came to us at one stage and said as much.

His interruption was unwelcome and when he tried to complement us further by suggesting that he hoped to see this scene repeated often, especially when "a certain happy event" would happen, my heart almost stopped when I realized his meaning. He was looking at Bingley and Miss Bennet dancing together.

Whilst I can see that both Miss Bennets are superior ladies, their relations are not. This was confirmed at supper where Mrs Bennet loudly enumerated the advantages of her daughter marrying Bingley and this was not all! Their cousin, Mr Collins, accosted me without an introduction and proceeded to tell me that he was Lady Catherine de Burgh's vicar. Then Miss Mary Bennet, the least accomplished of the five Bennet sisters presumed that she was chosen to monopolise the pianoforte and sang weakly and sometimes out of tune. To crown it all, Mr Bennet, instead of coming quietly to remove her from the instrument almost shouted from his table to stop her.

Both Caroline Bingley and Mrs Hurst displayed extremely bad manners when the Bennets were leaving and in consequence, I began to feel sorry for them. Their coach was the last to leave and I could see pain and shame written on the fine features of Miss Eliza B. But so it was, plain to see, that the Bennets were not of the first stare and Bingley's sisters were making this abundantly clear to me as I watched the sorry scene.

Miss Bingley and Mrs Hurst cornered me after breakfast and began to list all the disadvantages of their brother uniting his name to the Bennet family. And they were correct. I tried hard to be rational in my assessment of the situation, although I do realize now that I have become quite enamoured of fair Eliza Bennet. Yet, one cannot think with one's heart.

Bingley's sisters suggest that the planned trip to London becomes a permanent removal from Netherfield. They are convinced that Bingley is ready to offer for Miss Bennet and a joint effort is needed to prevent this "disaster", as Caroline Bingley described it.

It is a novelty to be of the same mind as Miss Bingley. I cannot recall when we had agreed on anything before.

London, 30th November

I feel for Charles. I can see how miserable he is, yet there is no other way. We are to remove him to Pemberley for Christmas and then return to town for the season. Caroline

Bingley is convinced that he will find another young lady able to attach his heart. I suspect that she is trying to place Georgiana in his path, but this will not do.

Pemberley, 7th December

Georgiana and I have arrived in Pemberley together. My Aunt Barrow was disappointed when I came to Roxbury to collect Georgiana. I had to refuse all her entreaties to change my mind and remain at the Hall for Christmas. My Aunt Barrow is always surprised when I explain that I have different plans to her own.

There has been no snow yet and thus our journey was very comfortable. Georgiana has not mentioned George Wickham once and I shall not ask her about him either. She will be busy here with visits to the tenants and those in need, and so I hope will think less of her own situation.

Bingley, his sisters and Mr Hurst are to arrive next week. As is the custom, I have also invited our Uncle Robert and Aunt Catersham. My old school friend, James Ratten is coming with his two younger sisters. It would have been their first Christmas at home without both of their parents. I think he was delighted I wrote to him.

I caught myself staring into distance as I strolled through the Park, my mind's eye totally engrossed in Miss Eliza Bennet's fine features. It seemed to me that I could almost hear her saying to me: "I do not want to dance a reel at all – and now despise me if you dare." Her voice has that quality which is not often found of being pleasing and uniquely suited to the person. There is playfulness in it, yet the serious undertones make it impossible not to notice. This combined with her exceptional turn of phrase and the sharpness of her intellect make it difficult to ignore, nay forget.

Pemberley, 21st December

Bingley told me today that if I thought to amuse him by inviting the two young Miss Rattens, I was mistaken. I explained my motives for having James Ratten, after which he apologised and promised to be a perfect gentleman.

Isabella Ratten, the younger sister is Georgiana's age and I'm satisfied Georgiana finds her company congenial. Alexandra Ratten is almost twenty and will have her first season in the new year. Her mother's illness prevented her from attending earlier. She is a dark haired young lady, very much in the mould of her brother James in looks. She has not had much exposure to company and seems very shy. It is a shame she is not proficient on the pianoforte, for she could have hidden her shyness this way, as Georgiana does.

Pemberley, 22nd December

Miss Bingley asked me last night if another pair of "fine eyes" have caught my attention. I presumed that she was referring to Miss Ratten. I replied simply, "no".

Pemberley, 25th December

Our vicar excelled himself today with his sermon. It was unusually short. He recommended to everyone that they use this joyous time of the birth of Christ to examine themselves and see if there is anything in their character that obstructs the Lord in their lives. Miss Eliza Bennet's words came to me at that point, "... your defect is a propensity to hate everybody". I remembered my reply: "And yours is wilfully to misunderstand them".

I resolved to be more patient and never repay an evil word with another. If Miss Eliza B. thinks that I hate people, I should have found out why.

We ended the day with some dancing. Mrs Hurst obliged us on the instrument. Miss Ratten may not play, but she dances well.

Charles danced with all the ladies. Caroline thinks that he might be on the mend. She is mistaken. When everyone else had retired, he stayed behind with me and started to talk about Miss Bennet. He said that if he had more time, he could have succeeded better in turning her heart to himself. He began to list all her fine features and asked me if I thought the Bennets would send Jane to London for the season. I told him that it was unlikely since her Uncle Gardiner was not well connected.

He stared distractedly for a good while and I had no heart to interrupt his musings. How well he hides his love for Jane Bennet. And now blames himself for not engaging her sentiments better! Though I wish he were happy, I do admire his selfless attitude and his desire to please everyone. At times it touches me deeply. Caroline was so forceful in telling him that Miss Bennet was a cold, unfeeling lady. I wish I was not convinced of this myself, strange as it seems to me now.

I often think of Miss Eliza B. and feel almost bereft that I might never see her again. But reason tells me it is best this way. Miss Bingley's taunts about the Bennet family were perhaps extreme, but Mrs Bennet and her lowly connections cannot bring anything other than shame.

Pemberley, 27th December

Uncle Robert foxed me today. He cornered me in the library soon after breakfast.

“Do you know, my boy how old I am?”

I replied politely that I wasn't certain.

“Guess, guess.” He seemed jovial, but determined.

I thought quickly that if my grandfather was alive he would have been around eighty six, so being his younger brother he could be anywhere between seventy and eighty five.

“Seventy two?” I suggested.

“Wish I were, my boy!” He laughed heartily. “I shall be eighty this day next year, if it be the Good Lord's pleasure!”

I was surprised, for Uncle Robert has not changed much in fifteen years or so, ever since in fact, I took any notice of my adult relations.

“I have a little scheme in my mind for that eventuality, God willing, God willing,” he announced with a wink in his eye.

I tried to discover what he intended, but all he would say was, “wait and see, my boy, wait and see!”

Pemberley, 28th December

Aunt Catersham is to act as a chaperone to Miss Alexandra Ratten this coming season. I write with utter disbelief. When James Ratten thanked me again for making this Christmas the happiest he could have imagined, he added, "Lady Catersham has become very fond of Alexandra and is going to adopt her as her God-daughter, and launch her into society this season."

I was speechless. I have never heard of Aunt Catersham speak well of any young lady. I remember my mother telling me that she had two still births and in consequence avoided getting close to anybody's children. Perhaps the death of her husband two years ago has changed her?

I must have been in deep thought when Uncle Robert touched me on the shoulder and said, "Share your burden, young Fitzwilliam." So I told him about Aunt Catersham. He thought for a while and then answered, "You know, my boy, I have an idea. That girl could easily have been her own daughter, a little older perhaps, but that's no matter. Miss Alexandra Ratten could well have been Lord Catersham's offspring; the same eyes, the same colouring."

"You know," he added after a short pause, "Selina may not even realize that she's attracted to the girl because of that!"

"You don't think, it's because Miss Ratten is so shy?" I said.

"No, it wouldn't cross Selina's mind to help someone because they could do with her support. No, it must be because of Lord Catersham's looks. She was very much in love with him, you know."

"Was he difficult?" I asked in ignorance.

"No, no more than any other man. No, my boy, it was the children, or rather the lack of them. They both must have suffered. He left his estate to her, you must know that?"

"Yes, she's written to me on occasions asking some tricky questions."

“That’s Selina, always independent. She’ll enjoy society now and has an excellent excuse!”

At dinner Aunt Catersham was sparkling. She has already started on her project, for I found her sitting with Miss Ratten making a list of everything “they” would need.

I am glad that Georgiana has at least two more years before I’m forced to consider a London season for her.

1797

Pemberley, 2nd January

The house is empty except for Georgiana and Uncle Robert. We are travelling with him to Welligborough in Northamptonshire. He is not saying it, but I think he's grateful that we are accompanying him home. We'll stay overnight with him and then continue onto Lord Barrow's Roxbury estate in Oxfordshire.

Georgiana is happy to continue her education at Roxbury. She assured me that the company of her cousin Louisa and her younger sisters is in no way tiresome. They all like Miss White, the governess in charge of their studies.

Fitzwilliam knows I'm coming to Roxbury and will travel with me from there to London.

The more I miss the company of Miss Eliza B., the more I admire Fitzwilliam. Five long years of waiting and no end in sight! I'm determined not to follow in his footsteps.

London, 7th January

Bingley accepted my invitation to stay with me in London while Miss Bingley stays with her sister in Mr Hurst's house in Grosvenor Street. I think it gives Charles the peace and quiet he cannot obtain with Caroline under the same roof.

I've taken up fencing and Bingley has been forced to follow suit. He is still in a brooding mood and prefers to avoid female company. Netherfield would have suited him much better than this cold and smoke filled London, but he knows that neither his sisters nor I would countenance any talk of removal to Hertfordshire.

London, 8th January

I had a shock today. My senses were reeling and I thought my heart would jump out of my chest! I was walking with Bingley to Whites, when I glanced at a passing carriage. For a moment I thought that Miss Eliza Bennet was sitting in it! But

this could not be, I knew it was impossible, for as the carriage went past I recognized the livery of the outrider and knew it was the Duke of Norton's.

It took me a while to compose myself and when I finally did, I noticed that Charles was completely unaware of what was happening to me. I was mightily glad. But the mind is a strange thing, for however hard I try to forget what has happened, I still keep coming back to the image I saw, and begin to speculate who it could have been. Now all I can think of is how I could find out and meet the lady – if indeed she was a lady. The Duke's reputation is not entirely spotless.

London, 15th January

We had dinner with the Hursts and Caroline Bingley in Grosvenor Street last night. When Mrs Hurst played the pianoforte and Charles was chatting to Mr Hurst, I was accosted by Caroline who told me that Miss Bennet is in London, and had written to her. We were in agreement that Charles must not be told. Miss Bingley is set on a course of estrangement from Miss Bennet and seemed to know how to accomplish it.

I felt uneasy listening to her. I wish she would not involve me in all her plotting. I dislike the idea intensely that anyone should go into such lengths to break a friendship, especially involving so much scheming. Were Caroline the greatest beauty in the country, she would still repel me with her ways and insincerity. And I am greatly displeased with myself for having to deal with her in connection with Charles' infatuation with Miss Bennet.

Had I but a shadow of a doubt about Miss Bennet's feelings for Charles, I would never have allowed myself to be party to separate Bingley from Miss Bennet. But as it is, I am convinced that she does not care for him and therefore, she cannot be allowed to ensnare him. I remember particularly an instance when Bingley took her hand at the ball and in all eagerness kissed it. He was intently looking into her face while Miss Bennett had her eyes down and did not even acknowledge his gallantry. I could see at once that there were no tender feelings for him in that pretty head.

Brew told me today about the Duke of Norton's latest conquest. My curiosity though satisfied did not stop me from recalling the scene again and the feelings it roused then.

London, 22nd January

I was just about to come out of the carriage outside Grosvenor Street when I saw Miss Bennet coming out onto the street. She must have been visiting Caroline! I changed my mind about disembarking and told my man to carry on to Bond Street instead. I only had a slight glimpse of Miss Bennet, but she seemed changed. The day did not have a ray of sunshine and the cold wind was making everyone wrap up well, so perhaps this had caused Miss Bennet's sallow looks.

How I hate all this! The unplanned shopping expedition in Bond Street depressed me further. I did not purchase a single item. Strangely enough, meeting Philip Brew yet again and listening to another one of his tales helped. The fellow can be amusing. Before we parted, he insisted I would bring Bingley to dine at his house Tuesday next. I hope he does not have a sister or two lurking there at just the right age for marriage. I remember Aunt Catersham mentioning once that the Brews were numerous.

London, 24th January

We all dined at Aunt Catersham's last night. Miss Ratten has already lost some of her shyness and I complemented my aunt accordingly.

"Just you wait, Fitzwilliam," Aunt Catersham replied with force. "When that young lady appears among society she will not only be a transformed swan, but also a most beautiful dancer."

"I do not doubt your abilities." I answered and hoped that this would close the conversation, but it was not to be so.

"This has very little to do with my abilities, dear Fitzwilliam. Alexandra is a clever girl, quick to learn and such a treasure!"

I bowed not wishing to prolong the exchange. Yet my aunt would continue.

“You have danced with her so you will know that she can move very well, but what nobody has realized in Pemberley is that although she does not play the pianoforte, she does play the violin extremely well! She also paints beautifully.”

Again I said nothing and hoped this would finally bring the topic to its end. BUT, oh no!

“Fitzwilliam, listen to me for once!” My aunt was determined. “I have never said anything to you about any young lady, but this time I will say it. If you do not finally grow up and take note of what’s under your very own nose, do not be surprised if when you do, it will be gone!”

I could hardly confess that my thoughts were entirely occupied with a fair beauty whom I could not possibly consider as my future wife, and therefore I was not able to take an interest in any suitable young ladies paraded in front of me.

I replied instead, “My dear aunt, your concern is very gratifying. In the fullness of time I shall do my best not to disappoint you.”

She scolded me for my “pretty” speech and finally left me.

I reflected again on the strangeness of fortune. My frequent thoughts and desires in connection with Miss E.B. have been as if in spite of myself. I have considered every rational angle and cannot see the reason why I am so preoccupied with that lady. Her family is not to be considered. Yet when suitable young ladies are placed before me, all I can think is that none have the intellect to fascinate, none have the depths in their eyes to draw a gentleman in, none are a challenge for long enough to make one wish to speak to them again. The reputed beauties inevitably seem to be full of themselves: insincere, determined to be noticed, demanding attention and vain, so obviously vain.

I have analyzed my various encounters with Miss E.B. and cannot see anything that would displease me.

London, 30th January

Dinner with Philip Brew turned out rather pleasant. He does have three younger sisters, however they were either out of town or not at home, for we dined in male company only. I cannot think when I was last so amused. It could have been his constant chatter or the fact that we drank extremely good Burgundy and followed it with copious amounts of port. Brew refused to consider brandy saying that it did foul things to him.

How strange that he should be so easy with us. The talk after dinner turned to ladies. He is now determined to marry a young widow who lives near his estates in Hampshire. This time he was reticent about her beauty, mostly praising her good sense and comfortable disposition. I read in this a fair amount of land and not much else? God forgive me if I'm judging the fellow unjustly. She may, in fact be an excellent creature, with whom he will be truly happy. He is leaving town within days to propose to her and hopes the wedding will be soon!

"I do not believe in long engagements." He said simply and when I asked him why, he replied, "It is best to know as little as possible of the other half before you marry. You have the rest of your life to come to know them."

"But what if what you discover is not to your liking?" I asked.

"Then it's best to close your eyes and continue with what you would like to think rather than what you've discovered."

"Philip, this will not do," I said in all seriousness. "Your life could be intolerable."

"No, not at all. It's all a matter of your own attitude. You must choose to ignore everything you do not like!"

"But ladies have a way of trying to make you be involved in their ideas, their concerns. How could you tell your wife that her life does not concern you?" I was astounded.

Brew looked at me with incomprehensive eyes for quite some time, then said, "Darcy, you talk nonsense. My father and mother live under the same roof, but they know nothing

about each other, and do not choose to find out. It really works very well, you know.”

After that statement I knew our discourse could not continue. His experience of life was different from mine. What I saw and experienced at home was real closeness, real love between my parents and no other model exists for me. They shared their worries, they shared their concerns. I caught them on many occasions holding hands together when they thought no one was looking. Mother always kissed my father when she came down to breakfast and he kissed her. I never felt that there was discord between them or that one wanted something that the other did not. If this was so, for I cannot see how they could have been in constant agreement, they never showed this in front of their children. Nothing else would satisfy me. Obviously, Brew has never experienced this sort of environment, so it's best I leave him alone. He may not be able to imagine life with another person as close as my parents were with each other.

London, 16th February

Aunt de Burgh's letter arrived today. She reminded me that I promised to spend Easter with her at Rosings. Fitzwilliam will come too, I know he'll oblige me, for I could not possibly go there on my own. Bingley is going to his aunt in Hampshire and so are his sisters.

Since I haven't seen Georgiana for a few weeks, I shall go to Uncle Barrow shortly and spend some three or four weeks there, leaving for Rosings from London. Fitzwilliam's regiment is still stationed in London, although he mentioned that there was some talk of removal. Fortunately, nothing came of it.

Fitzwilliam dined with us yesterday and I managed at last to talk to him about Miss Stevington. He described her as a lady of slight stature and then showed me her likeness which he carries with him. I observed him as he took it out from his pocket. His expression was resigned, yet I detected relief that he could share his secret with someone.

If the artist was more accomplished I could have said that the lady was fair, but as the likeness is not very flattering, I must assume that the lady has other qualities difficult to paint.

Later I thought more on the subject and came to the conclusion that it is just as well that Miss Stevington is not an outstanding beauty or her continued spinsterhood would have been impossible. As it is, she is still waiting for Fitzwilliam and he is ever hopeful that somehow his fortune will change. I discovered from him that there are some maiden aunts on Lady Barrow's side who could possibly leave their fortunes to him. How long he would have to wait, however, nobody would even wish to speculate.

I am grateful to him for this latest intelligence. It does make me feel somewhat more optimistic on his behalf.

Now it's my turn to hope that fair Miss Eliza B. will finally stop haunting me.

Roxbury, 2nd March

I go riding every morning and afternoon. There is little else to do. Georgiana joins me in the afternoons – her lessons take all morning. Uncle Barrow is fond of good board, so we tend to have guests most evenings. Cards are then predominant. I find it confining and if I can, both Georgiana and I disappear to the library with a good book.

We were caught in the act of sneaking out last night and Lady Trente, a good friend of my aunt, was most displeased.

“How singular,” she said, “that you should prefer a book to convivial company ... unless, of course, you consider your Uncle's company beneath your notice?”

I apologised and explained that I got so involved in the latest project, my mind found it difficult to dwell on the cards.

Lady Trente looked at me with piercing eyes. “I shall not ask what that project is, my young man.”

I sat for a while considering her speech and eventually came to the conclusion that it is impossible to satisfy everybody. I have resolved, however, to limit my departures

from the salon to those times when all the guests are happily seated at tables.

Roxbury, 10th March

Georgiana mentioned Wickham for the first time since our departure from London. It's over eight months since then and I was delighted that she spoke.

"Rest easy, Fitzwilliam," she said suddenly. "I have no intention of renewing my contact with George Wickham. I see now how silly I have been to even consider his proposals ... very silly indeed ... and I am so glad that you came when you did ... it really was so utterly stupid."

I couldn't stop myself and rushed to her side, and after a hearty embrace gave her a kiss on her cheek. She was so relieved. I could read it in all her features.

"Georgiana, I am so pleased to hear that your heart is no longer engaged."

I could see that what I said was wrong. She blushed all over and I turned my gaze away from her not to embarrass her more. I had no idea what to say. It was some time later that Georgiana spoke to explain.

"You mentioned my heart. I must be honest, Fitzwilliam. My heart is still somewhat engaged, but my mind is now able to rule it. I hope you understand what I mean?"

"Oh, yes, Georgiana. I do. I know precisely what you mean."

"How so?" She asked in all innocence.

"Well, I must admit to you that my heart is also engaged at this time. I love a young lady but she is not the ideal partner for me."

She rushed over to me and sitting by my side demanded to know all about it. I told her about Miss E.B. and her family, and relations. We must have chatted for an exceedingly long time. It was Georgiana's maid who found us and took her mistress upstairs. We both arrived for dinner late by some good few minutes.

I have not shared my feelings and my thoughts on Miss E.B. with anyone, and I found that Georgiana's enquiries shifted a very heavy burden. It's as if her knowing my troubles has made them more bearable. I feel we have also become closer. This alone is a wonderful outcome. I really do want TO BE A GOOD BROTHER.

Roxbury, 20th March

Fitzwilliam and I leave for Rosings tomorrow. Aunt is again upset that I am away over Easter, but she must understand that Lady de Burgh would never forgive me if I let her down. Georgiana understands that and is very happy to stay at Roxbury. She will have plenty of young company. Going with us to Rosings would not be fun at all!

Kent, Rosings, 24th March

We've been here a whole day, but my aunt would not leave us even for a moment. Fitzwilliam tried to come up with some scheme why he had to go to Ashford, but Aunt de Burgh immediately sent her man there and insisted that we stay by her side. She has a way with her such that no blocking of her will is possible. She will be the centre of attention or she feels slighted. I recall how Lord de Burgh, a saint of a man, kept his distance and spent most of his time in London.

"You young men have no idea how confined I am. There is only the company of Mr Collins and his wife, and two young girls staying with them. You cannot know what it means!"

"Is he the clergyman I met in Hertfordshire?" I asked without thinking where the conversation could lead us.

"Yes, he's got my living and he did get married earlier this year to a young lady from Hertfordshire, Charlotte Lucas, daughter of Sir William Lucas of Lucas Lodge near Meryton."

"I've met Sir William when I was staying with Charles Bingley last year. Bingley has the lease of an estate nearby."

"Well, you shall then meet Mrs Collins and tell her the good news. She is a very good sort of wife for Mr Collins. Her sister and her friend are staying with them now."

There was only one friend I knew of. And that was Miss Eliza B! My heart started pounding and I could not believe that she could be here. With as much control as I could muster I asked in an indifferent way, "I might have met Mrs Collins' friend in Hertfordshire, would she be Miss Elizabeth Bennet?"

"Yes, it is. How very odd that you should know her." My aunt seemed to be displeased.

I explained that Bingley's estate was very close to Longbourn where the Bennets live. This done, I somehow managed to take my leave of my aunt.

The spire of the church was visible from my bedchamber and the vicarage could not be far off. Before I fully knew what I was doing, I was marching towards the church. Mr Collins chanced upon me. He bowed and bowed again, and insisted that we return to the house. He knew that Colonel Fitzwilliam was with me and "it would only be proper if I paid my most cordial respects to him." So we turned back and once the civilities were exchanged, and Aunt de Burgh pacified, all three of us made our way to the parsonage.

My heart refused to stay quiet and I had great difficulty to remain composed. Fortunately, Miss Elizabeth Bennet simply nodded to my entreaties. Fitzwilliam chatted on amiably. At last I felt able to ask after Miss Bennet's family and to my surprise, she asked me if I had met her sister in town. The truth was that although I chanced upon her, I did not actually speak to her, so I quickly answered in the negative. But my conscience bothered me.

We soon left and I knew then that all I wanted to do was to be in her company again. This would not do and so I resolved to keep away from Hunsford.

Rosings, 1st April

Fitzwilliam seems to be delighted with Miss Eliza Bennet and has been directing his steps to the Parsonage without me. Yesterday, my aunt asked Mr and Mrs Collins and their guests to come in the evening. Fitzwilliam monopolised Miss

Bennet's company until my aunt noticed it. The conversation was mostly about music and Lady Catherine told Miss Bennet off for not practising enough. I was ashamed to hear her inviting Miss Bennet to use Mrs Jenkinson's instrument in that lady's room.

Later Fitzwilliam led Miss Bennet to the pianoforte and she began to play and sing. I could keep away no longer. Another exchange between us followed which ended with Miss Bennet telling Fitzwilliam what she observed when we first met in the Assembly Rooms in Meryton.

She began to tease me about my reluctance to dance. I excused myself saying that I knew nobody except my party. She then pointed out that I could have been introduced. Fitzwilliam took her side by saying that I would not take the trouble to meet new people. I confirmed my reticence. Then in her usual style, she talked of her lack of proficiency on the instrument because she would not take the trouble to practice.

I immediately knew what she was saying to me, but was grateful that this gave me the opportunity to complement her, for I find her playing and singing admirable. "We neither of us perform to strangers", I said. As I said this she looked at me with such strength that I felt the very core of my being had been touched.

Unfortunately, Aunt de Burgh came up to us then and there was an unending stream of instructions to poor Miss Bennet intermingled with praise for her daughter Anne. I observed Miss Eliza take it all with equanimity. How well she responds to insults and slight! Many a young lady would have simply walked off.

At last the carriage arrived to take the Parsonage party home and I had no more chance to watch or hear Miss E.B.

I did not sleep well after that with fair Miss E.B.'s features, voice and singing parading through my mind in vivid images. I began to understand that the five months of effort to deny my love for her had been futile. Miss Eliza B. has conquered my heart and all my faculties. When morning came

all I could think was how to arrive at the Parsonage unaccompanied.

My chance came when Fitzwilliam left with Anne and Mrs Jenkinson for a drive.

As I write, I can still recall the every nuance of our conversation this morning. My luck was with me for Miss Eliza B. was alone. I tried to discover what her attitude was towards living some distance away from her family. I don't think she had any idea that I was probing her feelings about it. On the whole, I believe she would not consider it a hardship to be living in Derbyshire. I also gathered that she had become fond of Kent.

Rosings, 10th April

Now that I do not struggle to suppress my feelings for Miss E.B., I find it much easier to comply with Aunt de Burgh or Fitzwilliam's wishes to go visiting at the Parsonage. I've also taken to riding and walking through the Park and woods for several hours each day. As a consequence, I've discovered when and where Miss E.B. goes for her walks. She always seems surprised to meet me, even though I have contrived our accidental meetings every time.

Fitzwilliam is growing ever fonder of Miss E.B.. He told me today that had his heart been free, he would have fallen under Miss E.B.'s charms.

"You know, Darcy," he continued, "that in my ten years of being on the ton, I had never met such an attractive mind nor manners, let alone such beautiful eyes!"

"Surely, Miss Stevington outshines her?" I asked, half teasing him and half alarmed.

"Well, Miss Stevington is totally different." He stopped and I could see that he was remembering with pleasure times spent in her company. Since he did not explain himself, I asked, "How is Miss Stevington different?"

"When you fall in love with a woman she colours the whole world for you," he said. "It's as if you were born again and were noticing things you never had before. When I think

of Miss Stevington or when I'm in her company, I'm just happy with everything and everybody.”

There was no need to continue our exchange. I smiled at him, but he was looking at me with unseeing eyes. Yes, I do understand what he's been saying to me. Just being in Miss E.B.'s presence is enough for me.

Rosings, 12th April

Fitzwilliam was surprised that I postponed our departure date again. I have not explained the reason for it. I am now resolved not to leave Rosings until I declare my feelings.

London, 15th April

I am having great difficulty sleeping. I am constantly mulling over what has happened between us and I cannot find peace in my mind. Cannot write here either!

London, 16th April

I have written and sent a letter to Miss E.B. but I am plagued with doubts whether I have done the right thing. Have I expressed myself well enough? Have I been too proud?

I am set in my mind that the accusation of ill treatment of Wickham had to be refuted. My involvement in preventing Bingley from declaring himself to Miss Bennet had to be admitted, for I could not have done anything else. He is a dear friend of mine and deserved to be protected. If this is to be counted against me then I might as well discard my understanding of Miss Elizabeth Bennet as an honest and fair lady.

If the letter was too long, then I am sorry, but how else could I have written of the facts and feelings on such an important matter? I pray that the ending, “I will only add, God bless you,” spoke to Miss Bennet of my continued good wishes towards her person. If I was wrong to mention that her family behaved with a total want of propriety at the Netherfield ball, I shall apologise to her when and if I have a chance to do so. Perhaps the mention of her father in this was unnecessary, but I did speak with my heart and in full

knowledge of the facts. After all, I witnessed it and heard it myself.

Should I have delayed writing? Would my letter have been better composed if I had not been writing it through the night?

London, 18th April

It is five days since my proposal at Hunsford. I have now considered every sentiment expressed, every sentence written. I am resolved to stop tormenting myself further with doubts about the letter and its contents, but I am still in pain with the recollection of the way I conducted myself that day. If I am to have a second chance then the letter had to be written, facts presented. Wickham must have insinuated himself to the Bennet family with various lies. I also had to tell the truth about my part in separating Bingley from Miss Bennet. The truth must be told.

There are conflicting emotions inside me; I still cannot stop thinking of Miss E.B. without feeling completely wretched, and then I think of my own behaviour towards her and her words to me, and I realize how just she was in her assessment of me. This has only truly struck me today. I begin to see myself in a different light. I think she was right in calling me proud. I am at a loss how to go about now. The pain seems almost physical.

Bingley came today and was most upset that I've been in London and not called on him. I excused myself with indisposition after which he would not stop questioning me on the cause of my illness, and why haven't I let him know? He's an excellent fellow and I wish I had enough courage to share with him my feelings. He wants me to attend the Duchess of V.'s ball next week. I promised to join him although the very idea of strolling through a crowded ballroom as if one had no care in the world revolts me. And yet, I cannot expose my soul to Bingley and there is very little else I can do now, but be a friend to him as if nothing was wrong with my own heart.

I have written to Georgiana briefly outlining my marriage proposal to Miss E.B. and that she refused me. I did not go

into the details, but finished the letter with the sentiment of hope to present my suit to the lady in a better light in the future. (How I am to achieve this, I do not know. I must prove to Miss E.B. that I can reform). My letter was not honest enough to give Georgiana a clear picture of what had truly happened, but I want to spare Georgiana's own feelings. She will be distressed not only on Miss Bennet's account, but also because of her affection for me.

London, 20th April

Philip Brew called. His young widow has accepted his suit and he invited me to the wedding in May.

“What about you, Darcy?” he asked in his usual style. “You're handsome, you're rich, surely, there are many young ladies good enough to be considered?”

“Some think me vain and proud. My manners are lacking too.”

“This is no obstacle to marriage, Darcy.” He laughed.

“It is so with the lady who stole my heart.”

I could see that my reply foxed him. He laughed some more and added, “Stole your heart, Darcy? I must be frank with you, for you've always been my good friend – I never thought you had one!” He laughed again and still with an amused expression took his leave making me promise to attend his nuptials.

I can see now even more clearly how right Miss E.B. has been. If Brew has always seen me as a heartless creature, then I must have truly been so.

Georgiana has written a kind letter. She is more grown up in her attitudes than I have given credit. She suggests that I invite Miss Bennet and her sister to Pemberley in the summer. She realizes that they would need to be introduced first. The execution of this she leaves in my hands. This is an admirable idea, but not possible at present.

Lord, please have mercy on me and help me to change. Please help me especially in relation to Miss E.B. Please give

me an opportunity to make up to her for my slight and hurt I inflicted, for I see I have not followed the path of true Christian living.

London, 25th April

Bingley and I fence most afternoons. Physical exertion is easing the tension in my body. I wonder if Bingley feels any better. Is this what he's been going through?

Being in London at this time of year we cannot avoid every invitation. We go out most days. He smiles and dances a few times, and I try to do the same. But we both leave early and head for Whites.

I asked him today if he thought I had a heart.

“Darcy, are you going mad asking such questions?”

“No, I'm perfectly sane. In conversation with Brew the other day, he told me, he has never noticed any heart of mine.”

“And you listen to Brew? Darcy, forget his comments. Of course, you have a heart. If you did not, I could not have dealt with you!”

“You mean that I am not entirely selfish?”

“You are not selfish at all! Compared to many others I know, you are a paragon of virtues!”

“Charles, you may not realize, but this conversation is very important to me. Please tell me exactly what you mean.”

“Darcy, you must know that I respect you. I respect your judgement and intellect. A fellow can depend upon you.” He patted me on the back.

“This is all very well, but where is the heart?”

“The heart is behind it all. I know that you mean well and want to be helpful to all your friends. You may appear a little rough or uncaring at times, but I know deep down that this is not so.”

I thanked him and explained that he confirmed my own understanding of my character. However, I added that many

people get the impression I am unfeeling because I do not make the trouble to be polite and interested in their concerns.

“Well, just try to be more attentive in conversation and they will soon realise how wrong they have been!”

I have resolved. I will spend a few minutes with each new person I meet and try to understand them a little before moving on. I look forward to putting it into practice tomorrow. Lady R’s soirée is bound to have a number of people I shall meet for the first time.

London, 27th April

Miss Alexandra Ratten’s coming out ball is next week. Caroline Bingley asked me if I had met the girl since our time together at Pemberley. I know what her question was about. She must be wondering if I have fallen for the charms of Miss Ratten! If only she knew that no lady comes close to the perfection which is Miss E.B.! She also seems unaware that Charles is still missing the sweet Miss Bennet, as he described her to me the other day.

We were attending a musical evening at the Countess of R.’s when a young lady sang tolerably well. She was pretty and we were told that she had a good dowry too. I asked Bingley what he thought of her performance and instead of replying to the matter, he looked at me strangely and said, “Darcy, there is such sweetness in Miss Bennet’s whole person that no other compares!”

Aunt Catersham has asked me to lead Miss Ratten to the first dance. I will oblige, but I think it best that I tell Ratten that my heart is engaged elsewhere so that there are no false hopes raised. Somehow I cannot face my aunt with the news, for I suspect that she won’t let it rest. She’ll want to know whom I mean.

London, 5th May

Aunt Catersham was delighted with the success of the ball. She told me later that there were two young men who were paying particular attention to Miss Ratten. One of these is Lord Willerby. I know him well for we were at Oxford

together. I mentioned this to my aunt and she desired me to call tomorrow to give her more details. He was a wild youth at Oxford; often playing most stupid pranks on all sorts of people. But I hear from Brew that since the death of his father he has changed and spends most of his time in the country.

But what does that sort of early youth tell me? Perhaps he has not been noticed at home when young and so was driven to these excesses to be noticed? All I can say tomorrow is that I would doubt if the fellow could be relied on for long. I must also say something about Miss Ratten. This cannot be a one sided story. Relationships between two people require understanding and good will from both sides. Is Miss Ratten mature enough to manage a fellow who wants to be the centre of attention?

London, 6th May

As arranged I called at Catersham House just before noon. Miss Ratten was not in the drawing room and our conversation was unrestrained. My aunt was surprised with my answers.

“Why is it?” I asked a little uncertainly.

“Fitzwilliam, it’s a most pleasant surprise. You also seem more attentive to people than I remember. Well, I must thank you for your help both now and at the ball.”

“You did ask me to look after Miss Ratten.”

“Yes, and it was a vain hope on my part at the time that you would indeed do it as you should. So, I apologise to you, Fitzwilliam. You’ve done your duty beyond my expectations.”

I began to feel uncomfortable and my aunt must have noticed.

“Unused to praise? Don’t worry, Fitzwilliam. I shall temper my words in the future. Meanwhile, I think that Lord Willerby has felt at least a little jealous of your attentions. He has called this morning already.”

“What about Miss Ratten?”

“It’s too early to speak of love, but she does like him.” My aunt assured me that she would only be satisfied with a union

of two people who truly and deeply felt for each other.

“It is not customary these days!” I replied in a contrary mood.

“I married for love. It makes all the difference.” Aunt C. was almost displeased with my comment.

“Yes, indeed. When it is possible to achieve such a union one should take pains to make it a reality.” I had considered my own situation and noticed that my aunt was foxed with my reply. Although her gaze was firmly on me and she was waiting for further explanation, I simply bent over to kiss her cheek, and left promising to be of further assistance.

London, 15th May

The wedding of Philip Brew and Mrs Westmore gave me a lot to think about. When Brew talked of his young widow, I thought he was not very interested in her. She does have acres, but she also possesses charm. I watched Brew closely. He was trying hard not to show how much he is taken with Mrs Westmore. Yet he constantly strayed to her side, danced only with her throughout the evening and when I was finally in her company, I could see that she smiled with her whole being.

“Philip has been telling me about you so often,” she said. “I did want to meet you. One’s imaginings are never right.”

“How true, how true!” I answered amused.

“I had a picture of you being all stiff and proud. A sort of fellow one never feels comfortable with.”

I laughed. “I certainly cannot allow this to be your sentiment. Brew has known me for a long time and is entitled to see me as I used to be.”

“Well, we won’t go into that, Mr Darcy,” she replied most properly. “Suffice to say that I find your company most congenial and I thank you for being such a good friend to Philip.”

I was lost for words and muttered something to assure her that the pleasure was all mine.

When Brew joined us, I was able to congratulate him on falling in love with a splendid lady and with sincerity wished them both a very happy life together. She looked at him with such tenderness that I knew he had chosen and received more than he bargained for. That lady is capable of teaching him how to be really close together. I pray that this will happen and that his imperfect example from home, where he saw discord and lack of love between his parents, will soon be forgotten.

London, 20th May

The on dit going around town is that I am on the lookout for a wife. The fervour with which some mamas are trying to draw my attention to their daughters is making me think that I must leave London. I've spoken to Fitzwilliam and he thinks it would be best if I went to see Georgiana. Georgiana would be happy to have my company, but I should not hide in Roxbury when I can go to Pemberley and be useful to my steward.

London, 21st May

When I told Bingley that I would be leaving London, he insisted we go together to the Hursts in Bedfordshire. His argument is that it is close enough to London and that he promised his sister to bring me to her. After some further discussions we finally agreed that we would leave on the morrow and then remove to Pemberley in July.

Broutham, Bedfordshire, 24th May

I find Bedfordshire rather disappointing. As soon as we left Hertfordshire the landscape turned very flat. Broutham village used to be where the Park is now, but when the Black Death struck, the new buildings were built further away leaving the church and the old Manor in splendid isolation.

Mr Hurst had recently completed an extension to the old house. There are large, long windows giving plenty of light in spite of the house positioned in a hollow and close by the river Great Ouse. There are no extensive views or vistas close by, but the aspect is pleasant and quiet.

Mr Hurst has always struck me as a man of few words. In his own demesne he is an affable host, always busy and full of

local history. We've been here only two days and I must have already met at least a dozen local notables. Bedford is close, but apart from some good schools for children of the clergy, I am told there is little of interest. Northampton is less than 20 miles distant and we are to make a party of three carriages on Friday.

Broutham, 28th May

Miss Stevington and Mrs Hurst are great friends! I made the discovery yesterday when I found myself sitting in a carriage opposite Miss Stevington on our way to Northampton. I tried not to show undue reaction when the introductions were made, but Miss Stevington is observant and soon was asking me if her name meant anything to me. I confessed that Fitzwilliam was my cousin. She blushed profusely and I was at a loss how to ease the discomfort the news brought her.

I resolved to leave the subject of Fitzwilliam alone, but Miss Stevington is made of sterner material. Later she said quietly, yet with feeling,

"I gather that Colonel Fitzwilliam has told you about me. I am sorry to have embarrassed you with my blushing, but you are the first person I've met in Bedfordshire who seems to know about our acquaintance."

"Do not be uneasy." I replied. "Fitzwilliam and I are almost like brothers, but it's only recently that he spoke to me about his regard for you."

She blushed again and to my utter astonishment spoke out frankly, "John Fitzwilliam is the love of my life. The circumstances are such that we cannot marry, but if you see him tell him that my sentiments are unchanged."

I assured her I would speak to Fitzwilliam. We then became aware that our long conversation had drawn the attention of Mrs Hurst sitting across from me and Miss Stevington remained silent for quite some while.

The miniature portrait Fitzwilliam showed me bears little resemblance to the lady. Her features are regular and she has a lovely smile. There is strength of character too. I wish, I were

able to help Fitzwilliam in some way. I have not asked him if he spoke of his affection for Miss Stevington to his father. Perhaps the Earl would be able to allocate some further funds?

Fitzwilliam is an accomplished raconteur at parties and gives an impression of a well adjusted, confident fellow. It took me years to realize that with his parents present and especially the Earl, he is subdued and altogether different. It is likely that he has kept his attachment to Miss Stevington secret.

Broutham, 3rd June

We've all been invited to a ball at Turtley Hall. The Hursts are rather pleased and Mrs Hurst told me with an air of studied nonchalance that the family at Turtley Hall are rather grand. Her affectionate description of Lady Freemantle of Turtley Hall reminded me of the eccentric great aunts on my mother's side. I am looking forward to meeting the lady.

Broutham, 7th June

The ball could have been given by a London hostess of the first stare. I gathered from Mrs Hurst and later Miss Stevington whose father I had a chance to meet there, that Lord and Lady Freemantle are not often in Bedfordshire. They have a great deal of property in Ireland. When they come home they entertain on a lavish scale. Their son and heir is twenty seven and a quiet man, in sharp contrast to both parents.

I spoke to him briefly. He's been on the Continent and studied at Cambridge. He told me that his passion is horse flesh and he has an idea to breed horses in Ireland.

"Mind you, my father tells me, I am foolish to base myself in Ireland. He suggests I buy further land hereabouts."

"You intend to breed race horses?"

"Yes, I suppose being close to Newmarket would be an advantage." He spotted Miss Stevington just then and calling to her offered to introduce us. I explained that we had met.

“You probably do not know that Miss Stevington has a cracking seat. If she would only agree to ride out with me more often I would certainly settle here.” His unwavering eyes were placed with strength on Miss Stevington.

Miss Stevington blushed and said, “We’ve known each other since childhood; often getting into scrapes together, for there were no other children of our age in the neighbourhood.”

I watched as Miss Stevington tried to ignore Freemantle’s stares. I realised that the young man was very fond of her, and would perhaps have liked to turn the old friendship into romance now? He soon grabbed her hand and led her to a country dance with no ceremony observed.

I stayed in my place and marvelled at the vagaries of fate. Here was Miss Stevington still in love with Fitzwilliam, who is as poor as a church mouse in comparison with Freemantle. I must speak to Lord Barrow, if John will not.

My mind then wondered towards the fair features of Miss Eliza B. I was lost in thought when Lady Freemantle brushed my face with a fan.

“Young man, the ball is not the place for reverie. There are plenty of young ladies in want of a partner. Please be so good and oblige them.”

I apologised profusely and remembering my resolve to be most attentive, asked if she had a young lady in mind for me. She led me to a friend of her daughter’s, Miss Belinda Trente. Whilst dancing I asked if she was related to Lady Trente, whom I had met in Roxbury. And so it was. From then on we found plenty to talk about. The conversation was easier than I had anticipated. Miss Trente is only eighteen and has not had her season, but will do so next year.

“Eveline Freemantle and I have been out for almost two years now, but neither of our parents think it right that we should have a season until we are nineteen.”

I approved of the sentiments and discovered that the young ladies did not.

“But it’s so tedious! We know everyone in the neighbourhood and would love to have a chance to meet lots of new people.”

I realised that Miss Trente was talking of young men and that none present were to her or her friend’s liking, but I kept quiet, knowing that my views should remain unspoken.

When I returned Miss Trente to her place, Lady Freemantle introduced me to her daughter. Again, I did my best to be a polite and attentive partner although both girls made me long for Miss E.B even more. But as a reformed social being, I continued to behave with due consideration to my young partner.

Mrs Hurst must have noticed my dancing with Miss Freemantle. She came up to me at the first opportunity and said, “Darcy, the girl is an heiress. The parents dote on her and I understand that property of eighty thousand pounds is placed in her name.”

“Tom Freemantle must be expecting a substantial inheritance then?” I replied.

“Yes, indeed. He’s not only to get his parent’s wealth, but estates from his uncle too.”

If my earlier resolution to see my Uncle Barrow and to intercede for Fitzwilliam had not been made, I would have resolved to do it now.

In the carriage on the way home, Mrs Hurst was beaming. She told me that Lady Freemantle asked her about me. “That young man, you brought with you, do tell me dear Mrs Hurst, is he a man of property?” Mrs Hurst made a very good imitation of that lady’s manners and speech. “I replied,” she said, “that he is considered to be the richest man in Derbyshire.” After which, Lady Freemantle raised her eyebrows and made Mrs Hurst promise to bring me to dinner Friday next.

“So, Darcy, you must have made an impression on Miss Freemantle if her mother was so particularly asking.”

I sighed and Bingley caught my meaning. He reprimanded his sister for talking nonsense. “We’ve had to run from London to avoid the matchmaking mamas. Are we to run again?”

Mr Hurst then woke up and said we were his guests and, “Just go hunting with the young Freemantle and everyone will be happy.”

Broutham, 18th June

“We’ve now had our sport with Tom Freemantle and we’ve had dinner at the Hall twice, Darcy. I think we had better return to London without further delay.” Bingley spoke with feeling.

Our plans are firmed then. We will stay only another week or two at most with the Hursts and after a brief visit to London, we would all head for Pemberley. I shall of course collect Georgiana from Roxbury first.

Broutham, 30th June

It is such a relief. We are leaving at last tomorrow. Our time at Pemberley can be as quiet as we wish to make it. I have invited the Hursts who are keen to come and will provide company for Caroline Bingley. Georgiana does not want to bring any friends with her. It will give me freedom to spend as much time with her as she would wish.

London, 2nd July

I did my duty and called on Aunt Catersham. She was pleased to see me. Miss Alexandra Ratten is having a very successful season.

“None of the gentlemen have asked for her hand yet, but this is good. She is enjoying every evening and gains more confidence. She has also joined a little quartet which Lady Darliple has set up with some talented youngsters. She does play very well.”

“So none of the gentlemen have made a decision?”

“She seems to prefer Lord Willerby to all her other beaux, but after what you have told me, I’ve tried to caution her about

him.”

Miss Ratten came into the room just then and we had no further opportunity to speak openly until I was on my way out. Aunt C. would prefer Miss Ratten not to marry too soon. I think she rather likes the girl and wishes to spoil her even more.

“I hope to take her home with me. There are plenty of young blades thereabouts. It will also remove her from Lord Willerby.”

“What does James Ratten say to all this?”

“He is a darling boy.”

“Yes.” I decided to persist. “But he may prefer to have his sister settled sooner rather than later.”

“He wants the same for her as I do; a man who will truly love her.”

I kissed her cheek on leaving and promised to visit her in the country later in the year.

“Fitzwilliam, you have changed, changed for the better,” were my aunt’s parting words.

London, 7th July

I could not in conscience leave for Roxbury without seeing Fitzwilliam first. We dined here, for the club would have had too many ears eager to listen. I related to him my meeting with Miss Stevington in Bedfordshire.

“Tom Freemantle has indeed been trying to obtain Heather’s affection,” he said, after listening to me in silence. “He even proposed to her some two years ago. Fortunately, he did so without going to her father. Had Freemantle asked permission from him to address her, she might have been forced to marry.”

“Have you told your father of your attachment and desire to wed Miss Stevington?”

“No, I haven’t.”

“Do you think that your father might help you, if he knew the strength of your feelings and the excellent qualities of Miss Stevington?”

“Darcy, you forget that my relationship with my father is not the same as yours was with your own. He is a man I find difficulty relating to, and certainly could not imagine telling him about my feelings.”

I was saddened. Lord Barrow is an autocrat, but I imagined that there were better relations between him and his sons. Suddenly I had an idea and I asked Fitzwilliam if he might speak with his mother on the subject.

He was unsure at first, but as we discussed it, he agreed there was a chance that she might act on his behalf.

“If I can be of any assistance, I will,” I assured him. “I have met Miss Stevington now and could vouch for her character.”

And so it was decided between us. Fitzwilliam could not leave his regiment now, but he was expected home in early autumn. I will most likely, be returning to Roxbury with Georgiana in September. He will try to see his mother before I go to Roxbury. I have promised to report any success I have in presenting Miss Stevington to his mother or father by writing to him after my visit to Roxbury.

Roxbury, 15th July

I was sorely tempted to use the time with my aunt and uncle to help Fitzwilliam, but little was possible. Aunt had spoken to me about John yesterday.

“I worry about John,” she said when we were walking alone in the Park. “He’s almost past thirty and still no romantic attachment!”

“Perhaps he feels unable to marry because of his financial constraints?” I tried to speak plainly.

My aunt did not answer me and I could not say anything else, but I was pleased that we had this conversation. It is

possible that she might attempt to speak with her husband about Fitzwilliam's future before he does so himself.

Georgiana is looking forward to going home. She has been working hard and the governess reported to me a vast improvement in her studies. She told me that at the start Georgiana was unhappy and distracted, but this gave way to ever more concentration. Her application during the last three months has been particularly exemplary. Georgiana seems to have a very good ear for languages, and excels in both French and Italian.

I thanked the Lord for this news. It means that Georgiana is almost over her feelings for Wickham. I knew she wanted me to tell her more about Miss E.B. and what had happened in Hunsford on 13th April. I struggled with myself to think what to say to her in addition to the sentiments of my letter. Eventually, I felt it would strengthen our understanding if I explained a little more. So I outlined the disgrace of my proposal and then explained that I had written a long letter and handed it to Miss E.B. in person. Georgiana congratulated me on my effort.

"If she's an honest person, she will with time, appreciate your letter and its contents."

I looked at her with gratitude and thanked her for her kindness to me. She rushed to my side and embracing me told me quietly that she loved me.

"You've saved me from an awful mistake, Fitzwilliam. I am now praying that you are comfortably settled in the desires of your own heart."

I reflected later on how fortunate I am in having such a loving sister.

We are leaving Roxbury tomorrow and allowing for a stop in London, we should be in Pemberley no later than 25th July. Georgiana will be seventeen on 25th and I have a string of pearls for her birthday. Mrs Annesley is coming with us. She will not only be an attentive presence in Pemberley, I also know that Georgiana enjoys having singing lessons with her –

out of the way, with no one listening, but quietly pleased to have an appreciative audience in that good lady.

Pemberley, 24th July

Bingley and the rest of the party resolved to stay another night with my uncle Robert Darcy. He was delighted. I wish I felt the same; instead I felt restless and decided to carry on to Pemberley promising to prepare the house and an appropriate welcome. I now think that it was my guardian angel who was prompting me to leave ahead!

If anyone had told me that I would meet Miss E.B. in my own gardens, I would not have believed it. But so it was! At first I thought I was imagining the scene. My heart was beating furiously and I hardly knew if I was standing or walking. Miss Eliza Bennet was walking through the gardens and almost fell over my person. I could see that she was deep in contemplation, possibly admiring the plants. She looked up and stopped completely dead. Was I a sight? My confusion must have been great.

As I began to concentrate on Miss E.B. rather than controlling my disordered thoughts, I realised that she was terribly upset. Her own confusion was also making her blush and what with my own discomfort, we must have appeared as two most strange beings. I did my best to speak in such a way, as if we had always planned to meet in my gardens. But I knew that I was travel weary and was not presenting a welcoming sight. So I quickly excused myself.

I hurried indoors and with my valet's help changed into a clean set of clothes and ran out again to see if I could retrieve the situation by inviting her into the house. It was then that she introduced me to her aunt and uncle from London. I chatted to them in my best manners and tried hard to show that I am a changed man; no longer satisfied by bestowing polite nods and moving off, rather than spending time with people and making them feel welcome.

I do hope I am not mistaken in Miss E.B.'s response to me. It seemed to me that she was very civil and although embarrassed to be found at Pemberley, she was gracious

enough to allow me to bring Georgiana to her on the morrow. Can I take it as a sign of forgiveness from her?

Pemberley, 25th July

I was relieved that Georgiana and the party arrived early. As soon as I could, I took Georgiana aside and told her of Miss E.B.'s presence in Lambton. She was eager to meet her and we set off almost immediately. As I was leaving, I mentioned our destination to Bingley. He promised to join us at the inn. I asked him to give me a chance to speak to Miss E.B. for a few minutes first. He was surprised but agreed in his usual friendly fashion.

In the carriage, Georgiana kept asking if I felt differently because of the time gap of three months since I had last seen her. I realised that she was wondering of her own response to Wickham should she have chanced upon him. I was honest with her. I found my affections unchanged, nay even strengthened, through the absence.

She thought for a while and said, "Fitzwilliam, I do wish it very much that you succeed with your suit."

"Are you so well disposed to the lady before you have even met her?" I asked.

"I know that I shall like her, for you could not have fallen in love with an unworthy person."

I squeezed her hand and thanked her for her support, and belief in me.

Georgiana's presence helped me manage the meeting at the inn well enough. The Gardiners' open manners were most reassuring. Their compliance and eagerness to be agreeable could not be faulted. Mr Gardiner's interest in fishing allowed me to invite him to Pemberley on the morrow. Georgiana was pleased with her own conversation with Miss E.B. and has since told me how much she was looking forward to tomorrow's dinner.

"I felt easier with Miss Elizabeth Bennet than any other person I had met for the first time."

I told her that this was because Miss Bennet does not use any artifice and is genuinely interested in people.

“I feel we would be fortunate to have a lady like Miss Elizabeth Bennet in our family,” she added.

Our celebrations that evening of Georgiana’s seventeenth birthday went well, although I could see that Georgiana’s heart was not fully engaged. I caught her stealing frequent glances in my direction especially when Caroline would insist on praising me at every turn. I made no comment to Georgiana, but I think she understands how irksome I find this.

Pemberley, 26th July

Today I have been shocked – twice. The awkward scene in the drawing room this morning was entirely the fault of Bingley’s sisters. I did not know how to shield Miss Bennet and Mrs Gardiner from their deplorable behaviour. How is it that Charles is all affability and condescension and his sisters have none of his excellent qualities?

Mrs Annesley, who is very fond of Georgiana, was clearly distressed seeing Georgiana blush profusely when Miss Bingley spoke of the militia’s removal from Meryton. I was intently watching Miss Elizabeth Bennet and so missed my sister’s embarrassment. Afterwards Mrs A. enquired of me if there was anything she should know to help Georgiana. I had to deny this, but my anger with Miss Bingley is beyond anything reasonable. She spitefully taunted Miss Eliza Bennet about Wickham, and once our visitors left, looked for triumph over me in her remarks about Miss E.B.’s loss of beauty. What a trial this lady is! I do not know how Bingley can stand it.

And then the awful tragedy of the youngest Miss Bennet! I made my way to Lambton to see if I could persuade Miss Eliza Bennet and her aunt and uncle to dine with us in spite of the uncivil reception they received earlier, when a scene of utter amazement greeted me as I tried to enter the parlour led by a servant. Pale and in clear distress Miss Eliza Bennet was trying to rush out of the room telling me that she had not a minute to lose. She was trembling and she seemed in a state of

near collapse. I prevailed upon her to allow the servant to go in search of Mr and Mrs Gardiner.

It was a pitiful sight that greeted my eyes as she sat down looking miserably ill. At first she refused all my suggestions of help, but then burst out crying. I watched powerless as she tried to control her emotions. I desperately wished I could take her in my arms and comfort her. At last she spoke. She had just read news that Lydia, her youngest sister, had eloped with none other than George Wickham! That man will plague me! Miss Lydia B. was staying in Brighton where the Militia were garrisoned, and leaving all her friends, threw herself into the power of Mr Wickham, as Miss E.B. explained to me.

The news shocked me. As I began to realise the consequences on the Bennet family of what had happened, my heart froze in horror. Miss Elizabeth Bennet bravely spoke of her own fault in not telling her family of the true character of Wickham which she was privy to through my letter to her. She was right in saying that. If his character had been known, this could not have happened.

I wished I could comfort Miss Bennet in some way. What could I say that would lessen her distress? She and the Gardiners are to leave Lambton immediately.

I left perplexed and with an aching heart. How will the Bennets ever be able to face society if Lydia Bennet is not found and Wickham not forced to marry her? The longer the search is postponed, the worse scandal it could become! My resolve was instant. I will go to London directly on the morrow and see what I can do to locate Wickham.

At dinner I told Bingley that I had to go to London first thing in the morning, but gave him no more details. Where and how I am to proceed with my enquiries once I get there, I still do not know, but I will send my men to all the north bound inns on the roads leading out of London to establish if Wickham is indeed still staying in town.

London, 2nd August

I sent an enquiry to Wickham's regiment, but this brought no further clues. The reports from my men going as far as

Baldock do seem to confirm that Wickham is somewhere in London. I had a wild idea this morning to trace Mrs Younge as Wickham had some dealings with that lady in Ramsgate. My valet, Hawkins is a shrewd fellow and he's gone to investigate if Mrs Younge is to be found in Chelsea where she taught Georgiana.

London, 4th August

Mrs Younge is no longer in Chelsea, but Hawkins managed to obtain her new direction. Her new establishment is in Edward Street. Hawkins and I are going there by hackney carriage to enable me to remain out of sight until he gives me a sign.

Evening: Mrs Younge seems to have prospered. The house is large, newly built and popular with the lodgers. At first she refused to see me, but I made the servant repeat to her my exact words. Flustered and displeased, the lady finally made her appearance in the parlour. I was forceful, yet to no avail and so I had to resort to threats. It pained me to have to do it.

“Mr Darcy, I am going to give you the address you desire, but please be in full understanding that I am doing it for Georgiana's sake alone. I was very fond of her and I'm sorry that she has such a brother!”

The lady's insinuations were of no consequence. I left the room with bare civilities exchanged between us.

My conference with Hawkins on the way back established our strategy. We would watch the address given by Mrs Younge and would speak to Wickham outside. If Miss Bennet is living with him, it is better that neither I nor any of my servants meet her. I must also contact Mr Gardiner and inform him of my plans. But this I shall do only after I have spoken with Wickham.

London, 6th August

Hawkins watched the house and counted five tradesmen at the door. It was clear that they were calling for money and came away with nothing. Wickham did not leave the house all

day. If he did so at night, we do not know, for Hawkins had instructions to report to me by evening.

I made inquiries and discovered that the house where they are hiding belongs to Mrs Younge! It is run as a small lodgings establishment. Mrs Younge has certainly prospered. This lady's deplorable behaviour in Ramsgate has not stopped her from gaining profit out of her activities. I am glad though that she does not run a school any more. Her example could do nothing but harm any young lady under her care.

London, 7th August

At midday I proceeded to Edward Street where Hawkins was keeping his vigil. His news was the same as yesterday. Two tradesmen have called, but were refused entry and Wickham had not left the house.

I decided to knock at the door, for it was possible that Wickham was reluctant to be seen. The servant refused to admit me; taking me for a tradesman, most likely. I insisted on my name to be passed to Wickham and placed my foot in the door. At last he came down and with his usual insincerity welcomed me.

He denied all knowledge of Miss Lydia Bennet's whereabouts. Fortunately, the lady herself made an appearance a short while later. He was rough with her for disobeying him and he said all this in my presence. She left the room reluctantly and we could then start a proper discussion. Miss Lydia Bennet is with Wickham because she is in love. I shall make no comment on his feelings.

"Are you and Miss Lydia Bennet married?" I asked.

"No, we cannot at present." He spoke with a quirky smile on his face.

"You realise the disgrace your behaviour has brought on an innocent family?"

He laughed. "Another example of my bad behaviour?"

"Wickham, I am not here to lecture you. I am here to rescue a girl who has lost all sense of propriety."

“I am glad to hear it. Since when have you stopped thinking ill of me?”

I would not be provoked and so replied, “I am here to agree and organise your marriage to Miss Bennet.”

“I cannot marry her.” He moved away to the fireplace and turned his back to me.

“Are you married already?” Anything was possible with that man!

“No, I am not, and I am in no position to do so.”

I wanted to ask him how he dared do what he had done, but I knew it would be useless to remonstrate with him. Instead, I said that I would provide what would be deemed necessary.

“No, you mistake my meaning, Darcy. I cannot leave the house, for creditors are hounding me. I have no means of support.”

I asked him about the sum of his debt.

“I don’t care to keep the accounts.”

I ignored the superior smile on his face and insisted on particulars.

“Perhaps I could give you a list of my creditors, but that will not solve the problem. Lydia and I need to live on something, and you must know well enough that my return to Brighton is impossible.”

Again, I had to reign in my temper. Yet, I forced myself to say, “I realise that. Are you willing to join another regiment?”

“Certainly. If the commission can be found and paid for.” He spoke in a most disinterested fashion as if we were talking about someone else, but he came back from the window and sat on the chair, and indicated for me to do the same. I thought it was a good sign and so obliged him.

He began to speculate what regiment would be best. I smiled inwardly at his impudence. He had to be removed a long way away from the Bennet family and mine. Slowly I

made progress with him and he realised that he would have to rely on my enquiries.

“You drive a hard bargain, Darcy,” he said. “The question of the regiment is secondary really, for I will not marry Miss Bennet without a substantial dowry. My regimental pay will not be sufficient.”

Had I known the man less I might have been disgusted, but the young, handsome man sitting before me was no more worth attention than his shiny boots. “You will be given a dowry, Wickham, but there are conditions attached.” I watched for a sign on his features, but there was nothing.

“You may name your conditions, Darcy, but I still must agree to them.” And anticipating my response added, “Lydia will follow me with scant attention or care for her family, you know.”

I reigned in my tempter once more, and said, “Do not forget that you are both prisoners in this house and unless money is found soon, you may end up behind the Fleet gates.”

He shrugged his shoulders and replied speaking very slowly. “Miss Bennet will then be the greater loser.”

I knew he was a gambler, but I never suspected that he would gamble with people’s lives. The shock of what he was saying stopped me dead. At last I came to my senses and decided to ignore his threat, and started to list the conditions.

“I insist on seeing a list of all your creditors first. You will be found a regiment. Then, as soon as you are married, you will receive £3,000.”

He laughed and I had to squeeze my gloves hard not to response with a facer.

“You slight me with £3,000. I would never deign to look at a woman for less than £10,000. You are funning me, Darcy and I must ask you to leave.”

Two can play this game. I got up and leaving my visiting card told him that unless Miss Lydia Bennet is removed to her uncle’s house in Gracechurch Street by tomorrow evening, I would not increase by one penny the offer made to him. He

moved to the door and asked the servant to bring Lydia to us. Miss Bennet refused to consider removal to Cheapside.

“Wickham and I cannot be separated. What is your meaning, Mr Darcy? How can you speak so?” She placed her hand under his arm and looked like a child whose toy was to be removed.

Wickham laughed again, but he was doing it for Miss Bennet’s benefit. “Dearest, this is one of the conditions of Mr Darcy. He insists that you are to be married from Gracechurch Street.” She would have none of it.

In the hall and within hearing of the servant Wickham informed me, “She will be with the Gardiners as you desire.”

I left hardly knowing what to expect and how to proceed. I must arm myself with patience until the morrow.

London, 8th August

Wickham sent a note to me that Lydia will be ready to move to Gracechurch Street by Saturday, providing I let him have something “up-front”. The impudence, the sheer impudence of the man! But as I calmed down, I realized that he could be so short of funds to not even be able to hire a hackney for her. I was unsure for a while what to do, but then decided that it would be best if Wickham himself took her to Cheapside.

I have sent him £50 on the express understanding that Miss Bennet would be delivered to Gracechurch Street by the afternoon on Saturday. This gives me two or three days to put the Gardiners at ease and attend to some of my own business in town.

London, 10th August

I was too tired to write last night. The Gardiners needed to know what had been happening and I resolved to seek an interview with Mr Gardiner. I sent Hawkins to Gracechurch Street, as the number of the house was not known to me. Once he found the house, he was to ask if I could visit later that evening. His expedition turned out well. But it was just as well I did not call in person, for Hawkins got the intelligence whilst

standing at the front door, that Mr Bennet was a guest there. I felt that my business would be better conducted without Mr Bennet's presence. The maid also obliged him with the news that Mr Bennet was leaving shortly, so I left my visit until today.

I noticed that the Gardiners' house was the most imposing on the street and still very new. Mr Gardiner was effusive in his thanks and kept on insisting that since I had found the fugitives, he should do the rest. It took me quite some time to agree with him otherwise. He liked my suggestion that Miss Bennet should be placed under his roof as the first condition and called his wife to impart the good news.

"How kind and generous of you, Mr Darcy, to go to all this trouble on our behalf!" she said. "And how irresponsible and wicked Lydia's behaviour! That girl has no sense at all!"

I was going to say that her upbringing must be to blame, but I stopped and said instead, "She's in the throes of her first love and reason has left her."

Mr Gardiner then returned to our earlier discussion and tried again to make me hand over the negotiations with Wickham. But I would have none of it and still in the presence of Mrs Gardiner pointed out the advantages of negotiating when one knows the person very well. He nodded his head in agreement and I began to take my leave.

"Please Mr Darcy, promise me though that you will pass to me all the expenses."

I thought I would not allow another disagreement to mar our meeting and bowing, but not answering, left them.

London, 13th August

Wickham has indeed delivered Miss Lydia Bennet. I had a note from Mrs Gardiner.

My father's friend, General Frobisher, was most helpful. Wickham, if he agrees, will join a regiment in Newcastle.

Wickham came to meet me here.

“Darcy, you insult me!” He was utterly implacable. “Ten thousand is the sum or there is no wedding.”

I had already promised to purchase his commission and unless we came to settle the amount of the dowry, Miss Eliza Bennet and the whole of her family would be ruined. Miss E.B’s worried face came to me just as I saw her at the inn in Lambton. “Ten thousand is a sizeable dowry, Wickham,” I said at last. “But you shall have it.”

He tried to hide his satisfied smile.

Since I still do not trust the fellow, I insisted that we go to see the Bishop of Westminster together to obtain the special licence and then follow on to Hoare’s bank where the money would be made available to him after the marriage.

Evening: Exhausted after being in the presence of Wickham when every moment was a strain to rein in my temper, I nevertheless, later made my way to Cheapside.

Mrs Gardiner told me how hard she had tried to show Lydia the consequences of her actions and the pain this had caused her family, yet the girl seemed untouched. All she was interested in was her wedding clothes and complained of being kept away from her beloved.

“It must be her young age, and although it pains me to say it of my husband’s sister, her mother should never have allowed Lydia to be in society; she is much too immature. But the damage is done and we must do our best now to get them married as soon as possible. Mr Darcy, I simply do not know what would have happened if you had not decided to look for Wickham yourself.”

Mr Gardiner offered to pay for the special licence and go with Wickham to obtain it. I explained that this had already been done. “Mr Gardiner, the fault is mine and I must bear the consequences. Had my pride been less, Wickham’s conduct towards my sister and thus his character would have been known, and none of this would have happened.”

“Mr Darcy, you take too much blame on yourself. Believe me when I say that if it was not with Wickham, Lydia would

have disgraced herself with someone else,” replied my host.

Mr Gardiner must be a good businessman, for I was compelled to disclose the sum of all the arrangements I have undertaken to bring this whole affair to an end. Mr Bennet is to meet the expense of Wickham’s creditors in Brighton and Meryton and I am meeting his London creditors. I had a long argument with Mr Gardiner on this particular point.

London, 14th August

I will go to Pemberley and return for the wedding. Mrs Gardiner was surprised when I told her of my brief visit to Derbyshire.

“All this way for a few days stay, Mr Darcy?” Then she recollected herself and added, “I am sure you know what you are about.”

“My guests at Pemberley would feel truly abandoned if I remain in London all this time,” I explained. She was pleased to hear my reasons and we parted with good cheer.

The wedding will take place at St Giles and the only witnesses will be the Gardiners and I.

London, 28th August

What a farce! Wickham assured Miss Lydia Bennet that the officers of his regiment could not be spared and that was why there was no guard of honour on their entry into the church. The girl is truly to be pitied. She has neither sense nor a lady’s conduct. Wickham seems to laugh at everything she says and together they appear as if two characters on a stage.

I acted as Wickham’s groomsman and Mr and Mrs Gardiner were the only other people in the church apart from the unfortunate couple. Mrs Gardiner thanked me profusely again and her husband invited me to call on them any time I am in London. “For I still hope, Mr Darcy, that one day I shall be able to persuade you that some of the expense of this unfortunate episode should be met by myself and the young lady’s father.” I like Mr Gardiner. He comes to the point honestly and squarely.

I am relieved that they are now married. Miss E.B's feelings have been my guide throughout this ordeal. But it is over and there is joy in that. I have particularly asked everyone concerned not to mention my involvement in the whole affair.

Pemberley, 30th August

It was fortunate that Hoare's, my bankers, used the opportunity of my visit to inform me of the profits from my various speculations. The news was excellent and I was able to share it with Bingley in general terms. Neither he nor his sisters know the true reason for my stay in London.

I felt it prudent and necessary to appraise Georgiana of Wickham's married state, and how it came about. She listened quietly and her face from white and shocked turned to confused and blushing.

"Fitzwilliam, isn't it wonderful that you rescued me in time? I cannot express my relief."

Had I felt anything other than compassion for her, I would have made further comments. The complications, however, of Wickham now being related to the Bennet family kept me quiet. It is to be hoped that Georgiana never has the misfortune of meeting him again and that I am able to ensure Georgiana's distance from that man.

What vagaries of fate! These thoughts have been my most constant companions. I must resist every attempt at self pity. Georgiana's feelings must be now my chief concern. While I pity the unfortunate Miss Lydia Bennet, in some strange way I am relieved that Georgiana has come to know Wickham for the man he is.

Neither Caroline Bingley nor Mrs Hurst, even if they knew what had happened, can provide the companionship and compassion Georgiana needs now. So Georgiana and I stay in the library in companionable silence or go out for walks when our guests are otherwise engaged. I think she appreciates my quiet presence.

Pemberley, 1st September

Bingley got in his cups last night. I've never seen him so drunk before. It all began when we rejoined the ladies after dinner and Caroline began to probe him about Miss Bennet.

"Dear Charles," she started well enough, "you seem so quiet and unlike yourself. I hope you are not still longing for the fair Miss Bennet?"

He looked at her, then Mrs Hurst. He got up from his chair by the fireplace and walked over to the window. The dusk was falling and other than the contours of the trees against the darkened sky, he could not have seen much. I watched him as he stood there, motionless and with his back to us all.

"Come, come, Charles." Caroline would not let go. "There are plenty of young ladies as beautiful as Miss Bennet and a hundred times more accomplished."

Suddenly he turned round and said loud and clear, "I wish, Caroline, that you would stop harping at me. You know nothing of love and if you continue in this fashion, nor are you likely ever to know it!"

This was the first public rebuke I've ever heard Charles make. The relationship between brother and sister was not my concern, so I started to talk to Georgiana. Aware that there had been another exchange between them, I watched as he violently turned on his heel and left the room.

As soon as the Hursts and Miss Bingley retired, I began my search for Bingley. One of the footmen told me that Bingley had gone out. I thought it best to leave him alone and await his return in the library. Should he want my company, he would know that I would be there.

About an hour later he came in and without a word went straight for the brandy decanter. Only when he had downed the glass, did he say, "Darcy, I must apologise for my behaviour earlier."

"There is no need. Ladies, or I should say some ladies, never know when to stop tormenting a fellow."

“Right enough,” he said and added. “Caroline means well, but she can be overbearing at times.”

“Indeed.” My sentiments matched his exactly.

He asked me if I would have a glass of brandy with him and I did. While I sipped mine he downed his and reached out for another. His speech became a little slurred, but his meaning was clear.

“When Caroline asked me if I still longed for Miss Bennet, Darcy, I tell you, I had been thinking of her at that very moment!”

“Do you regret what has happened?” I asked.

“If you mean if I regret meeting Miss Bennet, I tell you, Darcy, I do not.”

He reached out for the decanter again and filled his glass. I wanted to tell him something comforting, but what could I say? He was very likely still in love. My own feelings for Miss Eliza Bennet overcame me and suddenly I realized, it was high time I shared them with him.

I started with my stay at Rosings and my proposal. Bingley listened motionless. He had forgotten his full glass of brandy and I was grateful for had he downed another glass, he would have become a very poor listener. I am still too proud to divulge every detail of my conversation with Miss E.B. on that day in Hunsford, but I told him sufficiently to show how right Miss E.B. had been to reject me. The story of our meeting in Pemberley did not need further enlargement. I did, however, admit the purpose of my trip to London.

At last he spoke. “Darcy, I have had one glass too many to be of real comfort to you right now, but believe me when I say, that I have been a fool to stay away from Netherfield all this time.” He got up on shaky legs, thought better of it and then sat down again before adding, “Will you accompany me to Hertfordshire to give me courage to meet Miss Bennet again and make myself more agreeable to her?”

“What will Caroline say?” My inclination was to agree but I could foresee vast opposition from his sisters.

“Caroline may refuse to be the mistress of Netherfield, but I tell you, Darcy, I can manage! So what do you say?”

“I shall certainly go with you and we shall pay a visit to Longbourn as soon as it is decent.”

He laughed and I joined him. I shall not mention the rest of our evening other than to say that we both laughed more than at any time we’ve ever been together.

Pemberley, 5th September

The West Wing is almost ready. The plasterers and painters should be finished with the last part of the hallway within days. The furniture I ordered will be arriving next week and the old pieces have been well restored by our own carpenter.

Harvest this year has been exceptionally good and my steward is urging me to enlarge our acreage even further. Mr Dutton is a shrewd man and knows how to turn my attention to the opportunities hereby. Sir Walter Welham died some weeks ago and his heir is comfortable in Norfolk. We are told he would be amenable to a purchase offer. I’ve written to Hoares to have the latest report on my account with them. Mr Dutton is not pressing me, but I can see that it would be foolish for me not to consider this purchase. My father would not have hesitated.

I would prefer to buy the land without the old house but this may not be agreeable to the heirs.

Bingley and I are planning to be in Hertfordshire before the end of the month. Neither Miss Bingley nor Mrs Hurst have been told yet! It is Bingley’s strategy that we keep our plans hidden for the time being and I must admit that I am more than happy to comply.

Pemberley, 8th September

Hoare’s reply is encouraging and I have asked Middleton, my man in London, to make a formal offer for Sir Walter Welham’s land and manor in Derbyshire. If this is accepted, I will not need to curtail all my speculations which are doing

well. Certainly my joint speculation with Fitzwilliam should be safe.

Pemberley, 10th September

We managed to get the last bale of wheat into the stores before the weather turned.

Charles cannot wait to return to Netherfield and has been busy writing to his steward. Caroline caught him writing at his desk yesterday afternoon and he was forced to admit our plans to remove to Netherfield. He told me that she was speechless for a while and then announced that since he was comfortable making all the arrangements himself, she was gratified that her immediate presence there was not needed.

Today both ladies announced that Miss Bingley will go to Bedfordshire first before coming to Netherfield. Bingley caught me in the study with this “joyous news”, as he described it. “We shall have the house to ourselves, Darcy, and no one will check our movements.”

I said we were like two boys plotting behind our parent’s backs and we both laughed heartily.

Pemberley, 14th September

Georgiana is happy to return to Roxbury to resume her studies. We are to leave within ten days. She is looking forward to her lessons and I imagine young company. My Aunt Barrow, it has to be said, is generous in entertaining young ones and making plans for their amusement. Mrs Annesley will be going with Georgiana. Aunt writes that with such plentiful musical talent at Roxbury, “dear Mrs Annesley will be in great demand.” I was pleased to hear this about her particular friend. The lady is unobtrusive, good company when conversation is scarce and will never tell anyone anything that might possibly hurt them. I wish I had asked her to accompany Georgiana to Ramsgate and not rely on Mrs Younge’s assurances.

Georgiana made me promise to write to her with every success I meet in Hertfordshire.

“I know Fitzwilliam, that you hide your sensibilities well, but please allow me to beg you to be less reticent in expressing these. Be different, Fitzwilliam.”

I mentioned my conversation with Georgiana to Bingley. He congratulated me on having such a sister.

“Do ask her how we can become more sensible, Darcy!” He spoke with all earnestness.

I promised to speak to Georgiana but then reflected further and added, “Why don’t you speak to her yourself? I am not really certain that my endeavours with Georgiana will provide all the answers both of us need.”

He made me call a footman right away to learn where Georgiana was to be found.

I knew little of his success with Georgiana, but when after dinner we stayed behind to savour our port, he immediately began to share with me his conversation with her. Georgiana told him that young ladies liked to talk of their feelings and so urged him to speak to Miss Bennet with all openness.

Again I marvelled at the wisdom of my little sister!

Pemberley, 20th September

Georgiana went out riding to the village this morning. She had an errand for our vicar. Her groom was with her as usual and apparently right next to her when her mare shied, and Georgiana fell rather badly. She was brought to the house not fully conscious. I was away myself with my steward and the news reached me some two hours later. Fortunately the butler had sent Hawkins to fetch Dr Summers right away. When I got home he had already seen her and was waiting to tell me that her concussion was not serious, but that he recommended a prolonged stay in bed and that she should not be moved at all.

Caroline Bingley and Mrs Hurst have gone to Derby and are not expected back until dinner. So Georgiana’s abigail Susan, Mrs Annesley and I are taking turns by her bedside.

Pemberley, 22nd September

Georgiana is feeling better. Today she reports an aching head and falls in and out of a fitful sleep. I hope it's only the effect of the sedation. Dr Summers insists that she is not to be moved at all.

I am grateful to Caroline Bingley for reading to Georgiana whenever she's awake.

Pemberley, 25th September

Georgiana is a little better and has been allowed to spend some of the day downstairs. Dr Summers seems very thorough in his attentions to her and both Mrs Hurst and Caroline spend many hours each day providing company and amusement for the invalid. She is to be allowed a walk in the gardens tomorrow.

I've had a helpful reply from Norfolk. A meeting in London is proposed for the 7th October. I intend to leave the reply for another day to see what Dr Summers will say about Georgiana's travel to Roxbury.

Pemberley, 27th September

Georgiana is not to travel for the next two weeks. I'm writing to Norfolk to explain the delay and propose a meeting around 10th of October. This date should allow me to spend a day or two with Georgiana in Roxbury as well as allow a brief visit to Netherfield. I shall also write to Fitzwilliam, so that he is aware of the dates when I'm most likely to be with his parents. Perhaps some solution to his predicament has already been found? I feel ever more compassion for him, especially when my thoughts turn towards Miss E.B. and my own situation.

Pemberley, 29th September

Having spent an excessively quiet week so far we entertained two of our closest neighbours tonight. It was so gratifying to see Georgiana well enough to play for us. She spoke little, but Sir Arthur Folliborough's eldest son, Richard who recently returned from Oxford, kept complimenting her masterful play. I spent some time in a good converse with him. The fellow has grown into a sensible young man. Georgiana

blushed each time he spoke to her, but he's known her since childhood and took little notice of it.

Lord Thirsk was in jovial mood and kept telling me to spend more time in Derbyshire.

"Darcy, it's time you thought more of your home and settled like the good man you are."

I thanked him for his sentiments and made some remark about the future which Lady Thirsk instantly interpreted with, "This is capital news, Darcy. When are we likely to meet your special lady?"

Caroline Bingley and Mrs Hurst were all astonishment and thus spared me any kind of reply. For once I was grateful for their interference.

Pemberley, 30th September

Richard Folliborough called and asked if Georgiana might enjoy a ride in his new curricle. I had to explain that it was not yet possible. He stayed a while and Mr Hurst engaged him in a game of cards. I told him about Georgiana's stay in Roxbury until early December. He then surprised me by asking directly if Georgiana would be having her season next year.

"Lady Barrow will most likely press me to allow it," I answered. "Her daughter Louisa is to have one then. But I would sooner she waited another year."

He made no further comment and talked of his own ideas in farming. He told me of some noted gentleman in Norfolk who invites strangers to inspect his farming methods which he claims are superior to all others. As soon as he had mentioned the possibility of his own travel to Norfolk, I told him to keep me informed of his plans for I might join him.

Pemberley, 1st October

It seems to me that Dr Summers has been over cautious about Georgiana. She has not complained of any aches or pains for some days. She spends most of the day outdoors which is what he has recommended and seems to be in excellent spirits.

Richard Folliborough called again. This time to take his leave of us and send his parents' regards. I couldn't help myself and watched Georgiana's closely but I detected nothing in her demeanour or her words of a special regard for him.

I am not often found in praise of young blades, but Richard appears to have a good deal of sense and is already showing the best parts of his father's nature. If Georgiana ever did fall in love with a man like him, I would make no objections. There is certainly no hurry as she is still very young. If he has any tender feelings towards my sister, they'll withstand the test of time.

Roxbury, 4th October

At any other time it would have taken us two days to reach Roxbury usually stopping overnight in Warwick, but I insisted on an overnight stay near Rugby. The inn was recommended to me and indeed, it was clean and well provided. We also had convivial company in the person of Peter Stanope. He was no more than an acquaintance of mine at Oxford, but he recognised me and insisted on eating supper with us. He was more than civil throughout and pressed me to visit him. His estates are some ten miles distant from Rugby.

Georgiana spoke little as usual, but it did not stop Stanope looking at her every so often. I caught one of his gazes and realised that my sister has become an attractive young lady. If his intention is to befriend me because of Georgiana, he may find me a very dull fellow indeed!

He left pressing his visiting card into my hand. I read it later with some surprise to see it stated "Earl of Repton" and an excellent address in London. His father must have died recently. I certainly commend his reticence in broadcasting his title, which he could easily have done when he met us. Since I reciprocated with my card, he can easily trace me either in town or in Derbyshire.

Roxbury, 5th October

My aunt is making my stay quite intolerable. If it was not for the news that Fitzwilliam is expected on the morrow I would have left this morning. Georgiana and I were forced to

take part in a charade last night. I kept declining, but this would not be accepted.

“Darcy, don’t be such a poke! We’ve been planning this for days and we need you to make a pair with Louisa. We cannot proceed unless you do as you’re told.”

Louisa’s eyes and everyone else’s were upon me. Georgiana suggested she would join me and Louisa, but no - she was to go searching in the upper rooms of the second floor East Wing with Louisa’s brother, Michael. Once they retrieved the costume, they were to come down and then the next pair would commence their search. At the end we were all to compete at guessing what the charade was to represent.

It was very well to provide the clues and costume, but what I objected to was being asked to go searching in pairs, particularly on account of Louisa. Aunt B. will not give up her ridiculous notion that I might find Louisa to my liking. I resent all attempts to throw us together. When the game finished I went directly up to my chamber.

I have decided to go to Banbury first thing so that I’m out of the house until Fitzwilliam comes. There is nothing I need, but will go to the shops to see if I can buy a trifle for Georgiana.

Roxbury, 6th October

Rain kept me from going to Banbury. Instead, I buried myself with a good book in the library and any interruptions were treated with utmost incivility. As soon as the weather cleared I took my horse to the road keeping an eye on any passing vehicles. I calculated that Fitzwilliam would most likely be travelling the Oxford road after luncheon, so I partook in a simple meal at the George and Dragon, and resumed my vigil on the road.

My mind was full of Netherfield and Longbourn. I should be in Hertfordshire tomorrow evening.

Fitzwilliam was worried when I explained that Bingley was expecting me and all I could spare him was one evening at

Roxbury. There is no avoiding the matter. He must broach the subject of Miss Stevington with his father today.

Evening: When the ladies left us there was only Lord Barrow, Fitzwilliam and I left to our port. It was an ideal time for my uncle to ask me what I thought of Miss Stevington, if Fitzwilliam had had a talk with him. He said nothing until the glasses were empty. For a moment I thought Fitzwilliam had not had the chance to speak with his father and we were going to join the ladies without another word on the subject that kept me in Roxbury one more day.

“Darcy, I hear from John that he’s mightily smitten with a Bedfordshire lady with whom you are acquainted. Since you’re here, tell me of the lady’s circumstances.”

I told him what I knew, which was little. That Mr Stevington’s estate was near the Hurst’s, the mother had been dead three years and that there were three daughters, and that both Miss S’s sisters were married.

Lord Barrow said nothing for a good while. I looked at Fitzwilliam whose head was down.

“An awkward situation,” my uncle suddenly continued. “Two daughters married, presumably with their dowries already settled. What about the estate? Is it entailed?”

“Not as far as I know.” I could recall neither Mr Hurst nor Miss Stevington mentioning it.

Again a long pause ensued.

“And the young lady, is she a woman of good breeding, Darcy?”

I told him she was. “She is sensible, knows her mind, much respected in the locality, very personable, rides well-”

“Rides well?” my uncle interrupted. “Yet sensible! Unusual combination, don’t you think?”

“Yes, indeed. Tom Freemantle who has known her since childhood described her to me as a “cracking rider”.”

“The Freemantle heir?” my uncle asked.

I revealed that Miss Stevington had not been swayed to accept Tom Freemantle's suit, despite his immense wealth.

Fitzwilliam's face became a picture of worry. I had only been trying to illustrate the strength of Miss S's character. Had I done wrong? Would Uncle B. interpret Miss Stevington's rejection of fortune as extreme foolishness?

Both Fitzwilliam and I waited as Lord Barrow mulled over the facts. At last he filled our glasses anew and raising his own invited us to join him.

"We must celebrate John's good fortune. To find a woman who will be so devoted is a rare thing."

He said no more, but I hope he'll help John enough to make the marriage possible.

Netherfield, 7th October

Bingley took residence two days ago and was mighty glad I had finally arrived. Our plans to be in Netherfield by the end of September had not come about but he understood my need to remain longer at Roxbury and was all compassion for Colonel Fitzwilliam.

"You never know, Darcy, how generous Mr Stevington might be," he said. "After all, his daughter will be marrying an Earl's son."

I must have raised my eyebrows for he quickly added, "Don't dismiss it, Darcy."

The rest of the evening was occupied with our plans for visiting Longbourn on the morrow. He had not had the courage to go on his own. We settled that late morning would be best. Neither he nor I could wait for the more fashionable hour of three o'clock. Our acquaintance with the Bennet family is such that a late morning visit would be quite unexceptional.

Netherfield, 8th October

Mrs Bennet was beside herself on seeing Bingley "grace" her home. She fussed mercilessly and even acknowledged my presence with a slight incline of her head. My heart was beating so fast that I kept some distance from the others in

case this would be noticed. Once the tea was served I composed myself enough to search out the face of Miss E.B. She was seated at the other end of the room and I could not engage her in conversation beyond pleasantries.

When we left, Bingley was in transports proclaiming Miss Bennet unchanged and the best of creatures that had ever lived.

“Have you changed your mind about Miss Bennet, Darcy? Did you not see how she tried hard to hide her blushes whenever I looked at her?”

I had difficulty saying much for I was preoccupied with my own feelings for Miss Eliza B. Once I confessed this, he became satisfied.

We are to visit Longbourn again for dinner. Bingley pressed me to agree to spend the next two days shooting from morning till dusk.

“I must tire myself out completely or I simply will not sleep,” he said.

I meditated on the difference between us. I am convinced that my feelings for Miss E.B. are as strong as Charles’ for Miss Jane Bennet, but he seems to wear them on his sleeve. No wonder Mrs Bennet was so sure he would propose last autumn.

Netherfield, 9th October

Sir William Lucas called on us in the morning, just as we were ready to take our sport. He insisted we dined at Lucas Lodge. Charles was eager to be out, so he accepted.

Our evening at Lucas Lodge was in some way lacking, possibly because last time we were there, both Eliza and Miss Bennet were present. Sir William will go on about St James’s Court and it made me think of Caroline Bingley slighting him once by refusing to accept the invitation there.

Lady Lucas quizzed Bingley excessively. I got the measure of her interest. This was to ascertain if he still “found Miss Bennet a delightful creature that she is”. Naturally,

Charles proceeded to regale the good lady with every virtue sweet Jane possesses. At one unguarded moment I ventured to disagree with him, saying that Miss Eliza Bennet's virtues although different to her sister's were still most commendable.

Lady Lucas quickly picked my point and began to list the "excellent features" of Miss E.B. In truth I had to agree with her sentiments. "Charlotte does miss her company," she concluded.

So do I, I was going to say.

Netherfield, 10th October

Neither Charles nor I talked much during the day, both of us, I believe, mulling over the prospect of spending tonight with the Bennet family.

London, 11th October

On our return from Longbourn last night my sensibilities were shaken. I could see clearly that Miss Jane Bennet had truly engaged her heart to Bingley and the iniquity of my behaviour last year stood plainly in front of me. I decided that it was time enough to apologise to Bingley and admit the grave injustice I had done to them both. Only the complete truth would do, so I also admitted to having seen, and known from Caroline, of Miss Bennet's stay in London.

Bingley was rightly furious, but his good nature soon took over and we were the best of friends again.

Since I was leaving for London and would not be back for at least ten days, he asked me if I no longer had any objections to Miss Bennet as his future wife.

"Go to it!" I told him as I was leaving Netherfield. I watched him from the carriage with pleasure. His feet seemed to have acquired a lighter spring.

My own embarrassment in the presence of Miss E.B. slowly gave way as the dinner progressed. I made no attempt, however, at singling Miss Eliza B. out for my attentions. I just hope that one day when we are more thrown into each other's company, as it will inevitably be because of my connection

with Charles, I might persuade her that my regard for her is still unchanged, and I hope that she will notice me a better Christian than before.

I found a letter waiting for me here. Lady Barrow asks my permission to move her large party from Roxbury to Pemberley. I replied promptly to encourage her to treat Pemberley as her own house.

The meeting with Sir Walter Welham's heirs is to take place early on the morrow. My hopes are high.

London, 14th October

The last two days have been almost exclusively taken up with the meetings to agree the precise terms of the purchase. There are several points still unresolved, but it is clear to me that if I want the land, I must buy the manor.

On the advice of both my man of business and my bank, the price requested is neither excessive nor is it low. But I shall proceed slowly, not replying to all the demands at once. Middleton is right; I am the only purchaser and as such should profit from it.

London, 16th October

Aunt de Burgh surprised me mightily by arriving unannounced yesterday afternoon. Her object was to extract a promise from me that I would not offer for Miss Eliza Bennet! Had she but known that I had already done so in Rosings last April she would have been utterly crushed. I refrained from imparting this news, but I did demand to know what led her to suppose I would "lower myself and dishonour the whole family by this totally unsuitable connection."

Slowly, I was granted the particulars. The news came to her through Mrs Collins, who had received a letter from her mother, Lady Lucas. According to Lady Lucas, I had a "deep regard for Miss Elizabeth Bennet."

On learning this, Aunt de B. immediately removed to Longbourn where she tried to intimidate Miss E.B. to refuse such a proposal!

“That girl would have none of it. No argument, no appeal to her nature, sensibilities, duty or honour would sway her. She told me with all impudence that she would not take advice from anyone ‘so wholly unconnected to her’, as she put it.”

Aunt then went on: “She refused to take into account your position in society; considered herself equal in birth to your own family and assured me that she would only be guided by her own happiness! What do you say to that Fitzwilliam? Surely, you can see how badly brought up she is, how much she rejects any authority and is determined to show it!”

Aunt de B. looked triumphantly at me. She was certain of her victory, and my approval of her sentiments and wishes. I had to be brutal. Nothing else would do, for I have tried for years to dissuade her from her ridiculous notion that her daughter Anne should be my wife.

“I have a very high regard for Miss Bennet, as Lady Lucas reported. Her father is not rich, but she does come from a long line of gentility. She is superior in taste, talent, intellect and understanding to any young lady of my acquaintance, and her manners are both pleasing and devoid of any artifice. This with other excellent virtues would make her an ideal wife for me.”

As soon as I finished Aunt de Burgh almost fainted. She soon recovered her wits and with an angry farewell, and reminder of Miss Bennet’s lowly relations, assured me that all connection must be severed between us, until such time as I “behaved with sense and honour.”

“If by this, Aunt, you mean that I should forego the possibility of a life of mutual respect, love and understanding to satisfy a misjudged sense of honour and duty! No, I shall not consider it.”

Without another word she left me. I followed her duly and bade her farewell, but she remained a statue, head turned away from me as if the very sight of me was unbearable.

As soon as I calmed down, I began to realise that there was hope for me; Miss E.B. would not have spoken the way

she did to my aunt without some kind sentiments in her heart towards me!

London, October 17th

The negotiations are progressing slowly. I find the other lawyers pedantic and Middleton agrees with me. There are letters going to Norfolk, unclear replies follow, then more letters. We have made various suggestions, most of these in consequence of Middleton's promptings. The price of the manor, home farm and parkland is now agreed. The price of the land is well established, so we hope for speedy resolution. I was well advised to wait. It is now a matter of drawing up a contract.

A letter from Georgiana arrived today. The removal to Pemberley brought her great joy. Aunt Barrow plans to remove to Scarborough, but if I permit, Georgiana would prefer to remain at Pemberley. I replied endorsing her decision not to go to Scarborough. We have been there several times and I know she would enjoy some quiet time at home.

Having been so preoccupied with business and Longbourn, then Aunt de Burgh's extraordinary visit here, I have neglected to write to Fitzwilliam. I left Roxbury with no understanding how his father would help regarding Miss Stevington. I will write to him in London today.

London, 18th October

My lawyer has reported to me today that the ten-acre field on the border with Mr H.'s property is in dispute. Mr H. has sent a claim saying that he approached Sir Welham before his death to buy the land and had a favourable reply. My lawyer advises that unless I particularly wanted that land, it would be best to leave it out of the purchase. "Let the heirs deal with it separately," he advised.

It would be politic to accept his advice, not least to ensure friendly relations with my neighbours. I have no head, nor heart for any entanglements now. I have not even sought my club these last few days preferring to stay indoors. The contentment I feel must stem from the glow inside me that seems to grow the more I think of my Aunt de Burgh's visit to

Longbourn. I sit at home of an evening with my papers or a book and dream ... dream pleasantly. No other company is needed.

I have written to Roxbury since there has been no reply from Fitzwilliam in London.

London, 19th October

Bingley's short letter brought no surprises. His happiness is complete. He writes of his Jane as a true angel. "Everyone is so kind to me. I'm spending most of my time at Longbourn. I have not written to my sisters, yet. Will do so when you are with me."

I quickly sketched a note with my congratulations on his betrothal and assured him of my return as soon as the contract for the Norfolk purchase is signed. I suspect Bingley is worried about the response to the news from his sisters, but sometimes I wish he did not depend on me quite so much.

Dreaming of marriage with Miss E.B. has made me realise that this purchase is most timely. Any younger sons, if the Lord will bless me with such, could look forward to a better situation than poor Fitzwilliam.

Hoares are reporting an excellent dividend from my East India shares. The bankers have said I could be out of debt within three years. Three years is not a long time, but I have never had to worry about debts before. My resolve is therefore, to cut the time to the minimum.

Although the thought of economy has not entered my head, I believe that I could make progress in that department with the help of my excellent steward at Pemberley. Had I considered the possibility of purchasing another estate when I was making plans to re-build the West Wing, I would have abandoned or postponed that venture.

And while I am not going to be too optimistic about the income that will come from the additional land, despite the upkeep of the manor, the increase of acreage by thirty percent means it is not without foundation to expect at least twenty percent increase in my income.

All in all, I am not unduly concerned about the debt I will accrue from this purchase.

London, 20th October

A letter from my Aunt Catersham writing from Berkshire arrived today. She reminded me that I promised to visit her and had not done so. I shall have to write and apologise sincerely for I do not know how I may contrive this before Christmas. Bingley's stay in Hertfordshire will now be a certainty and judging by the tone of his letter, he is waiting for me to give him courage to both write to his sisters about the engagement as well as shoulder their displeasure when they come to hear of it.

I shall write an invitation to Aunt Catersham to come to Pemberley for Christmas as usual. Uncle Robert is in London and I will deliver the invitation in person when I see him at White's tonight. From what my Aunt writes, Miss Ratten is quite positively separated from Lord Willerby who has not tried to see her since the London season. There is another man now mentioned by my aunt: Lord Belvoir of all people!

Apparently Lady Darliple has not abandoned the patronage of the quartet she set up in London and Miss Ratten has been asked to attend a couple of house parties at Lady Darliple's. At these, Lord Belvoir was present and Aunt C. writes that he has been paying particular attention to Miss Ratten. My aunt writes that she considers Lord Belvoir a very good match but that it is too early to speculate.

How strange that here is another man who was with me at Oxford and finds Miss Ratten to his liking! Willerby's wild antics at Oxford always worried me, but Belvoir was not only clever, he was very steady and sensible, the sort of man I was happy to be friends with. What with Aunt Catersham taking Miss Ratten so completely under her wing, it puts me in mind to issue an invitation to James Ratten and his two sisters to come to Pemberley for Christmas this year, too.

Late afternoon:

The ten-acre field is now removed from the contract and all is agreed. If the final aspects of the lawyers' work are

indeed ready in time, then by Saturday I should be in possession of the Purchase Deeds, and could spend most of Sunday going through the documents. The signatures will be placed on October 24th and this will give me one more day in case I find any problems or have questions to put to the lawyers.

London, 21st October

Uncle Robert and I had a pleasant dinner at the club last night. I told him of my reason for being in London. He was mightily pleased that, as he put it, "You have not squandered your inheritance, just the opposite, you are increasing it further, well done, young man. I am truly proud of you." He may have tried to hide from me a tear appearing in his eye, but I did see it and told him that his care and love of me, and Georgiana were greatly appreciated.

"How could it be otherwise, young Darcy?" It must have been the first time that he used my name. Usually he calls me, young boy, young man or my boy. "You and Georgiana are my closest relations. Do not forget that in the male line there are most likely just the two of us!"

I knew what Uncle Robert was saying. My father's younger brother William has not been heard of these five years. So I agreed with him and told him that I had not forgotten his promise to "surprise" me on 27th December when it would be his eightieth birthday.

"Ah, my boy, it will surely be a surprise." His eyes were smiling, he seemed mightily happy with something. I felt extremely pleased to see his obvious joy.

When we parted, I said a little prayer for him asking the Lord for the grace of his surviving till his 80th birthday and beyond! I added another wish for it to be possible for me to have a son born while my Uncle is still alive. I know this would mean more to him than any presents I could give him.

Since I am waiting for the lawyers to complete their work, I decided to think of my own surprise for my Uncle's eightieth birthday. No ideas would come to me, so I walked leisurely to Bond Street and tried to get an inspiration there. Nothing was

either good enough, or unusual. I strolled to St James's Street and chanced upon Brummell who knows me as "that strange fellow, Darcy, who does not gamble!" He condescended to stop and exchange a few words.

"You seem preoccupied, Darcy. If the burden can be shared, do tell me!"

I was taken aback that he noticed as much and so admitted freely that I was foxed, not knowing what to give my uncle etc, etc.

"Bond Street would not suffice, Darcy, for such an occasion! How about a work of art? Commission a picture. There is still time enough!"

I asked him if he meant a portrait, for how might that be a surprise?

"But of course it will be a surprise. You must insist that the artist not allow your uncle to watch the progress of his work. When it is finished, it will be a surprise, I guarantee you!"

I thanked him and we parted. He turned after a few paces and added, "You will show me the finished work, I dare say? John Copley in Leicester Square."

I admit I was vexed. It seemed almost like a royal command. But I still liked the idea. There are a number of names I could contact, but the obvious one is Lawrence at the R.A. He might, however, be unavailable at such a short notice.

Evening:

Lawrence, I was told, could not possibly consider the project in the timescale presented. Benjamin West could not be contacted either. Half expecting to be turned away from Copley's studio, I hurried to him, for the day was drawing to a close. Brummell's idea may have been inspired for Copley received me with civility and was pleased that the sitter was in "advanced years". He thought it would give him freedom to portray old age. I did not know how to interpret that, but we agreed the fee and providing my uncle was not averse, he could start work immediately. So I furnished him with my

uncle's address and asked him to wait until I gave him leave to see him.

Uncle Robert was not at home and I was directed to White's. I was surprised to see him seated with one of the closest friends of the King. They were intent on their conversation, so I waited before making my presence known. At long last, Uncle R. got up to leave and I left the club with him. Since he had already eaten, I invited him to have brandy with me here.

At first he was shocked and kept saying that his face was not worth "preserving", but then a strange laugh overcame him and he told me that perhaps it was a good idea.

"You never know how many relatives of ours can claim to have lived as long as that! There is something to be considered, my boy?" He laughed some more and then started to complain that most likely Copley would not wish to travel with him to Northamptonshire, and he would be compelled to stay in London longer.

I thought we had agreed everything when he turned to me with a thoughtful gaze and said,

"Now, Darcy, you probably think that I do not know how expensive these fellows are. But I do and I am telling you, my boy, that unless I cover half the cost of this nonsense, I shall not sit for hours for anything!"

Unable to sway Uncle R. from his resolve, I had to agree to his meeting half the costs of Copley's fees. I must own that this expense is not a practice of economy, yet circumstances seemed to demand it.

London, 22nd October

I dispatched my note to Copley that Uncle Darcy was agreeable and asked him to assure my uncle that the portrait would not take long.

I spent the rest of the day with my head in the legal documents, Middleton by my side. We stopped only to eat and finished checking the details by late afternoon. I could not remember what we actually agreed in terms of contents of Sir

Walter's Manor, but a comprehensive list of a hundred and sixty odd items gave me the impression that I have bought the entire collection of his paintings as well as most of the furniture. Window hangings were not on the list, but I gather from Middleton that these will indeed be found in the house.

By evening I had a note from Copley to say that he never told me how long the portrait would take. All he assured me of was that it would be ready for 27th December. Uncertain what to reply, I wrote another note saying that my uncle was an old man and was worried about the need to stay in London too long.

My footman was asked to wait for the artist's reply and brought another letter from Copley, this time saying that unless I could trust him, he was not prepared to carry out the commission. I apologised for interference and begged him to proceed as he knew best. All this made me think of a comment my Aunt de Burgh had made once when she gave up on the portrait of Anne when the artist would insist on his own ideas and demanded that the child be kept still. At the time I put it down to my Aunt's usual heavy-handedness, but I now realise what she was saying. If I receive no other notes from Copley, I shall sigh with relief.

There is still not a word from Fitzwilliam. The Earl of Barrow writes that Fitzwilliam is in town or in Bedfordshire! Since I have enquired here before dispatching my letter to him to Roxbury, I must presume he is with the Stevingtons!

Netherfield, 24th October

I am now a legal owner of the Manor of Uplands, its parkland, the village of Uplands with seven tenanted farms, home farm and various coppices as well as woodland in East Uplands. On signing the necessary papers I immediately departed for Netherfield.

Bingley is truly radiant. I listened to a litany of Miss Bennet's extreme goodness of character. He would have attended at table for me rather than his servants. He could not recommend enough burgundy to please a Duke! His banns are

going to be read next Sunday, so what with his sisters not knowing and the papers not informed, there is a lot to be done.

“I knew you would look after all that, Darcy. I trust in your judgement completely.”

“But this is your wedding, your sisters, your advertisement we are placing, so you must take the responsibility,” I insisted. I would help him but I would not do it all.

He was taken aback with my forthright speech. There was however, no other way to wake him up to the reality of his duty. Rising from the table he suggested I follow him to his study to help him with the most difficult part of this, a letter to Caroline and Louisa Hurst.

I ended up dictating the letter, for he sat for a good while and claimed he knew not how to begin. At last it was ready and he was pleased with the result. It was a simple note appealing to their sisterly love, saying his heart was exclusively engaged and that he would be married on November 14th.

This accomplished, we stayed up late talking of the future and he rejoiced in my good fortune in securing Sir Welham’s manor and lands.

Netherfield, 25th October

Bingley has been in the habit of taking long walks with Miss Bennet. So when we both arrived in Longbourn another such walk was immediately suggested. Miss Eliza Bennet was my companion, for Bingley and Jane far outstripped us. Suddenly and to my great consternation, Miss Eliza Bennet began to thank me for the service I rendered her family when Wickham eloped with the youngest Miss Bennet. There was nothing for it but to admit that my involvement in sorting out the affair had been done entirely with the thought of her own reputation. How could I let the Bennet family partake in the social ruin if Lydia Bennet were not to be married to Wickham? It was unthinkable.

When she heard that my sentiments of last April, so badly expressed in Hunsford, were unchanged, I proceeded to ask her if hers were the same as they had been then. She astounded me by saying that they had undergone a complete turnaround! We talked and talked then of everything that had happened since that fateful day, and how much I have benefited from her remarks made on the 13th April – the date I shall never forget!

And so Miss Elizabeth Bennet has consented to be my wife!

I know it is true for my pen is also confirming the news, but the full force of what it means cannot possibly have reached me. I am composed, I am happy, I am even grateful for the long months of uncertainty! It has all been to the good, and most clearly helped my suit.

In some way I also feel peculiar, as if a different person, as if I have waited for this day since I do not know when. I kept my peace until we reached Netherfield and then shared my joy with Charles. He was shaking my hand so much that I had to stop him.

I have already written to Georgiana and will have the letter sent first thing on the morrow. It was not possible for me to speak to Mr Bennet for by the time we arrived home, some considerable time after Bingley and Miss Bennet, Charles was ready to depart. It must wait until the morrow.

I cannot write any more. I am just so very happy.

Netherfield, 26th October

The day went by so quickly that I hardly noticed when it was time to see Elizabeth's father. Mr Bennet was astounded and I was sorry for it, but it could not be helped. Our courting has been unusual and I felt at a loss how to explain to him that we are truly in love. I stammered and this surprised me, and made me ill at ease too. At last I managed to control my nerves and told him just what was in my heart. His agreement to our betrothal was given with an air of total incredulity, and he asked me to send Elizabeth to him.

“Darcy, I cannot hide my amazement,” he said. He waved me off, but then recollected himself and got up in all civility to shake my hand, and to wish me a very happy married life.

I gathered later that Elizabeth had a difficult time with her father at first. This soon gave way to more astonishment on his part, and then a truly splendid hug and a kiss.

Bingley and I are agreed that the sensible way to proceed is with a quiet wedding. We shall both be married at Longbourn on the same day. I shall invite my closest family, but feel certain that Aunt de Burgh will not attend.

Since Charles has already settled on a date of 14th November, I shall have to obtain the Vicar’s permission to have us both wed in the same ceremony. There is just enough time for the banns.

Netherfield, 27th October

The notices have been sent to the Gazette and the Post.

Elizabeth tells me that I must expect an effusion of good will from her mother. I am reconciled but I fear that Mrs Bennet will start treating me the same way she treats Bingley, and that would be a sore trial.

Georgiana has written a most joyous letter. She praises Elizabeth in it so sincerely that I ended up showing the letter to her. My sweet Eliza refused to believe in the contents and proceeded to chide me for my “excessive partiality”.

“Fitzwilliam, please write to Georgiana that she must not think of me as the paragon of all virtues. My sister Jane takes that place in our family. All I can claim is that I love you and will do my best to be a good wife to you.”

My heart soared at her words and I kissed her hand tenderly and assured her that Georgiana would always look at her as the kindest and best person in her life, if only because she was to become my wife.

I suddenly realized how deep Eliza’s regard is for me. I hope that my gaze told her how I felt.

There are endless things to be considered, but both Elizabeth and I feel that we want to spend most of the time together. There is so much still to understand about our feelings and each other.

Netherfield, 28th October

The vicar was very obliging. He will read out the banns. There is just enough time. Elizabeth and I are of the same mind that after the wedding we shall go straight to Pemberley. If Lady Barrow comes to the wedding then it is probable that she will not return up north with us. Georgiana most likely will.

I have asked Fitzwilliam to be my groomsman. I wrote both to his regiment in London and to Bedfordshire. One or the other place should find him. If he is in Bedfordshire still, then I am surprised not to have heard of his betrothal!

Mrs Bennet seems most subdued. She hardly spoke a word when I met her at Longbourn today. She bowed several times; most unlike her to do so. I would venture to say that she is tongue tied, a rare thing certainly.

My mind is so full of happiness I forget to attend to ordinary matters. If it was not for Hawkins, my valet, I would have completely disregarded my attire for the nuptials. Hawkins insists that I remove to London and get myself fitted out at Weston's. If I am to listen to him then I should go immediately for the master of the needle may not be too pleased to be given such short notice.

Netherfield, 2nd November

I should be writing Longbourn rather than Netherfield, for I am mostly there. Elizabeth and I take long walks whenever the weather permits. It's the only way not to be interrupted by either one of her sisters or the dog. I dreaded the prospect of Mrs Bennet being a nuisance, but I have been astonished with her continued reticence, even in the situations when Elizabeth asks her opinion on various arrangements connected with the wedding. Elizabeth admitted today that her mother was still in awe of me. When I laughed, she replied, "Fitzwilliam, be on

your guard. This will not last for ever. Once Jane and I are no longer at home, she will be at a loss how to go on.”

“Surely your father will keep her busy? There are Mary and Kitty, too.”

“Not so, my dear Fitzwilliam. Father will keep out of her way. As to Mary and Kitty, she will find them only in her way. I predict most unsettled times for all the family.”

I left the subject at that. Poor Jane and Bingley may well end up bearing the brunt of Mrs Bennet’s customary interference.

I have been to London and await delivery of various items Hawkins felt were necessary. Hawkins has coped admirably with my monosyllabic responses and has simply taken decisions himself.

There is no answer from Fitzwilliam. I had no time to think of this during the short visit to London. Lady Barrow will be coming with the whole Scarborough party. Lord Barrow and his eldest son, Adam, are to come from London where my letter at last found them. Uncle Robert begs me to forgive him, but he feels that his health will not allow him to make both Pemberley at Christmas and Longbourn now. Lady Cattersham wrote an enthusiastic letter promising to bring Miss Ratten with her. She also suggested that I invite Lord Belvoir. This I have now done. Philip Brew came into my mind, so I have sent off a letter to him.

The wedding breakfast will be at Netherfield. After some lengthy discussion with Mr Bennet we finally managed to convince him that the number of invited guests from both Bingley’s side and mine were such that Longbourn would have difficulty accommodating everyone. There was some talk of dancing, but we have managed to avoid preparing lengthy and lavish festivities. Both Elizabeth and I are eager to remove to Pemberley as soon as possible. Georgiana will travel with us. A number of the guests will arrive in the morning directly from London and return to town that day. We have around forty guests who will have to be accommodated at Netherfield and some at Longbourn, thus making both houses full.

Netherfield, 4th November

Both Jane and Elizabeth are now in London attending to their bridal purchases. It has been only two days and I am missing my dear Eliza already.

Netherfield, 5th November

A letter from Fitzwilliam at last! He wrote it in London. Yet there is no comment about Miss Stevington or why he has taken so long to be in touch with me. His cryptic note simply says that he would, "explain when we meet". I am vexed with his letter and my inclination is to think that something must have gone wrong, otherwise, why would he keep it a secret?

Another day without seeing Elizabeth; her wedding dress required another fitting. She is staying with her aunt in London. Mrs Bennet assured me yesterday that Elizabeth, "will come flying, Darcy, for she is so terribly attached to you, but you must excuse her wanting to look her best."

I assured her that I understood perfectly. Mrs Bennet then regaled me with the details of her own wedding to Mr Bennet. I listened with due attention and was spared from having to say much as all she required me to do was listen. I am in fact pleased that she has begun speaking to me.

Netherfield, 7th November

I never suspected that I would have such a miserable day of it yesterday. Eliza did not return from London. A letter arrived, however, today from Mrs Gardiner begging me to forgive her for keeping Elizabeth a few more days. "We are as busy as we can bear it, Mr Darcy," she wrote. "There is not a moment of idleness between us, but both Jane and Lizzy require substantial purchases."

I do hope the ladies remember the wedding day and arrive in time for it!

Netherfield, 9th November

Fitzwilliam has come. Elizabeth and Jane are expected tonight, but we are dining with Bingley and his sisters here.

Evening: I retired with Fitzwilliam to the library leaving Bingley in the drawing room. At last we were alone and I could not wait to find out about the progress of his suit with Miss Stevington.

“I gathered from your father that after your talk with him you went straight to Bedfordshire?” I started the conversation myself for John did not appear inclined to talk about it.

“It was my intention.” John spoke slowly and quietly with little emotion showing on his face, and I was surprised. This he must have noticed. He laughed heartily and added, “I see, Darcy that your own nuptials have narrowed your mind considerably. All you can think of are weddings? Mine, by any chance?”

“Well, yes,” I admitted. “I dispatched one of my letters to you in Bedfordshire for nobody seemed to know where to find you.”

“You did what?” John got up from his seat and his countenance told me that he was not pleased to hear my news.

I asked him if I had done wrong.

“Darcy, you have not written to Mr Stevington, have you?”

“I simply asked him to forward a letter to you should you still be staying in Bedfordshire,” I explained. Fitzwilliam was now pacing the room with clear signs of agitation. I sat motionless in my chair and when after some further silence there was no word from Fitzwilliam, I began to sip my wine. Until he spoke up there was little else I could do.

“I had better explain to you what has been happening, for I do not know now what the consequences of your letter might be.” He stopped, sat down again and began slowly. He explained that he had intended to go to Bedfordshire but that an accident had prevented him. His curricle had ended up in a ditch some thirty miles short of his destination. “I was lucky, Darcy, I tell you,” he said. “My horse was badly injured and the kindest thing I could do was to shoot it.”

I commiserated with him. Poor John has had more trials in his life than I would ever wish to cope with in his situation.

He took a drink from his glass and continued the story. “But, it was not all bad, Darcy. Here I was stranded on a road I hardly knew when this carriage and four came to my rescue. Who should be in it, but my old friend Lord Thursby! He insisted that I join him and after arranging for my curriple to be attended to in Rushden, he took me with him to his house. It must have been nerves that kept me going until we arrived there for as soon as I dismounted from the carriage I felt so dizzy and unwell that they ended up calling the apothecary. You may well imagine my protestations, but it was not to be taken into account. Both his mother and his sister would hear none of it, and before I knew it I was being quacked, poked and prodded by this unsightly gentleman who they all believed was everything I needed. And there I have stayed until I returned to London to find your letter waiting for me.”

“Wouldn’t you rather be in Bedfordshire now? I am sorry if I have inconvenienced you with my own affairs.” I felt truly sorry, realising that Fitzwilliam has put my affairs before his own.

“No, no, Darcy. You have not done anything of the sort. I am delighted. Miss Eliza Bennet will make you an excellent wife.”

I agreed and kept waiting for further news of what had happened between him and his father just prior to his decision to head for Bedfordshire. But unless he would tell me of his own accord, I felt I could not pry into every detail of his personal situation. He said nothing on the subject and after some idle conversation we both retired.

Netherfield, 11th November

I have unburdened myself to Elizabeth about Fitzwilliam. The summary presented to her made her very quiet. She was not, however, as pressed as I was to put an explanation to Fitzwilliam’s strange behaviour.

“Dearest,” Eliza replied. “There is nothing odd in the story you have related. Colonel Fitzwilliam must have been

smitten with Miss Thursby, and that is the long and short of it. What else could have stopped him so severely? What else could have prevented him from driving thirty miles from Lord Thursby's place to where Miss Stevington resides?"

"Now you put it like this, it finally makes sense. He is obviously in no hurry to see Miss Stevington. But his situation is rather awkward, don't you think?" I could imagine what the Earl of Barrow would say, and there is also Miss Stevington patiently waiting.

"Tell me more about Miss Stevington," Eliza asked with real interest.

I recounted the various instances of our meeting and the conversation with her about Tom Freemantle. Again her response took me by surprise.

"Dearest Fitzwilliam, you know how much I enjoy studying people. This is quite famous. A girl has an acquaintance with a boy, her neighbour, for years. She knows him inside out whether he is now grown or not; underneath he is still the same person. When he then proposes, it's not a passion, it is a situation with little romance in it."

"Perhaps, you are right," I replied, "but what is your object?"

Eliza laughed. "Oh, what a manly response you have just given me! I love you for it, Fitzwilliam, for I see a role in your life for me; if only to explain people's characters to you!" She laughed again and I crushed her in a sound embrace.

When we gathered our wits about us, she continued. "Well, she meets Colonel Fitzwilliam, who as we all know, is excessively well mannered, charming and with good conversation. I found him so in Kent. It is his first love, so he is smitten. He tries his best to be agreeable. Miss Stevington cannot but fall in love with him. I almost did in Kent, you know?"

I knew she was teasing me, so we passed only a few remarks on that subject.

“I suspect that his sensibilities are more developed than any gentleman I have had the pleasure to meet.” Elizabeth went on to explain when I was still unable to comprehend what she was trying to say. “Yes, I am sure that this is true. In a man prone to deep feelings, he would easily exaggerate his attachment to his lady. Possibly even make himself a martyr to his own sensibilities. But dearest Fitzwilliam, remember, that such a situation when it is likely to be suddenly resolved would make the hero extremely worried! The lady of his dreams is an ideal, she is unblemished, she is pure, and she is unattainable. Now, tell me how our hero would feel if she were to become his wife?”

I protested that I did not know and embraced her soundly again, saying all the things with which my heart was overflowing.

“My dearest, dearest Fitzwilliam,” Eliza interrupted. “You still do not comprehend?”

I admitted that I did not.

“Our hero runs away! His family scenes come to his mind. He remembers all the disagreements he had heard between his own father and mother. In short, he is afraid to commit himself for life! And the accident is truly heaven sent!”

I had to concur with Elizabeth that Aunt and Uncle Barrow were not ideally suited. The marriage was arranged and they managed to rub together well enough. Elizabeth most likely had the measure of the domestic scene.

However, I could not forget poor Miss Stevington. “But, dearest Eliza,” I said, “he is a gentleman and he has given Miss Stevington false hopes. He cannot simply walk away.”

“Fitzwilliam, dearest Fitzwilliam. You are forgetting that it is only you who knows that he is now in a position to offer his hand to Miss Stevington. Miss Stevington does not know it.”

“Ah, yes. That would explain why he was so agitated and began to stroll around the room when I told him that I had sent

one letter to London, and another to Bedfordshire.”

Elizabeth came over and embraced me herself. She kissed my cheek gently and said, “My dearest Fitzwilliam, I am so glad that we understand each other so well.” She stopped, turned, took a few steps towards the window, then turned again in a very pensive mood and added, “But, my dearest, it does not absolve us from coming to the aid of Miss Stevington. Not indeed, especially since you sent your letter to her father.”

I protested that we could not possibly make Fitzwilliam marry Miss Stevington. She may well be the wrong lady for him.

“But, dearest Fitzwilliam, I am not suggesting anything of the sort.” I was relieved. “What we need to understand first is if Miss Thursby did indeed catch Colonel Fitzwilliam’s eye. I am strongly of the opinion that this is just what has happened but it may not be so. Then the poor man is in real difficulties. For as long as he remains unmarried Miss Stevington will play her role well, but should he turn to another, it would be too much! Truly, too much to expect of Miss Stevington not to be affected!”

I was in agreement and so we discussed what could be done. There was little I could see anyone could do, but not so for my clever Elizabeth! She proposed to invite to Pemberley both Colonel Fitzwilliam and Lord Thursby together with his sister. I was charged with coming up with an excuse as Lord Thursby is not one of my acquaintances. Having established the regard that existed between Fitzwilliam and Miss Thursby we agreed that we were honour bound to do something for poor Miss Stevington. The solving of this we could not manage in our discussions and decided to defer it for another time.

Pemberley, 17th November

I am the happiest of men! Elizabeth says that she never imagined life could be so totally perfect, so agreeable, every minute so enchanting. And so it is. Georgiana is also blossoming. Eliza does not neglect her in any way. Whenever I

am not with them, they are together and I know that Georgiana enjoys Eliza's company excessively. My prayers are full of thanksgiving for the blessings I have received in making Elizabeth my wife.

I have had no inclination and in truth no time to write lately. I resent being separated from Elizabeth even for a short while, and I know she feels the same. But perhaps I should mention the amusing incident at our wedding ceremony. The vicar stopped for a long while when he first asked if there were any objections to Bingley and Miss Bennet being joined in matrimony. Someone at the back of the church coughed. The vicar took his glasses off and stared into the congregation. In the long silence everyone must have thought that something was indeed going to happen. At last the vicar decided to ask again. This time there was no coughing and we finally went through the ceremony.

The poor vicar must have had a real feeling of unease because of that cough for he waited for a long time when he asked again on our behalf. The singing in the church was to my ear unusually loud and joyous. Mrs Bennet took our hands into hers outside the church and I wondered what was to come. She explained that the vicar was a little deaf and could have thought that someone was speaking. I shall omit here her profuse words of happiness on seeing her two daughters married. I am sorry that I have had any unchristian thoughts about her for she was deeply moved, and finally turned away from us with tears freely falling.

I have attended a number of wedding breakfasts before, but have never felt as delighted as I was at my own. Bingley's good spirits were a wonderful sight too. We ended up submitting to general merriment and with the help of Mrs. Hurst who was most willing to oblige us on the pianoforte, had some impromptu dancing. Bingley danced with his wife for most of the dances and I felt equally sad for having to relinquish Elizabeth's hand to Lord Barrow, and other gentlemen eager to dance with her. We resolved to leave early, but we only managed to get away after three o'clock. I was doubly happy because Georgiana told us in the carriage that

she danced almost every dance and said that my Aunt Barrow complemented her on it.

Pemberley, 28th November

I should mention in the diary that Eliza's reception from all the servants was stupendous! Mrs Reynolds had prepared a champagne reception for us and after all the introductions, Elizabeth without any shyness, invited all the servants to partake a glass with us. I complied willingly for although this was a most unusual behaviour, the sincerity of her invitation broke all the constraints and I happily concurred. It is possible that no other household has ever had such a reception, but then my Elizabeth is unlike any other woman.

I have also noticed that all the servants are extremely obliging to her, as if there was not enough they could do for her. This gratifies me and makes Elizabeth feel so at home, and so at ease that she told me today that all her misgivings in connection with running such a large household have vanished. Mrs Reynolds refers to her with everything in utmost reverence and when Elizabeth is not sure what should be done, Mrs. R. advises her on the protocol and customs in such a way that they frequently end up laughing together.

It was in that mood that she came to the library today seeking my advice on the expense of replacing torn linen. I had to assure her that we could easily replace at least a dozen sheets without the expense being noticed. By her reply I got the measure of the stringent circumstances of the Longbourn family. All I dearly wish now is to spoil my dear wife!

Pemberley, 1st December

Elizabeth has been working hard to prepare rooms for our guests. She has enlisted Georgiana's help. They went to Derby together to procure more china and whilst there chanced upon Georgina's school friend when they were both together with Mrs Younge. Georgiana reported to me that Isabella Kerriston never went back to study with Mrs Younge that autumn of 1796 either. Reason being that her uncle discovered Mrs Younge's other occupation! While appearing to Mr Kerriston and my father (who originally employed her) an eminently

suitable person to run a small and exclusive boarding school, she had another occupation as a proprietress of a tavern in the east side of London! There seem to be no end of talents to Mrs Younge's bow! I wish they were employed to the good rather than evil.

Pemberley, 7th December

I have no possibility to redeem myself in Elizabeth's eyes. I have completely forgotten that today was her birthday. It was Georgiana who noticed that Elizabeth was somewhat down. To cheer her she had an idea to gather some blooms from our hot house and place them in her sitting room. As she entered the room with flowers in her arms she saw Eliza sitting by her writing desk with a letter from Jane on her lap and looking absently into the distance. Georgiana walked in without making her presence known because she wanted to place the flowers unseen as a surprise for her. On seeing Georgiana with the flowers Eliza jumped up, ran to her, embraced her and cried out: "Oh, you did remember my birthday!"

My only excuse is that although I did notice the date entered in the marriage register at church I must have been so unlike myself that it flew out of my mind. Eliza listened to my apologies very composed and kept assuring me that she was not expecting that I would remember such an "unimportant date". I was cross with her for saying that and displeased with myself for my utter want of conduct. We parted with some unease on my part. I am not sure how my Eliza really felt at the end of our conversation. She kept assuring me that she had no need of any presents, there was nothing she was in need of and there were no trifles she could think of to suggest for me to procure for her.

I have thought long about all the things we talked about and Eliza's responses and have come to one consoling conclusion. In the household of five daughters, with money scarce, Eliza probably never received anything of real value and therefore, was not expecting this of me either. But I am still not happy. If I go to Derby to seek some jewellery for her, I might not find anything good enough and with weather the

state it is, it makes it a hazardous thing to go all the way to London. Nevertheless, I am resolved on going to Derby first.

Pemberley, 9th December

In a way I am pleased that I had not found anything I liked in Derby. My going to London should convince Eliza how much she means to me and that it is high time someone started to spoil her. I said that in jest to her and she replied, "Spoil me if you wish, but bear the consequence in future! I might become quite unrecognizable!" She laughed saying this and I was again seeing my dear, clever Elizabeth. "And while you are in London," she added, "please bring me news of all the latest scandals as well as some extravagant present I can give to Georgiana for Christmas." Suddenly I knew what I was to do. I should go to London with my dear wife. She protested at first, but then I saw that this was going to be a treat indeed, her first glimpse of our house in London, and certainly the very first time of shopping with her husband on her arm and almost "unlimited purse"?

Where is my resolve to retrench? But I know this is not the time to do it, but rather show my wife how important she has become to me and what our life together will be like. I pray the weather improves further. We are to be back by 20th December.

London, 15th December

Eliza is overwhelmed with the "opulence" as she called it of our London residence. I suppose my mother was rather used to grand living having been born into aristocracy (her father was Lord James Stockton the third Earl of Barrow). She was responsible for redecoration of the house and used good craftsmen to do it. I heard that at one time she even brought some Italian to do the paintings on the ceiling in the main salon. He also did excellent work on the dining room and library. Being used to the place one accepts and forgets what impression such surroundings can have on people not used to living in this style.

I get special pleasure in looking at Eliza rejoicing in her new mode of life. "This house is fit for a countess!" She

remarked the other night as all the candelabra were lit in the dining room and we were having dinner on our own. I replied meekly that my mother's father was an Earl, which seemed to be complete surprise to Eliza. "Now I understand why Lady Catherine said all these things to me." I stopped her in further speech, explaining that I deemed her more than a mere countess. "What do you think of me, then, Fitzwilliam?" She asked with eagerness written all over her features.

"You are as noble to me as any high born lady and no titles are needed to confirm your nobility."

We went on in this vain for a little while and then made plans for the following day when apart from necessary shopping we also intend to go to the opera. Yesterday, I bought Eliza a sapphire necklace and earrings. They are matching her eyes in a wondrous way. She promised to wear these to the opera.

London, 17th December

We were most fortunate last night at the Theatre Royal for Eliza and I chanced upon the performance of Mrs Elizabeth Billington. Her extraordinary range of 3 octaves with the sweetness of her voice gave us both a great deal of pleasure. The evening was further marked with Beau Brummel calling on us during one of the intervals. He remembered about my uncle's portrait and asked if I had used Copley. On hearing that I did, he sketched an elegant bow and said: "You are pleased with the result on doubt." And turning to Elizabeth asked her if she approved of the painter's skill, too. Eliza concurred and exchanging a few superlatives on Mrs Billington, which we were happy to endorse, left us.

I was interested to hear Eliza saying later: "Mr Brummel's visit seemed more like a royal condescension than a friendly gesture. I wonder why that is so when he said nothing unexceptional. I suppose it is his air and manners which are so regal."

This gave me an opportunity to share with my dear wife my own impression which exactly matched her views when I

chanced upon him in St James', and he suggested the painting of the portrait and Copley to me.

Pemberley, 22nd December

Our guests have started to arrive. Uncle Robert came yesterday. I noticed a slight dullness in his complexion, yet he seems stout for his age of eighty bar a few days.

Copley has kept his promise and the portrait is here. Elizabeth has never met Uncle Robert, but she thought that Copley had caught the real character of an elderly man, and said she was looking forward to meeting Uncle Robert and spending time with him, so that she could judge if her first impressions obtained from the portrait agreed with the real person.

After meeting Uncle Robert, Elizabeth thought that he was even more distinguished than the image presented in the portrait. Uncle Robert overheard her comments to me and chuckled loudly. I could see that he was excessively pleased to hear such praise.

I am so pleased that Elizabeth is not disturbed by the large size of the house and, with all the help from the servants, has already established a daily routine. It also brings me great joy seeing her trying to involve Georgiana in household matters, often asking her opinion.

Aunt Catersham is not here yet, but Ratten and his two sisters have arrived. Miss Ratten is truly changed and I must complement Aunt Catersham. Miss Ratten has remembered to bring her violin with her, for I mentioned in my letter of invitation that she and Georgiana might wish to rehearse some compositions jointly.

Pemberley, 27th December

What a Christmas we have had this year! The house ringing with the chatter of many voices, the servants busy, the rooms occupied with groups intent on making merry. Georgiana told me that she had never had such a jolly time before and only wished Aunt de Burgh were thinking kindly of

us all. I am so well disposed towards everyone that even the mention of my aunt has not upset me.

Uncle Robert admitted that he had a brief look at the portrait, but had not seen it finished. He liked it exceedingly. Just as we thought we would bring his birthday to a close with a reel which Bingley considered a necessary end to the day, Uncle Robert asked us all to sit down.

“Fitzwilliam knows that I promised him a surprise on my eightieth birthday, if I would live that long,” he said. “And so I have and there is no escape now!”

He looked at me with a strange twinkle in his eye, took out a roll of parchment paper from behind one of the sofas and handed it to me. “Read it, my boy, read it!”

I began slowly for it was written in an archaic sort of English, but beautifully done. There was a seal with His Majesty’s stamp and signature at the bottom, and the date of 30th July 1797. The King was confirming the title of the earl of Astwode to my Uncle Robert, and as from that date he is now called Baron Fosston Darcy, Seventh Earl of Astwode. The King in his graciousness has elevated the name of Darcy to the status of Baron in conjunction with the original name of baron Fosston which belonged to the earls of Astwode. As the details were slowly read out, we began to comprehend what it all meant. The King had resurrected the extant title of the Earl of Astwode which belonged to my Great Grandmother’s father, Sixth Earl of Astwode. Lady Julia Fosston married my Great Grandfather John Robert Darcy and their marriage was blessed with two surviving sons, my Grandfather John, George Darcy and my Uncle Robert, Astwode Darcy.

Lady Julia Fosston was the only daughter of Lord Astwode and there were no male relatives entitled to inherit the title. My grandfather inherited Pemberley while Uncle Robert, his brother, inherited Welliborough House in Northamptonshire and all the lands which belonged to his mother Lady Julia Fosston. It was clear from the Letters of Writ that the title was being assigned, “to Robert Astwode Darcy only surviving child of the marriage of John Robert Darcy and Lady Julia Fosston daughter of the Sixth Earl of

Astwode and then in perpetuity to all male progeny of the Darcy family residing at present at Pemberley in the County of Derbyshire... whereon the title of the Earl of Astwode shall have “and Pemberley...”

Once the congratulations were over and Uncle Robert provided us with more details of his meetings in London to pave the way for the Letters of Writ which the King had signed, we finished the evening with several reels and great merriment.

As Uncle Robert left for his bedchamber, he turned to me and said, “You will not have long to wait to be the Eighth Earl. The Lord cannot keep me here for much longer, can He?”

I protested and invited him to spend a little longer with me in private in the library.

“Uncle Robert, I am greatly affected by what you have done,” I told him. “But was it necessary?”

“Certainly, my boy. You must realise that I shall be leaving you my estates in Northamptonshire. They are by no means small. You shall be a very rich man indeed. It is high time you had a title to confirm your consequence.”

I assured him that I had not thought of it and that although I was deeply moved by his gift, I was concerned that this must have cost him a great deal.

“It would have if I had wanted to become a new viscount, but my grandfather’s title could be resurrected, as my friend told me. And the expense was no more than my half for that portrait of mine!”

We parted in very good spirits.

I have had no chance to talk to Elizabeth about this yet. I feel somewhat embarrassed and cannot see the reason why my uncle would want to do such a thing. I have been used to respect people for their views and honesty rather than their social ranking. But if Uncle Robert felt that I should have a title to go with my possessions, there is little I can do but thank him. He made it clear that he has done it for my benefit.

On reflection, there may be some benefit of honours being bestowed on Elizabeth? Certainly, in the eyes of Lady Catherine this might well pave the way for reconciliation? Or will she feel even more aggrieved?

Pemberley, 28th December

Elizabeth's views on the title were in accord with mine, but she admitted a little later that being called Lady Elizabeth Astwode would give all of her family great pleasure.

"So my dearest Fitzwilliam," she continued, "I am utterly resigned to this awful burden of respectability when it does come, but meanwhile allow me just a few more years of irresponsibility!"

"It could be sooner, my love. Uncle Robert is eighty after all."

"I shall pray for a very long life for him," she said and we laughed.

I felt such closeness that it makes my heart ache. Elizabeth had tears in her eyes. When I quizzed her about it, she confessed that it was the excess of happiness!

Charles and Jane Bingley have left us already because they are expecting the Bennet family at Netherfield over the New Year. Their decision to join us for Christmas was taken rather unexpectedly and they explained that the Longbourn party had to be offered hospitality at Netherfield at least for the end of the Christmas season.

It has been wonderful for me to watch Jane and Elizabeth together. They love each other dearly and I felt remorse again for having caused such pain to them by my high handed ways. But I was consoled for both ladies are so very happy now and would not allow me to mention the subject.

Lord Belvoir is expected to join us for New Year 's Eve and I understand that Georgiana and Miss Ratten are preparing some special musical entertainment for us. It is a secret and they are practising together in the West Wing away from the other guests.

We shall have our neighbours with us for the concert and for some dancing afterwards. Richard Folliborough has met Georgiana in the village and I wonder if this was by accident or design?

Every time I look at Georgiana now I see a change for the better in her. She is less shy, she manages to speak a little in company and does not avoid contact with young gentlemen, the way she did last year.

Pemberley, 2nd January

Miss Ratten and Georgiana have excelled themselves. Everyone who came to their concert clapped and clapped until the girls were obliged to replay some part of it. I think Belvoir is smitten with Miss Ratten and I could see that she often stole glances in his direction. Lady Catersham told me later that she would be in favour of the match as she thought Belvoir an honest man.

“Yes,” I replied in all eagerness. “I have known him for a number of years and the fellow is to be depended on, a recommendation I am reluctant to bestow on anyone.”

My aunt asked what I knew of his circumstances and I informed her that I was sure that his estates were unencumbered.

“His mother is eager for him to wed,” I added. “The only obstacle may be the man himself.”

“How so?” My aunt looked alarmed.

“When I had a chance to sup with him in London last year, he was telling me that he intended to fill up his diary with a few manly notes before he became respectable.”

“Fiddlesticks!” Aunt C. would have none of it. “If he falls in love, he will only think how to get his lady into his arms and not about his diary.”

Although I had to agree with that sentiment, I asked if she would not mind losing her protégé.

“I will contrive somehow,” Aunt C replied with a laugh. “I may even make myself unbearable to dear Alexandra by coming to visit her too often!”

Folliborough danced with Georgiana twice, I am sure of it. Elizabeth told me later that they seemed on good terms, but she noticed no partiality on Georgiana’s side. This is good news. Her coming out is not until next year and I do not

believe that girls of sixteen or seventeen are ready for marriage.

Pemberley, 3rd January

Fitzwilliam has written to tell me that his regiment will remain in London for the foreseeable future and that, having spent Christmas at home, my Aunt Barrow is asking if Georgiana will be re-joining his sisters at Roxbury. Their governess, Miss White particularly wanted to recommend herself to Georgiana. Elizabeth and I have discussed this together with Georgiana, and we think that Georgiana should stay at home. We shall try to engage our vicar as her tutor. He might be able to spare her several hours each week. The question of her languages is not resolved yet, but I have a mind to attend to this somehow.

Our neighbours have not left us unattended. We have now received scores of invitations to various parties and will start the social round as soon as we can. The question of a ball has been on my mind and although Elizabeth was not too eager to play the hostess at such an affair, my inclination is to proceed and we have set the date of January 22nd. This would allow all the neighbouring families to see Pemberley for the first time in years.

We are also to invite the Bingleys, the Hursts, Mr and Mrs Bennet with Mary and Kitty, and Lord and Lady Barrow with their children. Ratten and his sisters will remain here until the ball, and perhaps Lord Belvoir. Lady Catersham has accepted to help Elizabeth throughout the preparations and to support her at the ball.

Eliza is very fond of her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner. I came to respect them through my dealings with them in London. I know that she was a little apprehensive if I would welcome them at Pemberley. I assured her that she should not fear to invite them at any time it pleased her. They have now left, having had a "perfect Christmas", as Mrs Gardiner informed me. I do believe that their children have never had so much room to play and run around. Georgiana found them at times a trifle taxing, but she said that she took pleasure from watching them enjoy themselves so much.

In my reply to Fitzwilliam today, I have asked if he would like me to extend the invitation to Lord Thursby and Miss Thursby.

Elizabeth and I have spent most pleasant time on our own this afternoon when all our guests had found some other occupation. I talked to Elizabeth about Sir Walter Welham's lands and Uplands Manor. We are to go visiting there as soon as the ball is over.

"I find places have their own ambiance," Elizabeth said. "I was immediately enchanted with Pemberley. If Sir Walter's manor gives me a similar feeling, would it not be a capital scheme to spend some days there?"

I put forward objections. The house has a much reduced staff and I do not know the capabilities of Sir Walter's cook. But these obstacles were soon put aside when Elizabeth volunteered to oversee the kitchen herself. I was shocked. Eliza saw my problem and began to explain that Longbourn was not Pemberley, and that she was used to spending some time in the kitchens helping out on various occasions. I felt that I had to mention that Georgiana had never done that.

"Dearest Fitzwilliam, please give me this pleasure and please, remember that I only ask for this indulgence if I decide that the house is truly inviting."

How could I refuse such a request?

Pemberley, 10th January

We have now visited five of our closest neighbours. Some of those visits were on our own, at others we took those guests of ours who were willing to join us. Aunt Catersham knows most of our neighbours, so she was delighted to renew her acquaintance. She talked to me about Richard Folliborough and his obvious attentions to Georgiana. She advised me to leave the matter alone.

"I detect no partiality on Georgiana's part and this may cool his ardour," she said. "It will be more than a year before she goes to London. He may find another worthy lady before then."

I replied that I was glad she had not observed any feelings on Georgiana's part for Folliborough. Aunt C. is naturally thorough so I told her that Folliborough's father had been liked and respected by my father, and were it not for Georgiana's young age I would have few worries.

"In that case, I shall rest easy," Aunt C. declared.

Pemberley, 14th January

The Bennet family have arrived. Mrs Bennet has not uttered a sound since she crossed the front door. I saw Eliza try to make her at ease, but she has failed so far. The lady soon retired and we have not seen her since. Mr Bennet is in raptures, but in his particular way has already asked me about sport. I am eager to make his stay easy and will make certain that our shooting expeditions are exhaustive. There are also plenty of invitations from our neighbours, so if he feels at all bored with what I can provide; there is at least another month of excellent game to be had in the locality without having to go over the same ground.

Evening:

I am grateful to Aunt Catersham for taking Mrs Bennet under her wing. She occupied her with talk of Miss Ratten's season in London and asked if Kitty was going to have her London season this year. I managed to interrupt before Mrs Bennet could reply. I said that we were thinking of going to London for the next year's season, when both Georgiana and Kitty would be eighteen. If Mrs Bennet's look could be turned to gold, she certainly would have covered me in this precious metal. What I heard next astounded me.

"Mrs Bennet," said Aunt C., "would you think it an imposition if I took the young girls under my wing once Miss Ratten is out of my care? I must tell you in confidence that I expect her to have a marriage offer quite soon. I am sure that Darcy would be glad of it." She turned to Elizabeth, and added, "And Mrs Darcy might be equally glad of my help?"

Mrs Bennet assured my aunt that whatever her "estimable" son-in-law considered right, she would be honoured to give him her unstinting support.

Mr Bennet must have received the news by the time our evening was coming to a close for he came up to me and said, “Darcy, you must not be put in this fix. Kitty will do well enough darting from Netherfield to here every so often, attending assemblies in Meryton. Do not feel obliged to take another burden on your shoulders!”

I assured him that I was more than delighted to be of service to one of Eliza’s sisters. “Besides, we must not forget that it is really my aunt who seems eager to introduce the young ladies to society and continue to enjoy it as she must have done when she attended the season with Miss Ratten.”

“Kitty is my daughter, Darcy, and I should be proud of her. But I must be honest with you. She is a silly girl and I do not know yet if I should allow you to do it. Her portion is very small too, which I am ashamed to admit, but I cannot deny it; I have been an irresponsible parent and now my children will suffer for it.”

Mr Bennet’s frankness astounded me. Something in me responded to him and with all sincerity I assured him that I would undertake to sponsor Kitty myself, and it was possible that even with a small dowry she could find favour with a worthy gentleman.

“Your optimism is very gratifying, Darcy. I shall leave you now before I say something that might dampen your enthusiasm. You are very good indeed.”

I looked with admiration at him as he left me. Here was an older man, speaking with me in such a frank way as if we had been family for years.

Pemberley, 15th January

Elizabeth was speechless when I reported to her my conversations with Mrs Bennet, Aunt C. and her father about Kitty. I waited patiently for her response and when it came, she was as direct as her father.

“Kitty is in no way ready for society, Fitzwilliam. I even dread her behaviour at the ball. Are you sure you really want to sponsor her?”

“My Elizabeth, I do mean what I say. If Kitty is not ready to face society, it’s because she has had no exposure to it. Why don’t we do something about it? Perhaps she could stay here with Georgiana? We need to provide tuition for Georgiana, we could include Kitty in it.”

“Georgiana needs help with languages, possibly some more music tuition, geography and Latin. Kitty needs to learn basics. She needs to learn her manners. She needs to start thinking about serious matters, not officers, bonnets and dresses which is what she did with ample encouragement from Mother and Lydia.”

“I have a solution then. We shall engage a governess who is proficient with languages and who would have the duty to teach Kitty to be a lady of the first stare.” The thought only occurred to me as I spoke!

“I see Fitzwilliam, that you are serious. So be it, then. If you succeed in turning Kitty into a gentlewoman worthy of a London season, then all I will say is that I have married a man who is above every other man in the Kingdom.”

We resolved then together to approach the problem of making Miss Kitty Bennett a lady worthy of the highest society as a challenge. We shall both not spare any opportunity to improve her mind and her manners. Elizabeth assured me that Kitty will be flattered and could well be motivated by the lure of London balls, and mingling with the top bucks there. She was doubtful however, how long her interest might be kept.

We then talked of Miss Mary Bennett who is a year older than Kitty and could feel neglected. Eliza resolved to speak to Mary herself. If Mary wished it, we could ask Aunt Barrow to take her into her care this season when she takes Louisa to London. We could not help one sister and neglect the other completely.

Pemberley, 16th January

Miss Mary Bennett is adamant that she does not wish for a London season. Only on speaking to her myself was I satisfied that she was saying what was in her heart and not to

please us. I still recommended Eliza to talk to Mrs Bennet about it. It would be cruel to deprive Miss Mary Bennet of her chance just because she is studious and sometimes too outspoken, the worst, I suppose, being her mistaken idea that she excels at singing and playing the pianoforte.

Later:

Eliza talked to Mrs Bennet and related the whole to me. Mrs B. is of the opinion that Mary is not ready for London, but she added that were we inclined to sponsor Mary in the future, she felt it would be a boost to her “neglected daughter” as she called her, to see the delights of London, “even if she were not successful in attaching the affection of some gentleman.”

I agree with Mrs Bennet entirely and am pleased that we have not forgotten to consider the needs of both of Eliza’s unmarried sisters.

Pemberley, 17th January

Georgiana is in agreement to have a governess installed at home. I have written to Aunt Barrow to enquire if she knows a suitable governess who could be spared as soon as possible. Georgiana finds Kitty a little difficult on occasion but she has discovered that Kitty started riding at Netherfield and appears to have an interest. Our head groom will now take Kitty under his wing.

Lord Belvoir asked Ratten today if he could pay his addresses to Miss Ratten. So my aunt was correct. I was glad to hear Ratten describe Belvoir as a decent man.

Pemberley, 19th January

Aunt Catersham is beaming. She has told me today that Miss Ratten deserves to marry a man of Lord Belvoir’s standing. She confessed to being a little alarmed at the notion of not having a young lady at her side, however.

“I have realised what a pleasure it is to escort a young lady to various events and evenings in London. It is almost as if I were young again and doing the rounds myself,” she said.

She then went on to inform me that as it was likely that Eliza would be increasing at that time, I had no choice but to submit my sister and Kitty to her care in London. I was astounded at her conversation and simply reminded her that Georgiana's season would be next year and not this. Aunt C. added, "There is of course your mother's sister-in-law, Lady Barrow. Were you thinking of asking her to help you?"

I assured her I was not and that she would be the perfect sponsor for the girls.

"You better write to Lady Barrow then, Darcy. I do not want to feel that I am coming in her way."

I promised her that I would do just that. Meanwhile, I sought her help in trying to mould Kitty into a young lady worthy of a London season. I told her of our idea to engage a governess.

"This is an excellent notion. A good governess can make all the difference and the Bennet girls have not had that advantage. And do remember, Darcy that I am willing to take Kitty to Berkshire where there will be another social scene and my constant vigilance."

I greatly thanked my aunt. She laughed and said, "These girls have taken over my life, but I do not complain!"

I wanted to add that it gave her a purpose and enjoyment in life but I left the thoughts unsaid.

Pemberley, 21st January

The house is a hive of activity before tomorrow's ball. I try to keep to my study. The expenses so far have been somewhat greater than expected. Economies cannot be made when balls are planned and the household enlarged! I am not concerned. I have allowed an additional sum each quarter to provide for the increased expenditure.

The review with Middleton on the finances will be in the autumn when we know how the additional land has prospered.

Lady Barrow writes that Miss White, Louisa's governess, would be an ideal lady for us and that I may "have her at all

speed!” Since Louisa is having her season, Miss White could be spared as her sister, who is currently looking for a position, could take care of the younger children.

Various other sentiments were then expressed, and finally, my aunt writes’ “Miss White is a truly remarkable lady. She will do wonders for Georgiana’s languages and Miss Kate Bennet’s manners.”

I showed the letter to Eliza who said, “Dearest, we must indeed have her at once!” Thus I have written by return to welcome Miss White as soon as she is able to manage the remove.

Pemberley, 23rd January

The ball was a “resounding victory” for Elizabeth, as my Aunt Catersham called it.

“Your wife hides many talents, Darcy. One of these, a difficult one, is to be a hostess who knows how to make every shade of gentleman or lady happy at her house. You are to be proud, Darcy.”

I admitted I was and then my aunt went on to remark on other matters; the good behaviour of Kitty!

“I devoted most of my attention to her, now that Alexandra is so pleasantly preoccupied,” my aunt said.

I had indeed noticed Kitty attempt to leave the ballroom on her own. Aunt C. had managed, with one movement of her fan, to recall her and the girl had returned directly to my aunt’s side. My father, were he alive, would marvel at the change in his sister since the death of her husband.

Elizabeth is of the opinion that Miss Thursby has her eyes on Col. Fitzwilliam and listed to me the occasions she has observed that lady’s attentions towards him. Of his regard, she is not sure, but suspects he must have noticed the sings and perhaps is duly flattered.

Georgiana danced twice with young Folliborough, but I see no increase in intimacy between them.

Pemberley, 25th January

Aunt Barrow writes that Miss White will come to Pemberley next week. All our guests have now left except for Kitty. Miss Mary Bennet has received an invitation from Mrs Collins and will be going to Kent soon. Mrs Collins is expecting her first child in May.

I scarcely paid any attention to Miss Mary Bennet when in Hertfordshire, so I have made a point to remedy this during her stay with us. The conversations about her London season broke ice between us and I was better able to include her in various conversations.

Miss Mary Bennet is an extremely well read young lady and of a serious disposition. Some of her ideas are straight from her extensive reading, but she means well. She is perhaps the least beautiful of the Bennet sisters, but I noticed a most attractive turn of phrase, somewhat in the mould of my dearest Elizabeth. Her profile is also good, so there may still be some learned man whom she might attract. She studies people's characters too. She told me that this gives her a lot of pleasure. I have come to the conclusion that if Miss Mary Bennet was a child in a family without other daughters, she would have done well enough. But with four other girls all prettier than herself, she found a role for herself by being studious and different. I shared my thoughts with Elizabeth and she agreed.

“Now is her chance. She'll be the only one.” I said.

Uplands Manor, 28th January

We both liked the situation and the parkland around the Manor. Although I had seen the place before, I tried to gaze at it with Elizabeth's eyes. She thought that the row of yew trees to the side, leading as if nowhere was strange, but she admired the old oak trees scattered along the southern border and thought that with some attention the avenue could be made fresh again, and the rose garden on the west side extended so that it would reach the lawns bordering the house.

We stood outside for a good while admiring the Jacobean front and the “solidity” of the construction, as Eliza described it. She called the tall and broad chimneys “majestic”. When we went in, welcomed by Sir Walter's old butler, Elizabeth

shivered a little in the old stone entrance hall. Although we were expected, the entrance hall fireplace had not been lit and the hall was very cold. I asked the butler to attend to it, and he, rather worried, explained that his master never allowed the fireplace to be used. He thought it was a waste to heat up a hall where nobody stayed for long.

The rooms leading off from the entrance hall are somewhat dull. Eliza's solution was to introduce floor coverings and change the window draperies into lighter shades. Nevertheless, Eliza declared that she liked the house well enough to stay there. My enjoyment was nothing compared to Elizabeth's delight as we strolled from one room to the next. There is a general feel of old times about the place, yet each room has something of interest. I was struck with a large picture of Sir Walter's hunter. It reminded me of his visits to my parents when I was still a child.

Overall the house inside will need some attention if we decide to use it, but it can equally be left in the current state; the exception being the family gallery. Elizabeth suggested we turned the room into a music room, but one way or another, it will need redecoration.

We made the rounds upstairs and chose for our rooms a suite which we were told was last used by Sir Walter's father. I thought that we might have a difficult night, but it was not so.

I have now spent some time with the estate bailiff, Mr Brown, and have asked for my own steward to come and join us, so that we can continue the assessment of the property. Eliza has started to catalogue the house. She reported to me that little had been removed. All china, all linens are still present, and she is making lists as she goes from room to room. There is nothing missing from the purchase agreement, in fact there are more items in the house than listed. This speaks well for the servants who have had the task of looking after the house all these months.

We have spent here one night so far and the house is rather cold. Our dinner tonight was cut short. The wind got up to quite some strength and we both decided to withdraw to our

chamber. Draperies around the bed are most useful at such times!

Uplands Manor, 29th January

The wind was still at full force today and through necessity rather than choice I limited my inspection to the home farm and talks with the bailiff. Sir Walter ran his house and farms on the lean side, and so there is little I need to do to economize further. However, general neglect of some parts of the home farm is rather obvious and it does need additions to livestock to make it more productive. Since I am considering investing in a cheese making enterprise, I have impressed on my people here that the quality of milk produced would be my first priority.

Elizabeth walked into one of my conversations about cheese making and was truly interested. I asked her to stay if she so wished. We spent some happy moments later discussing my scheme and she was praising me for my “novel ideas”. I explained that with a mixture of fields, not all capable of producing good yields, cheese making was an obvious thing to consider. I will not transfer any current fields into pasture until I can see how well we can sell our cheese.

To this end we are to leave Uplands within a day or two. I need to see our own dairy farm at Pemberley and how we could manage in the space we have, if we double or treble the amount of cheese we produce. I am hoping though, that we can increase our production several times. We have been selling surplus cheese from Pemberley to two merchants. I will see how far they are willing to extend their business with me.

Pemberley, 28th February

Mr Bennet has just spent a week with us. He came unexpectedly, but was most warmly welcomed. I find him good company and Eliza is a clear favourite. It gratifies me to see her so delighted to have her father here. Before he left, he asked me simply if I minded his visit. I told him he was always welcome. He said, “Then I shall come when I find Longbourn too intolerable.”

Pemberley, 4th March

Eliza has made me the happiest of men. She is now certain that she is increasing. I advised her not to write to her mother or any of her sisters for another month or two. I understand her joy and her wish to share the news, but I would rather she had some quiet time before the inevitable visit of Mrs Bennet. We had a letter two weeks ago with the same news from Jane and an immediate post script that Mrs Bennet had arrived to “provide motherly attention”.

I hope I have convinced Elizabeth of my point.

Miss Mary Bennet is still in Hunsford and helping Charlotte who is expecting her first child. She writes that Anne de Burgh is her favourite companion and whenever the opportunity arises they spend time together. This communication pleases me. Poor Anne has been under the shadow of her overpowering mother all her life. If she can spend time away from her presence this must be beneficial. Elizabeth assures me that there is no trace of regret in Mary’s letter because of her decision not to have a London season.

“I know Mary well,” explained my dear wife. “It is clear from her letter that she finds company of Anne and whatever they do together very pleasing.”

Kitty is already a changed young lady. The combined effect of Miss White’s tutoring, Eliza’s talks with her sister and Georgiana’s gentle example and lead, has transformed Kitty beyond what I expected in such a short time. I write this because I caught her absorbed in a book in the library earlier today. I quizzed her on her reading and her reply was so precise and well formed that I ended up complementing her on it. She curtsied in a most proper manner and taking the book, excused herself from the room thus giving me privacy should I have been in need of it.

We are all invited to the wedding of Miss Ratten and Lord Belvoir. The date is set for April 25th. Elizabeth suggests that we all go to London first, least of all to make some purchases for Georgiana and Kitty. My protestations against the journey in her delicate condition met with rebuke.

“My dear Fitzwilliam,” Eliza said, “your concern is all very well, but you must consider my strong constitution and undoubted desire for the Darcy ladies to make a dash at this splendid wedding.”

I tried again to explain that had she had a child before and knew her own strength while carrying a child it would have been different, but with the first one... Grudgingly she agreed to remain while the others go to London as soon as possible. I have allowed them to spend ten days in London. Miss White is to go with them and Lady Catersham is to accompany them while they shop. Aunt C. is already in London and it was her letter that prompted the idea of the sojourn in London.

Eliza reminded me that this would be Kitty’s first visit to London. To this end I have instructed Miss White and written to my Aunt to refrain from spoiling the girl too much. She still needs to prove to us that she can be serious about life, about learning and about responsibility. Riding has been a great boon to her for I have noticed that she is frequently talking of her horse and her riding, but she has found it difficult to practice on the pianoforte and Miss White has had to get my support in trying to impress on the young lady, that when one has talent, as Kitty does for the instrument, one is obliged to nurture it.

Pemberley, 7th March

Eliza suggested, and I think it a splendid notion, that the young ladies go to the opera while in London.

“Kitty is bound to be impressed with the musical side, and so may look at her practice periods more favourably,” Eliza said. “And Georgiana should attend for she truly deserves a treat, if nothing else for being such an angel to Kitty.”

It gratifies my heart whenever Eliza pays Georgiana deserved notice, for although I am a very partial brother, I still believe that Georgiana’s excellent nature requires acknowledgement.

Fitzwilliam wrote to me today asking for my help in his entanglement, and entanglement it is! He writes that he is “a most desperate fellow” and also an “unworthy man, unable to

decide on the lady” now that his father made it possible for him to marry.

“Miss Thursby is such a wonderfully balanced and obliging young lady, while Miss Stevington still has that special place in my heart. If I declare myself to Miss Thursby, and this is, Darcy, my stronger desire, then I would have slighted Miss Stevington and dashed all her hopes. I do not know what I should do...”

I shared the letter with Eliza when she had some time to spend with me after dispatching the last orders for the journey to London. We sat together in the library, strangely happy to be discussing Fitzwilliam’s predicament.

Eliza had of course predicted Fitzwilliam’s partiality for Miss Thursby and was convinced that she had observed that lady’s regard for Fitzwilliam when they were both here at Pemberley.

His letter made clear he did hold feelings for Miss Thursby and so we talked about how we might resolve the problem of poor Miss Stevington.

Eliza declared that she could see only one solution, that we have Miss Stevington and Tom Freemantle here together.

“But, of course, we cannot make it obvious,” she said. “We need to invite the Hursts, the Bingleys and any other members of the Bedfordshire party who were particular friends of yours when you were staying with the Hursts last summer.”

This prompted us to consider various schemes for entertaining such a party and at this time of year. Elizabeth resolved to write to Aunt Catersham to ask for assistance. Unless we can think quickly of any other way of helping Fitzwilliam, the house party will commence in the first week of May. I am writing to Fitzwilliam to outline our scheme to him.

Pemberley, 27th April

We are just back from the wedding. Elizabeth is feeling well, although I suspect that she hides from me her morning

sickness. Her maid is intent on removing me from her mistress as soon as may be in the mornings, and I am now resolved to discover the truth. Why I should I not know precisely what ill my dear wife?

Georgiana was in great demand during the wedding festivities. She not only played most evenings, but was of considerable help to Miss Ratten prior to the ceremony. Aunt C. called her in for all occasions when the ladies were to be left together. I was told later that Georgiana's quiet ways were like a balm to the bride's nerves.

Belvoir's mother thanked me for making it possible for her son to meet Miss Ratten. "You know, Darcy that my son has been most reluctant to even think of marriage. No inducement on my part would sway him." The dowager spoke with animation. "And I can see that my son is very much in love, and his love is reciprocated. It does make me wish I was young again!"

I shared with her my own parents' happy union and said that love could come at any age.

"My husband took my heart to the grave, Darcy. I am not really inclined towards any other amorous entanglement. I simply rejoice watching my only son entering life with another, in such blessed circumstances."

I said something about gaining a daughter and possibly also being of help to the other young Rattens, since neither mother nor father were alive.

"Yes, that is a happy thought, Darcy. I am glad of this converse." And with that she left to speak to other guests.

If I am not mistaken the dowager Lady Belvoir will take both Ratten and his younger sister under her maternal wings. Lady Catersham behaved with much decorum and yet clear love towards her dear Miss Alexandra. I trust she will be happy to see Alexandra's younger sister under the careful guidance of the dowager.

Pemberley, 3rd May

Our guests are all here. I am a little worried about Eliza for she is still having morning sickness. She assures me, however, that by noon she is perfectly well.

Pemberley, 7th May

Aunt Catersham tells me that Mr Stevington is making eyes at her! His gallant behaviour has also been noticed by my dear wife. Eliza believes that there is nothing as uplifting as attentions from a gentleman when one is no longer in one's first bloom. I teased her on where this conviction came from, but she simply laughed.

I have had to disclose to Aunt C. our concerns about Fitzwilliam. In consequence she now knows why we have the Freemantle and Stevington families in our party.

"I am not a matchmaker, Darcy," she told me, "so do not look to me to help you out with the fix your cousin has got himself into, but thank you for telling me." Before she left me, however, I obtained a promise from her that if she had any ideas how we could help, she would tell me.

Lady Freemantle will always come out with some strange observation. She told me that she had hoped for a union between myself and her daughter. I bowed as low as I could and left her without a comment. What an unpardonable thing to say! Fortunately, Elizabeth was at the other end of the room.

Pemberley, 8th May

Caroline Bingley attached herself today to young Tom Freemantle. I watched with amusement how that gentleman struggled to get out of her sight, but all in vain. I was reminded of my own problems with the lady in the past. This, however, gave me an idea. If Caroline will make Tom Freemantle's life a misery, I shall enlist Miss Stevington's help to get him free.

Pemberley, 9th May

I shared my thoughts with Elizabeth for our guests left us alone to view one of our neighbour's property and will have their dinner there. Eliza's condition provided us with the

excuse not to join them. Everybody now knows that I stir outside little without my dear Eliza.

Eliza immediately saw a flaw in my thinking. The problem was not Tom Freemantle. The problem was Miss Stevington thinking that Fitzwilliam is still attached to her. We talked and talked about it, but unless I consent to someone dropping the news into Miss Stevington's ears that Fitzwilliam is now considering marrying someone else, the whole bother of having all these people at Pemberley would come to nothing.

"My dear, it is not scheming!" Elizabeth kept telling me. "We are rather helping poor Miss Stevington to realise that Tom Freemantle is the better man for her. In fact, he is the only one, for Fitzwilliam is not hers anymore."

I realised that what she was saying was right. Miss Stevington deserves to know the real situation. We decided then to approach it from two sides. I would talk to Tom to see if he would confirm to me that he was still interested in marrying Miss Stevington. And if the news was positive then Eliza would tell Miss Stevington openly of Colonel Fitzwilliam's new love.

Pemberley, 10th May

Today is the day of our ball, yet I managed to have a word with Freemantle in the library soon after breakfast.

"I suppose, I'm one of those men who will only love one woman." Freemantle explained when I started to talk to him. "I look at others, but see nothing in them of interest. By Jove, I wish you could help my suit with Heather!"

I admitted that I was truly interested in helping him and suggested that he would approach her father first in a formal manner. "Perhaps Miss Stevington does not know what is in her own heart. I am told by my wife that when one knows someone all one's life, it is a kind of blindness where feelings are concerned."

"Your wife may be right, Darcy." Freemantle looked lost in his own thoughts for a moment but then said, "Yes, I will do

it.”

“Go to it, then!” As I said these words, I suddenly thought of another young man who needed help and approval for his actions! I chuckled to myself remembering Bingley looking at me with consternation at first, then a wide smile had appeared and I knew that my encouragement to him to declare himself to Miss Bennet opened a flood of suppressed feelings. If it was not that I was already half way into my carriage and leaving Netherfield, he would have embraced me there and then.

Tom Freemantle looked at me the same way. He left me abruptly and I believe he went directly in search of Mr Stevington. I went in search of Eliza and told her about the conversation.

Pemberley, 11th May

It has all happened so very quickly! Miss Stevington’s and Tom Freemantle’s engagement was announced at the ball. Lady Freemantle came up to thank me and Lord Freemantle spoke so fast that I hardly knew his meaning, but I believe he is pleased too. They all seem very fond of Miss Stevington. It speaks well for the lady for her dowry must be small in comparison to Tom’s fortune.

Elizabeth later told me that she was sure of Miss Stevington’s deep pleasure. “She does not realize this yet, but she will soon understand that it was the best thing for all concerned. This unending drama with Fitzwilliam was doing her no good whatever.”

I adore the way my dear wife sums up situations. I cannot wait to see our child and how he or she will be nurtured by my dearest Eliza. I am certain that she will have a profound impact on the child’s character.

Mr Stevington emboldened by the good fortune of his daughter tried to speak to my aunt along “those same sentiments”, as my aunt reported to me. Aunt C. made it her business to avoid his company, and told me afterwards that “the poor man was visibly shaken” with her rebuff.

“Were I younger, I might have been tempted,” she said, “for the man is pleasant enough. Not now. I enjoy my widowhood too much, although I do miss my darling Catersham in many ways.”

I told my aunt that I considered the whole of my father’s family exceptionally good people. I only wished we knew what had happened to my father’s younger brother, William.

“We must hope that he is alive,” Aunt C. said. “India is a large country and it is a long way away.”

“But we’ve heard nothing these five years!” I replied.

“It is a long time, grant you. Let us remain hopeful though that my little brother is making his way in the world and desires simply to give us a mighty surprise. He was always keen on playing pranks!”

I said little else. My feeling is that he must have died, perhaps of some disease, in some remote part of the country. Aunt C. claims that as a member of one of the regiments sent there, he could not have disappeared without trace. Yet her inquiries have so far brought no further light to the matter. All we know is that he was sent on patrol with three other men and not one of them returned.

What with the engagement felicitations and everyone determined to be of best spirits, our ball was declared a wonderful event. All the neighbours kept saying how much they were looking forward to welcoming us in their homes in return.

Pemberley, 25th May

Kitty left with Lady Catersham a week ago. Georgiana insisted that she wanted some quiet time and so is to remove to Berkshire in June, but from what I observe she is rather lonely. Miss White has gone with Kitty. Elizabeth has become rather fond of Mrs Annesley who will be staying with us for another month until Georgiana removes.

Eliza tells me that Mrs Bennet will not be coming after all. She intends to make her way here for Eliza’s confinement, though. I am not sure if I am happy about this or not. My

initial inclination was to remove Elizabeth to London early enough to ensure attendance from the best doctors there. However, Elizabeth is adamant and nothing will sway her. Her mother did well without London doctors; she believes herself just as capable of childbearing as her mother and without much fuss.

I have written to Aunt C. to ask her advice. There are still three months or so to go, so we might agree on a compromise?

Elizabeth will insist on walking every day. She says that she has always done it and would miss it terribly.

“Darcy, stop this nonsense! When I do not have any more energy to perambulate along the lanes, then I will stay indoors, but not before!”

She was almost cross and very determined. I knew this not only by her tone, but also because she called me Darcy rather than Fitzwilliam.

Our cheese making has started in earnest. The meadows are lush and the cows are providing enough work for seven milk maids. I now have four merchants buying cheese from us and through this I have been able to increase the price of our cheese. The price is around ten percent more than last year. Elizabeth thinks that we should produce other sorts of cheese too, not only the local one.

“Surely, the cows are the same, why can’t you make other cheeses?”

I was short of an answer and wrote to Bingley to ask him what he does with his surplus milk. My Aunt C. manages a large estate too. She may have her own way of making cheese. I shall see what they reply.

Mr Bennet spent some time with me debating and observing the cheese making. Longbourn estate produces cheese for its own consumption only. So he was interested to learn how we do it on a larger scale. He is a most obliging guest. More often than not he is occupied in my library or talking to Eliza. When he does seek my company there is always a good reason for it.

Pemberley, 27th May

Fitzwilliam wrote to tell me that I am to look out for a betrothal announcement in the papers. Miss Thursby has accepted his suit and the wedding is to take place in Northamptonshire on September 22nd.

“I am of two minds, Darcy about selling out.” he writes. “Miss Thursby wishes me to be near her brother and become a country gentleman. Her brother has been most generous. We shall have a village in Northamptonshire and a smaller property near my parents.”

He wanted my advice but I wrote to tell him I had not seen the properties and that perhaps his father or Lord Thursby would know much better, having been acquainted with at least one of those properties for a considerable time.

Thinking of the changed circumstances of Fitzwilliam made me feel gratified. He is in a much better position now with Miss Thursby’s dowry than if he had married Miss Stevington. This is particularly so because his final preference was after all for Miss Thursby.

Pemberley, 29th May

Elizabeth received a letter from Charlotte Collins today announcing the birth of her daughter and praising Miss Mary Bennet “for her kind heart and constant attention”. Lady Lucas has now taken over from Mary and this young lady has managed to persuade my aunt Lady Catherine to take her daughter to Bath. Mary is going to join them shortly after going home to Longbourn first to keep her father company while Mrs Bennet spends time attending Jane in Netherfield.

The news of Lady Catherine agreeing to spend some time in Bath is most unexpected. I told my dear Eliza that my aunt hated any kind of disturbance to the daily routine at Rosings. Complain she might about how dull her life was there, but she would adamantly refuse to bestir.

We have received an invitation to the wedding of Miss Stevington and Tom Freemantle. The wedding date is the third of September but I doubt if Elizabeth would wish to be away

from the child to attend both weddings, and I think it would be unwise to expose her to two long journeys so close together.

Pemberley, 1st June

Aunt C. advises me to follow Elizabeth's instincts. "Women do know what will suit them on these occasions. So try to please Eliza and all will be well."

I was just about to suggest to my dear wife that if we went to London soon, we could stay there until the end of September when the visits to Lord Thursby's for Fitzwilliam's wedding, and Tom Freemantle's wedding in Bedfordshire could be made easily. I have not yet shown the letter from my aunt to Eliza, but I will do it soon. I think she will be at ease knowing the contents.

Eliza will also be pleased to read what my aunt has written about Kitty. "One of my grooms has a talent for teaching. And the horse he has chosen for her is just perfect. I am delighted to watch her coming back from her rides all glowing and eagerly waiting for her next lesson. And, Darcy, will be particularly pleased when I tell you that just one look from me and the young lady is quietly moving to the pianoforte, and stays there for at least an hour. Another year of such dedication and she will seek out the instrument herself."

I wrote back enquiring what incentives my dear aunt was using to turn Kitty into this paragon of virtues!

Pemberley, 15th June

The recipes for cheese making which came from Aunt C. have now been used. We shall know shortly what taste enhancement these will bring.

Bingley has written saying that he was so vexed with Mrs Bennet's constant presence at Netherfield that, "I have not had a head for anything these days, but my dear Jane who is so complying and so quietly taking all the strictures from her mother that it makes me ill! Be a good fellow and start looking for an estate somewhere near you, at all costs far away from Longbourn to keep this good lady at a considerable distance. I

have discovered that she is not very fond of travel, hence you are a lucky man.”

The letter went on in that vein for another page or so. I never suspected Bingley being capable of such passion. His previous letters have hinted at his discomfort with constant visits of Mrs B., but this one gives me an idea that he really needs help. I shall contact the local agent in Derby and ask him to keep me informed. In a way I am grateful to Mrs B. for being such a nuisance to Bingley. It has produced good results. My recommendations to him to buy an estate went without heed, now he is all eager. Thank you, Mrs Bennet!

Pemberley, 28th June

We tasted the new cheese today. It is somewhat different from our own. The opinions vary as to its likely success. We do not know what to call it either. I have asked the merchants to come and see me when they next are in the area. If they like the taste they might be able to sell it.

At dinner we discussed the cheese again. At last we settled that if it would be possible to sell it as a new type of cheese, we shall call it Catersham, to honour my aunt. I have now written to my aunt to ask permission to use her husband's name.

Georgiana and Mrs Annesley have now departed so we are much reduced at dinner. Dutton eats with us when he is here, but Eliza told me today that his spirits are much subdued. I hope this is not because of overwork. He will insist on attending to everything himself.

Pemberley, 5th July

The harvest started today. I have been away from home so much in the last three years that I have not had a continuous time to observe the activities on the farms.

Aunt C. does not like the idea of a cheese called Catersham. She suggests we choose some local name. Perhaps we should call it Pemberley? I intend to speak to Elizabeth about it.

Georgiana writes that my aunt is making their stay in Berkshire into a most pleasant interlude. They are visiting all the local families and there is always some sort of a dance or picnic, or rout. One of the neighbours is interested in putting a play on and both Kitty and she have been asked if they would like to take part. Aunt C. sees nothing wrong in this and so I shall write to give my permission. If Georgiana is keen to act in a play, it could be a real triumph over her shyness.

Pemberley, 7th July

We are going to call our cheese Pemberley, providing it meets with the approval of the merchants. I have sent out an invitation note to all four of them for nuncheon on 11th July. Elizabeth thinks that by being very civil to them we should get their good will. It seems to me to be a little excessive, but I am happy to oblige my dear wife.

Pemberley, 13th July

Mary has written to Elizabeth to say that Bath is a most wonderful place and that her stay with my Aunt de Burgh is not as demanding as she thought. She is allowed to go out for walks with Anne every day providing it does not rain. They also make their way to the Pump Room each morning where great crowds gather to converse and drink the waters. She is amazed at the ease with which she has been able to meet so many people, and that they are "most kind" to her and Lady Anne.

She does not mention Aunt de Burgh's activities in Bath, but I can imagine that she has card parties at home most evenings or else she is out visiting her friends. Mary mentions General Rogues who I think, was once Aunt de B.'s most ardent admirer. His presence in Bath should ensure my aunt's desire to prolong her stay. I remember my Aunt Barrow mention this gentleman. She was of the opinion that had that gentleman held a title and sufficient estates Aunt de Burgh would have married him.

Elizabeth commented that there was no mention of young men. I said that I doubted if any would be found in Bath at this

time of year. They would most likely be in Brighton or on their estates.

Pemberley, 14th July

I should have recorded in the diary that our merchants were full of complements about our Pemberley cheese. Eliza later joked that perhaps it was with Pemberley itself, but we have achieved our aim. Again I doubt if any merchants were ever entertained the way these men were. This is all Eliza's doing. She absolutely insisted that they were to be shown consideration. We have certainly achieved our aim; they are all going to start buying our cheese under the name of Pemberley.

One of the merchants, a young man full of pluck by the name of Price, said to me on the side, "Mr Darcy, it is a shame that you are not a lord. People would be buying your cheese in great quantities, no matter of its taste, if only I was able to tell them it was from Lord Pemberley!"

I was surprised greatly and Price laughed.

"Do not worry," he continued. "Pemberley is a well known estate and it will do us good to be able to say that it comes from here."

Eliza has had a letter from her mother. Mrs Bennet is making excuses about not being able to come for her confinement. Jane's baby is due sometime in the middle of August, and Mrs B. worries that she will not be able to leave so soon after. I asked Eliza if she minded it very much.

"I suppose, I do," she replied. "But it is rather too much to expect Mother to be in two places at the same time! We should not have got married on the same date." She finished with a laugh.

I thought of poor Bingley. My search for a property for him of necessity has now been extended beyond Derbyshire, for there are no large estates on the market anywhere near us. I have written to Charles to tell him and suggested that he places an advertisement in the London papers. These papers reach just about everybody.

Pemberley, 18th July

Georgiana writes again to tell me that she has the small part of a young country girl, a doctor's daughter, who gets lost in London and finds herself rescued by a lady who takes her into her house. It is there that she witnesses a love scene between the lady's son and one of the maids. She is required to run to the mother of the son to tell her of what she had seen and in consequence is thrown out of the house. The mother does not want to believe that her son is capable of such base behaviour.

Georgiana is also then appearing again as one of the ladies at a party where she is required to play the pianoforte. I am glad that they have found a speaking part for her, but I am not too happy with the play. I shall write to my aunt to enquire if she is acquainted with the plot.

Elizabeth is feeling well. Her morning sickness now well forgotten, but she complains of not being able to sleep well because the baby wakes her up. She thinks it's a boy, he kicks her so!

I am resolved to praise and thank the Lord for whatever child is born. Had my Aunt Catersham been successful with her pregnancies I would have written to her to come and assist my Eliza, but I think it would be cruel to remind her of her own problems with childbearing.

It has come to me to write to Lady Barrow. Perhaps she would be able to assist? I must talk to Elizabeth about it.

Pemberley, 20th July

Elizabeth will not hear of asking Lady Barrow to come.

“My dear Darcy, I shall be very happy to have my maid, the doctor and Mrs Reynolds. More than enough people to fuss over me!”

I tried to explain that Lady Barrow has had five successful pregnancies and thus be able to supervise and advise better than anyone.

“If she is a managing female, dear Darcy, please let me be. Mrs Reynolds has my full confidence.”

This argument spoke to me. I know that she respects our housekeeper and they have a great liking for each other. I understand it stems from that lady's devotion to me which somehow has also been transferred to my dear wife. Taking into account then that Elizabeth has not met Lady Barrow properly; their brief meeting at the wedding was too short to form any bond or understanding between them, I am reluctant to insist on this point.

Had there been more empathy between Eliza and Mrs Hurst I would have suggested inviting that lady, but I shall not do so. There has never been much liking between Eliza and Bingley's sisters. I know that Caroline writes to her from time to time, but Elizabeth takes her time in reply.

And then all of a sudden I hit on the best suggestion yet. I proposed to Eliza that we invite her Aunt Gardiner to be with her at her confinement. Eliza kissed me soundly before replying that this would indeed please her and she will write to her. And although we may end up with a house full of children as Mrs Gardiner would be reluctant to come on her own, I believe that the comfort of having Mrs Gardiner here far outweighs the discomfort of the noise from her children.

The harvest is progressing well both here and at Uplands. Of necessity I go there every so often, but I dislike leaving Elizabeth on her own. Even a carriage ride is not advised now.

Pemberley, 22nd July

Aunt Catersham has put my mind at rest. The play is only "vile" in that particular scene which Georgiana described to me. The rest is pure comedy and even that scene is comic later on. The young gentleman turns his back on Georgiana and just then his valet enters and sees his misbehaviour.

I find it hard to see any comedy in that, but my aunt tells me that Georgiana is blossoming in the company of the young ones. Kitty feels so privileged to be part of this "elevated" society, as she calls it, that Aunt C. does not even have to ask her to practice. "She sits at the pianoforte for hours on end, as if she were preparing for a public concert."

Elizabeth thanked me again today for making such a “difference to Kitty’s expectations”.

“You truly believe that I have made all this possible?” I asked.

“But of course, my dear Fitzwilliam. Your engagement on behalf of my family is very gratifying and has been so from the beginning. I must not continue for I shall end up praising you too much!”

I told her to be the guardian of my proper behaviour, never sparing me from any criticism when it was necessary and deserved.

“Yes, and I shall be the arbiter of when this criticism is due and you, Fitzwilliam, must keep quiet at all times.”

We both burst out laughing.

Pemberley, 30th July

I had a wonderful letter from Georgiana describing her 18th birthday celebrations. Aunt Catersham filled her house with roses. The ballroom had sprigs of roses suspended from all the candelabra and my aunt gave Georgiana a diamond brooch in a shape of an open rose. I will write to Aunt C. to thank her for making Georgiana’s day so special.

Elizabeth read out Miss Mary Bennet’s letter from Bath. It was such a surprise to both of us that I must quote a part here:

“Lady Anne is such a dear creature. She is becoming bolder every day. I thought we were going for another walk when round a corner from our house Lady Catherine’s carriage awaited us. She resolved to take me to a number of Bath shops and proceeded to order three new evening gowns for me, three pairs of matching slippers, likewise three day dresses and everything needed for them. When I began to protest at the expense and that my allowance could not possibly suffice, she dismissed this with a firm determination I have never witnessed before.

If you think that I have done wrong in accepting these generous gifts, please take into account my understanding of

what is happening to Lady Anne. I believe that were I to refuse, it would be the same as if her mother was crushing her independence again. So I have accepted it all and only asked what we were to say to Lady Catherine. Her reply astonished me again. "If Mamma will dare ask who has paid for these items, I shall say that it is very rude of her to enquire. And I shall make it quite clear that I am terribly displeased."

The letter goes on to explain how their acquaintance in Bath has prospered. They now dine with two other families and have been to their first ball. Aunt de Burgh fussed over Lady Anne and almost stopped her from dancing, but Miss Mary Bennet distracted my aunt with some remark and the gentleman managed to have his dance after all. When Aunt de B. saw that her daughter was not exhausted with dancing, she allowed a further two dances before taking them home. Miss Mary Bennet is convinced that Lady Anne's health has improved vastly and that their daily long walks have had a beneficial effect.

"I am beginning to think that Lady Anne would be completely recovered had she been allowed to be apart from her mother. Lady Catherine constantly fusses over her and it is my opinion that she has made her ill by telling her how weak she is. In fact Lady Anne is not weak. She is simply unused to any exertion. But having now tried walking and dancing she has colour in her cheeks, and is altogether a different young lady.

I do hope you will not disapprove of my further interference. I spoke to the General in most shocking way. I asked him to distract Lady Catherine somehow so that Anne would have more freedom. He laughed and laughed, and I thought that Lady Catherine would wish to be told precisely what was going on between us. But it turned out well for she was preoccupied with her game and barely remembered to quiz me later."

Elizabeth and I were delighted with the letter and the news it brought. Miss Mary Bennet seems to be managing extremely well.

Georgiana also writes that her stay with Aunt Catersham is turning into one big round of parties, theatricals and endless entertainments.

The play brought a lot of amusement, and as Georgiana says, "... would have been quite perfect if not that I had to perform in it and so was all in nerves on the night. Rest easy, however, my dear brother for I have no desire to become an actress by profession."

What change in my dear Georgiana to write to me such! Elizabeth and I were agreed that Lady Catersham knows how to promote freedom and give assurance to shy young ladies. And yet, she has never had the care of a family nor much contact with children all her life. Perhaps it is this freshness in her approach that has helped both Miss Ratten and Georgiana. We cannot wait to see our young ladies return home in the early autumn. Perhaps Miss Kitty Bennet will also be a very different young lady when we next see her?

Pemberley, 5th August

The days are now filled with the harvest and the waiting for the birth of our first child. Elizabeth sleeps little, for she cannot find a comfortable position. Her maid told me today that she was worried that her mistress will not have the strength for the birth. I have asked our physician Dr Summers to come to us.

Mrs Gardiner and her family are expected within days.

Pemberley, 7th August

Dr Summers was not worried. He said that the child should be coming any day now. I am again in two minds if I have done the right thing to allow Elizabeth to be among strangers.

Pemberley, 9th August

Mrs Gardiner is here. Eliza has cheered visibly and is feeling a little better. She has received a letter from her mother that Jane must be very close to the birth of her child and that she wished to come here as soon as she possibly could

afterwards. We have spoken about it and I encouraged my dear Elizabeth to write whatever she feels would be best.

This constant change in Mrs Bennet's plans is vexing and must be unsettling for Eliza, but she does not complain. She assures me instead that she is well used to it. Mrs Gardiner's presence is good for me, if not for my poor wife.

Pemberley, 16th August

Still no news either from Netherfield nor any signs of the child wishing to grace our home. We are all ready. The wet nurse is here. Dr Summers has come again today and explained that he would seek an opinion of another doctor from Derby. I am not to be worried about anything, but that he thought support from another professional would be reassuring for me.

I nodded in agreement and again worried if I had been too conciliatory in allowing Elizabeth to have her baby here rather than in London. But it is too late. I pray all goes well, while Elizabeth seems very jolly and started running round the house today as if she was not herself any more. I try to keep her amused but she told me off today for trying too hard to please her.

“Just go along to your study, dear Fitzwilliam, and attend to your estate business. I can manage very well without your worried face around me.”

Pemberley, 17th August

Mrs Bennet writes that Jane has been safely delivered of a baby girl! The birth was rather long but Jane is well. Mrs Bennet's letter is rather shorter than usual, but she writes that she will know in a few days if Jane can be left so that she might come here.

Neither Charles nor Jane has chosen the name yet. Mrs Bennet's opinion is that they thought the little Miss Bingley was going to be a boy and now cannot agree upon a name.

Pemberley, 18th August

Elizabeth has received a letter today from Jane with further details. The baby will be called Isabella. Charles is apparently still not himself, as Jane describes him. He fusses and fusses over her and the baby, and is even a greater nuisance than Mrs Bennet.

Elizabeth frowned as she read the letter and then said, "For Jane to write so, dear Fitzwilliam, is quite exceptional. She must be surrounded with endless enquiries."

"She may be also very tired," I said.

"Yes, she does write that she has not engaged a wet nurse and will feed her baby herself."

I looked at Elizabeth with questioning eyes. She avoided my gaze and then spoke again.

"Fitzwilliam, please rest easy. I have allowed the wet nurse to be in readiness here, but as you know I do not intend to make a decision now. All I ask is that you give me freedom to make that decision when I am ready."

I know that Dr Summers has spent some time talking to Elizabeth about her idea to feed the baby herself. Mrs Bennet has done it with all her children and Elizabeth feels that she would prefer to feed her own baby, but having listened to all the arguments, she has promised to make her final decision after the birth.

Pemberley, 20th August

Our son Edward John Darcy was born soon after eight o'clock this morning. I am exhausted having spent a sleepless night, but I cannot rest until I record this in my diary. Elizabeth is very tired, but she is looking at me with so much love and tenderness every time I walk into her room, that I can see she is just as delighted as I am. I have been into her room three times now and wish I could stay there. The maids and the nurse are quite adamant that I should leave, and allow them to attend to Elizabeth and little Edward undisturbed. Mrs Reynolds attended on me with such compassion that I finally realized I was being a nuisance to them.

Mrs Gardiner accompanied me throughout the night. When I think of it now, I see that her stay here has been so far of more benefit to me than to my dearest Eliza! I shall write to Mr Gardiner and complement him on his wife's constant care and thank him for sparing her to stay with us.

Dr Summers came about ten o'clock last night. Dr Wilkins from Derby arrived around six in the morning just in time to give support and encouragement to my poor Eliza. They have now both gone and all is quiet apart from a great bustle around Eliza's bedchamber. My dear wife has decided to feed her baby and so until this is accomplished and my son is fed and put to sleep, only then will Elizabeth be able to have her rest. I pray this is soon. Last time I went in, I thought she looked exhausted.

Mrs Gardiner assured me though that this is the ordinary way of things.

Pemberley, 22nd August

Little Edward is sleeping almost all the time. His father is anxious to see him with open eyes to determine what colour they are! He has no hair and looks rather strange. But I am told that this is as it should be. Dr Summers has also reassured me. He is of the opinion that Elizabeth is doing the right thing feeding her own baby.

"I know that many people in Mrs Darcy's position have a wet nurse, but my experience tells me that children fed by their mothers from the start are doing much better. The fashion is otherwise, but Mr Darcy, if you can accept your wife doing what she wants to do, then, please rest easy that I shall have a good eye on her and your son."

He left me feeling a little better. His promise to come daily has also helped me to accept that all is well. I am, however, retaining the wet nurse for another week, just in case she may be needed.

I have now written to everyone who should receive my news. Georgiana's letter was the first. I have also written to Lady de Burgh in Bath. She may make her own comments, but I believe that she would feel truly neglected if I had not

communicated my joyous news to her. It was her decision to cut herself off from me on the news of my marriage, but I shall never treat this as an obstacle to my duty to her.

Pemberley, 27th August

Mrs Bennet is not coming. She has written to Elizabeth to explain that Jane cannot do without her. My dear wife assures me that she does not need any more help. But I am somewhat worried. A short visit from Mrs Bennet would surely have been a comfort to her?

Our harvest is almost finished. I am now ready to visit Uplands. My steward has confirmed to me today that our cheese making is prospering. All the cheese we are making is being sold. As soon as the harvest is all in and we have sold our grain, I shall have a review of all our enterprises.

Uplands, 3rd September

This is my second day here and what I find displeases me. There is a general lack of management of the house; many rooms have not been touched since our visit here. The cottages on the estate which I agreed were to be repaired have not been attended to, and after the winds and storm last week, a number of fences are down, unlike in Pemberley where we have had no damage. This tells me that they must have been rotten and should have been mended long time ago, but no one pointed this out to me.

The dealing with the house I shall leave to Elizabeth. She will most likely have some ideas what is best to be done, once she is able to come and visit. But the estate will have to have a new manager, unless I can think of some way to encourage Mr Dutton to spend more time here. I really would rather not have to dispose of the men who were Sir Walter's trusted retainers if I can help it. It always leads to gossip and then ill will among those who are left behind. So, in the best form possible, I made it plain to Mr Brown how displeased I was to find his attentions to the estate lacking. He did not look into my eyes, which I suppose must give me some comfort.

Uplands, 7th September

My wife writes that she has an exciting letter waiting for me in Pemberley. It sounds mysterious as she does not say who has written it. I should think that she wants my return. I shall go tomorrow, but then will have to come back here within days. I have asked Dutton to look very closely at the estate books and if there is any query, he is to tell me with all speed. The more problems I find here, the more determined I am to see to it that Brown is removed from his post.

Pemberley, 8th September

The letter is indeed most unexpected. Aunt Catersham writes to Elizabeth about Georgiana and Kitty. They are going to travel with Miss White to Pemberley within a fortnight. My aunt writes: "... by then you would be comfortably settled with your little son. I am most reluctant to part company. In fact I should very much like to travel with them and share with you the amazing news about my long lost brother from India. I do not intend to say more now, but hope to astound you when we next meet."

I have already written to my aunt extending my cordial welcome to her. The news about my father's brother seems positive, or my aunt would not have written in such terms.

Mrs Gardiner is leaving today. Her children have had an excellent time. Her two oldest boys started to ride and were very reluctant to abandon their mounts. I think Mr Gardiner will need to put his mind to providing them with some horses in London.

Pemberley, 20th September

Our son Edward is one month old today. I can now confirm that his eyes are dark blue and although he has still almost no hair, there are traces of light, little wisps. His eyelashes are, however quite dark and I am told that he will most likely be a dark gentleman of striking good looks. Elizabeth dotes on him and they are inseparable. The only time we are together, without the attendant maids and his nurse, is when we sit down to dinner.

I must admit that I am looking at the world in different ways ever since the birth of my son, but I cannot describe it

sufficiently. I know that my love for Elizabeth has intensified further and that my love for my son is a very real thing now. I also feel a certain eagerness to do even better in the world than previously. I have also been thinking of some special present for my dear wife. I shall go to London for a few days once the Berkshire party are here. My aunt writes that they will all attend the wedding of Miss Stevington to Mr Freemantle on the twenty second before making their way to Pemberley from Bedfordshire. This means I shall be able to represent us at the wedding of Fitzwilliam in Northamptonshire at the end of the month on my way to London.

Pemberley, 26th September

Our visitors have travelled in great style. My aunt has had a new carriage built and when it drew outside the house yesterday, nobody was complaining of the usual travel discomfort. I was immediately determined to purchase a similar conveyance, but then remembered the need to retrench because of the purchase of Uplands.

Barely had the young ladies entered the house, my aunt went straight upstairs to pay her visit to the nursery. Everyone was delighted with our little Master Edward. He was passed from hand to hand and kissed thoroughly. The whole party then disappeared into their rooms to change and I asked my aunt to meet me in the Library together with my dear wife, so that she would furnish us with the news of my Uncle William Darcy, younger brother of my father.

“He is found! My dear Fitzwilliam, he is found!” Aunt C. was bursting out with clear joy as she began to relate the story of her lost brother. “It is William who has communicated with his regiment in India. The story I have is a firsthand account which one of the Captains from his Regiment told General Wexford here in London.”

I was impatient to hear more, so asked what the story was.

“Captain Reyfields has come home on leave and reported to the Headquarters that Major William Darcy has been found. He came to Calcutta, the regiment’s headquarters in India and reported the sum of his misadventures. In short, he was

captured by an Indian Prince, an enemy of the English, and kept prisoner in his palace. The three other men who were with him were killed in the skirmish. I understand that William has asked for home leave and this has been granted. Therefore, we should expect to see him any time now!”

“And all the details?” I asked in almost perfect stupefaction.

“Yes, yes, dear Darcy. He is bound to keep us entertained for months. You hardly know him, for he’s been gone to India these fifteen years, but I can assure you that my brother William is great company and very dashing, too. He will have scores of young ladies attend to him in no time at all.”

“What age would he be?” I asked.

“He left when he was just twenty, so he must be thirty five now.” My aunt replied and a smile was still on her lips. “In his prime, dear Darcy, in his prime!”

“And what are his prospects?” I asked barely aware that I was behaving like a mother of a prospective bride of my uncle’s rather than a responsible head of his family.

“It will all depend on what he’s been able to accumulate while in India, but in any way, I do intend to leave him all my estates.”

Elizabeth and I were truly moved by my aunt’s generosity and said so. But we could also see that she was prodigiously fond of her younger brother.

“Well, my dear Fitzwilliam, had I children of my own, dear William would have come second in any consideration, but as it is, he has to come first. You are well provided for and now Uncle Robert has not only made it clear that he will leave you his estate in Northamptonshire, he has also purchased you a title. I would be very mean indeed if I were not to look after my own brother.”

I agreed with my aunt and assured her that we were truly well provided. And in a jovial mood, I added, “I should think that I could have three sons and none would feel badly provided.”

Elizabeth looked at me with questioning eyes while Aunt Catersham added, "Dear Eliza, you have your work all mapped out now. Three sons in quick succession, please."

We all laughed and soon departed to our duties.

Pemberley, 27th September

Mr Bennet is here and truly delighted with his grandchild. I am so pleased he has come. He was very apologetic for his late visit. Mrs Bennet kept promising to join him, but eventually did not. So the poor man simply made his own way here. I understand from what he has been saying that Mrs Bennet thinks herself indispensable at Netherfield. Caroline Bingley came to stay there and left after only a few days; her presence not welcomed by Mrs Bennet. I wonder how Charles bears it all.

Aunt C. asked to see me privately after breakfast. She suggested a walk in the gardens since the morning was bright and clear.

"Do not be impatient, Darcy," she began on seeing my questioning gaze on her. As soon as we were some distance from the house and could not be overheard, she continued. "Darcy, this is just a warning. Your young sister is bound to attach any number of young gentlemen all eager to admire not only her beauty, but also her money."

I was very shocked and she explained that during the theatricals a young officer on home leave, from a good family but second son, began to show Georgiana some interest.

"I had to stop it," my aunt said. "The young man is not good enough for her. I do not think that Georgiana's feelings were too deeply engaged."

I thanked my aunt and mentioned the unhappy episode in Ramsgate with Wickham. She knew a little, but not all the details.

"This is very helpful, Darcy. I can rest easy that Georgiana will not fall in love too quickly now."

"Do you think this is helpful?" I was surprised.

“Yes, indeed. A young lady who has loved once will not fall in love too quickly for the second time, especially not when she’s had such an experience as poor Georgiana has.”

“I never thought I would be grateful to Wickham for anything, but now it seems that I must.”

Aunt C. laughed and then said, “We had a lovely time at the wedding. I mention this because Georgiana met a friend of Mr Freemantle there, Peter Stanope, the Earl of Repton.”

I quickly interrupted. “Georgiana and I met him by chance about this time last year at an inn in Rugby. He made himself known to us and mentioned that we were both at Oxford. I barely recognised him, but I do remember noticing that Georgiana made quite an impression on him. I was rather angry.”

“So he told me, dear Darcy. He told me that he met with your disapproval.”

“It was more the state of my own thoughts. I calmed down but I was upset because I had not looked at Georgiana as an attractive young lady. I must admit, I had not.”

“She is not only attractive, as all the Darcys are, but she has charm and most pleasing manners, apart from an excellent character and plenty of money.” Lady Catersham was laughing again and I was very grateful to her for her presence, and the role of mother she was beginning to fulfil to dear Georgiana. I told her so and we parted on excellent terms. I had to promise that none of this conversation would reach Georgiana’s ears.

“I have full confidence in Georgiana making the right choice. I do not wish it to be either hurried or confused,” my aunt explained.

I shared the contents of our converse with Eliza and she promised to be attentive to Georgiana if and when Georgiana decided to confide in her.

“This is not guaranteed, my dear Fitzwilliam, even though Lady Catersham suspects it,” my dear wife explained.

Pemberley, 28th September

I intended to depart for London this morning but an unpleasant situation has kept me at Pemberley – and may have turned out to be fortuitous! Last year I was told that there were problems in the stables, but these were resolved. Now the man has let us down completely! As I write, I blame myself for not attending to this with greater care last year.

Young Smith has been known to imbibe too freely, but nothing untoward was reported to me.

Smith took one of the gigs to Derby as he does weekly and never returned. Nothing much was thought of it at first, the others suspecting that he had sampled the bottle again and would turn up the following morning. Finally late in the afternoon yesterday, the head groom came to me.

I instantly sent him off to Derby to look for the lad. He could not find him at first. Then he met some people who witnessed the incident and told him that he was most likely in goal. He got involved in a nasty fight with some other men and indeed was incarcerated.

I have not said much to our head groom, Mr Bolder. He has enough to worry about now, but I will seek him out before I depart tomorrow and demand that he takes better care of his men. Any bad behaviour must be stamped out. It only leads to more and more difficult situations, and hurts everyone in the long term.

Mr Price, the young merchant who buys ever larger quantities of our cheese asked to see me this afternoon, and indeed would have missed me if I had already left for London as planned. He was a little shy at first, but soon came to explain his business to me. During his rounds it came to his ear that I was looking to buy some more land. I listened without making any comments. Mr Price, I think, cannot be more than five and twenty, astounded me before with some of his comments on our cheese making enterprise, so I was willing to give him more of my time. The young man explained that his business covers also the adjoining county of Nottinghamshire. It was in Nottinghamshire that he has been trading with an old gentleman, Mr Philip Shire.

“Mr Shire is at least five and seventy,” young Price said. “He has no close relations and one day when I asked him what he intended to do with his estate, he was very upset with me. However, the next time I came, he said that if I found him a decent man to purchase his land and manor, he would gladly remove himself to Bath.”

I listened with amazement. Bingley was supposed to place an advertisement in the London paper, but I doubt if he had done it yet. Mr Price was an unlikely agent in such a transaction, but I could not dismiss the story altogether.

“Mr Price, this might well be of interest not to myself, but to a good friend of mine.”

“I shall be honest, Mr Darcy.” Price said with an assurance rare in one so young. “I am in no position to profit from the information personally. My resources are not yet sufficient for a purchase of an estate such as Mr Shire’s.” He had a big smile on his face and I could see that he meant what he was saying. “So I would wish to meet the gentleman who would be interested in the purchase. This is so that I could agree with him my percent in the business transacted.”

I instantly had a vision of Bingley jumping to the purchase before proper investigation had taken place and promising Mr Price some inappropriate sum of money. So I decided there and then that I should be the main party to the negotiations.

“Mr Price, please rest easy that my friend is an honourable man. He has asked for my help and this I intend to provide. I shall be negotiating on his behalf both with you and with Mr Shire. My friend will join us once the price and all the major points are agreed.” As I spoke, I could see Mr Price’s surprise mounting on his comely face.

“This is most unusual, if I may say so, Mr Darcy?” Mr Price was direct and he further endeared himself to me with this remark.

“Yes, it is, Mr Price. But I shall rely on you to present this to Mr Shire in the best possible way.”

He laughed out loud and said, "Don't you worry, Mr Darcy. I shall tell him that you are buying it for your friend. He will understand that. This friend isn't an Indian nabob, is he?"

I admired the young man's shrewdness, but although what he was saying was not true, I felt it best to leave it at that. I simply assured him that my friend had complete confidence in my advice.

As soon as Mr Price left, I was eager to communicate this news to Bingley. Perhaps I will see him at Fitzwilliam's wedding?

London, 7th October

I have never seen Fitzwilliam look so happy. I took the role of groomsman and had very little to do. He has his own valet now who did an excellent job with his wedding attire, and Fitzwilliam himself showed no apprehension, as is sometimes the case with bridegrooms, while we waited at the church for his impending nuptials.

My aunt Barrow and all her family were in attendance and I was able to pass Eliza's congratulations to Fitzwilliam and the former Miss Thursby. Eliza would have enjoyed the occasion and would have found much to remark on.

Fitzwilliam and his bride have decided to continue living in Northamptonshire. He is selling his Oxfordshire farms and will look for additional land nearby.

I am here in London primarily to buy a present for my dear wife, but on my way back I am to stay the night at Netherfield. Bingley was not at Fitzwilliam's wedding and I need to find out what he has done to procure an estate for himself. Mr Price has written to me in London and Mr Shire is in agreement that I may visit him at my convenience.

Netherfield, 10th October

Netherfield has changed since last year. I suppose it is the constant presence of Mrs Bennet and the way Bingley seems to tolerate her interference. Our conversation about Great Diddicote, Mr Shire's estate, had to be conducted out of the

earshot of both Mrs Bennet and Jane. Bingley explained to me that he dare not speak to Jane about any removal from Hertfordshire in case she succumbs to Mrs Bennet's protestations.

"And these, my dear Darcy, are as sure as anything. Even Caroline found Mrs Bennet's presence too uncomfortable and has removed to Bedfordshire. Jane, an angel that she is, finds it impossible to stop her mother treating this house as her own. I cannot wait to remove from here."

This was the nearest to a thorough complaint that I have heard from Bingley, ever! There was such misery in his voice that I was touched. I asked if I had permission to negotiate on his behalf.

"Do, do, Darcy. I would rather not raise any suspicions here until I have to do it. Just write to me with the details and when you think it is time for me to come."

Bingley was sorry that they had not attended Fitzwilliam's wedding. "With Jane feeding Isabella it was out of the question, my dear Darcy. But if they are to stay in Northamptonshire we must invite them here soon. This is something Jane will enjoy."

Altogether Bingley's domesticity was pleasing, I was surprised that he makes no effort to bestir himself. Had he always been so agreeable or had I been so much in charge in our friendship that I never noticed how dependant he is on other people? I am beginning to see now why Caroline Bingley was so free to do very much as she wished, hardly ever referring to Charles, since he never checked her. This may have been happening for years, hence Caroline's constant management! Now I see that Jane is too weak to withstand Mrs Bennet's interference and Charles, though vexed, is not strong enough to oppose her rulings.

Pemberley, 13th October

My dear wife was so surprised with my present to her that I wish to keep her wonderful smile and big eyes in my memory for ever. I bought her a diamond necklace, matching bracelet and earrings.

“My dear, dear Fitzwilliam,” she began once able to speak, “how am I to thank you?” She looked at the jewels and then again at me, and putting them in the case came over to kiss me before adding, “Are you sure you can afford it? I thought that Uplands have stretched your resources and we were to be careful for about three years?”

“My dearest Elizabeth, my dearest wife and now mother of my first born son, how could I not mark such happiness as this? But rest easy, this has not put us in Dunn Street!”

She laughed, we embraced again and then talked of Bingley, and his worries. Elizabeth was delighted with the news that Bingley might buy an estate approximately thirty miles away from here.

“Oh, do help them, my dear Fitzwilliam. This would truly be a most wonderful thing to be so near my dear sister. Isabella and Edward playing together, oh I cannot wait!”

I had to remind her that our dear son will not be on his feet for quite some time, but Eliza was not to be prevented from a happy dream.

Pemberley, 16th October

My visit to Mr Shire and Great Diddicote was more fruitful than I anticipated. Mr Shire is a very old gentleman and rather tired with the responsibilities of a fair size estate.

“This here young man,” Mr Shire was pointing to Mr Price, “is a very shrewd young man. He could see how things were here. His father was doing business with me before him, so he was pert with me. But I do not mind now, no I do not mind now. I am pleased to meet you, Mr Darcy and let us see then what we can cook up?”

I was taken aback with his manners, but old men have a way with them which makes it difficult to place any objections.

I was taken on the rounds of the estate first. Mr Shire assured me that his house would still be standing when ten more generations of new owners have died. “The land is what

you must look at, Mr Darcy. It will either feed a family or it will not.”

As time went by I warmed to old Mr Shire and he joked even more. His knowledge of the lands he was husbanding was excellent and he did love them. I could see how he looked back from time to time as he took me to every nook and cranny, as if he were trying to remember some particular scene from the past.

When we sat down to dinner that evening he looked straight at me and asked simply, “Are you tempted, Mr Darcy?”

I replied simply too. “Yes.”

“Now as to the price, Mr Darcy, I shall not give you a price until you tell me who is going to live and work on my lands. Do not be surprised, Mr Darcy. I am selling my family’s home of three hundred years. Had I a relative worthy to take this we would not be sitting at this table together.”

I explained who Charles Bingley was and how dear a friend he was to me, and that his wife was also my wife’s beloved sister. As I spoke I kept adding more and more details for I suddenly began to comprehend that Bingley was not buying this estate like he might a piece of furniture, he was going to buy his livelihood and his children’s inheritance, and that Mr Shire had a right to know it all.

Mr Shire named a figure and it was reasonable, being only a fraction more than I paid for Uplands which is about ten per cent smaller only a year ago. He must have liked my description of Bingley and I openly told him so.

“I do not know if I shall like Mr Bingley, but I certainly like you, Mr Darcy.” He spoke looking into my eyes and raised his glass to me.

I thanked him and promised to bring Bingley to meet him as soon as the papers were ready.

“I should think, Mr Darcy, you would send your man of business here soon. It is just as well that we proceed quickly.

You may not wish for an additional complication should I die before the papers are signed.”

I made a comment to deflect from his meaning, but Mr Shire would have none of it.

“Mr Darcy, I mean what I say. I suggest that we sign a preliminary agreement today. Mr Price can be a witness and I will ask my butler, Tom Shepherd, to counter witness it. We might be well advised to be prepared for all eventualities. The Good Lord may call me to His Heavenly Kingdom tonight. It is well to be prepared.”

He repeated “be prepared” several times more and rang for his writing desk. We sketched out the basis of what was to be done and after inserting a clause that this agreement was only in force for the eventuality of Mr Shire’s death before the completion of the sale contract, Mr Shire called for the best bottle of port from the cellar.

“Now, gentlemen, the deed is done. All I have to worry about is who to leave my money when I die!” He laughed heartily and turning to me, added, “You are not poor, Mr Darcy, are you?”

“No, I am not, Mr Shire.” I replied.

“Do you have a poor relation, a sister too many?” asked Mr Shire.

I thought at first that perhaps Mr Shire was joking, but as I measured the old gentleman, I began to comprehend that I had to reply in all seriousness. “I do have a sister. Her name is Georgiana and my parents have provided her with a sizeable dowry. She is not yet married. My wife is a gentlewoman of good family of five daughters and no sons, and the estate is entailed on their cousin when her father dies. If your question implies what I presume, then any of my wife’s unmarried sisters ...” I stopped myself in time and began to apologise to Mr Shire.

He laughed again and said. “There is a condition to this. If I live long enough to get myself established in Bath, I would

wish to meet these sisters of your wife's, Mr Darcy. It is a reasonable request in the circumstances, don't you think?"

We laughed again and Mr Price added that if Mr Shire was interested in meeting any of his sisters, he would be most obliged.

"I might just as well make a difference to the prospects of some young ladies than give all my money to the Treasury?" Mr Shire spoke quietly before adding, "Yes, Mr Price do furnish me with the details of your sisters. I liked your father."

We parted soon after to our respective bedchambers. The following day was taken up with long lists of things to be attended to. I had my final surprise a few minutes before both Mr Price and I left Diddicote Manor.

"Mr Darcy, you have no objection, if I pay Mr Price for his services, do you? What is the sum agreed between you?"

I mentioned it and he smiled at Mr Price, wagged his finger at him in mock displeasure, and added, "This young man will soon be the owner of more than I ever was. His father was a good man and trustworthy, but his son is also very clever."

So we left in most amicable way and I was truly sorry to be leaving. I promised, however, to attend to the business together with Mr Middleton. And I could see that Mr Shire understood my meaning. He has become as dear to me as any of my own relatives, yet I have known him only for these two days.

As I travelled home, I meditated on the unusual closeness that developed between us. Did he see a son in me he never had? Did he once have a son and lost him? I resolved to find out.

Pemberley, 26th October

Mr Middleton has arrived from London and we are leaving early on the morrow for Great Diddicote. We have also engaged the services of my London lawyer who promised to come to Diddicote with the final contract. Once all the details are agreed with Mr Shire, we estimate that the preparation of

the contract may take as little as a week. I do not envisage any last minute obstacles from Mr Shire nor his neighbours, but should there be a problem, Mr Middleton assures me that he will know what to do. Charles is to come to Diddicote with the London lawyer.

I must say that I admire Bingley's complete confidence in me. He is neither curious to view the property now, nor in any doubt that I have negotiated a very good price for him. This last point has been made clear to him through our mutual friend in the City, who on listening to the details of the purchase price and what it represented, was congratulating Bingley on such a shrewd purchase!

"...go and act on my behalf, Darcy with confidence that I shall be for ever thankful to you for making it possible. I am just about to make this known to Jane, but still worry that Mrs Bennet will try to stop it. So, hurry and let me present the purchase of Diddicote as already completed. I am confident that my beloved Jane will be delighted with it, as to others, you know, Darcy, my thoughts on that subject..."

Pemberley, 28th October

I have not mentioned anything at all to Mr Bennet about the Great Diddicote purchase. Not because I do not trust him, but rather that I do not want him to be in an awkward position sometime in the future when Mrs Bennet demands to know why she had been kept in the dark on Jane's removal to Nottinghamshire. I am uneasy about this point, but since Bingley insists that he will be the one to break the news, I have no option but to follow his instructions. All Mr Bennet knows is that I have some business to attend to and must travel in this connection. He is most affable and has not been inquisitive or unhappy to be left alone.

His presence at Pemberley provides company for Eliza when she is free of her nursery duties and they seem most content to spend time together in the library or going for long walks. Eliza believes that Edward must have lots of fresh air to grow into a healthy young gentleman. I often watch them from my study window coming out into even the most inclement weather wrapped up and smiling. Eliza inevitably takes her

father's arm while the nurse pushes the perambulator with Edward in it some distance behind them.

Kitty and Georgiana are good companions. After dinner I explained to Georgiana that I rarely saw Kitty around the house and as such had no means of establishing my own opinions. She told me that Kitty is a changed young lady.

“Miss White praises her for her application to her studies. This should tell you, my dear Fitzwilliam, that Kitty is doing rather well.”

I have also noticed that she removes herself straight after dinner and does not stay in the salon.

“No, this is because she hates to waste time, as Kitty tells me herself. If she is not practising on the pianoforte or writing, or drawing, or reading she thinks that she is wasting her time.”

It also explained to me something Mr Bennet said recently; that Kitty was in danger of becoming a blue stocking. I thought that he was joking.

Great Diddicote, 30th October

Mr Shire is a most attentive host. I gather from the information Mr Price has given me that Mr Shire never married and that he rarely entertained anyone other than his close neighbours. Mr Price's father told him some time ago that Mr Shire's two unmarried half sisters lived with him, but they were both much older. His father married for the second time to beget an heir, but Mr Shire's mother died when he was no more than twelve. The young boy was then under the care of his half sisters. His father died when he was eighteen.

Mr Price knows no other details, but this is enough for me to understand my host better, and his interest in young unmarried ladies. Mr Price tells me that Mr Shire's sisters were no beauties. I suspect that he might have felt sorry for them and perhaps never made an effort to find a wife for himself, for the worry what this might do to his sisters? His gentle disposition confirms this to me and in my letters to my dear wife, I have tried to seek her own understanding on the matter.

Dear Elizabeth writes: "... you must promise me that somehow I shall have a chance to meet Mr Shire. If he will not come to Pemberley, then I shall go to Bath...."

Great Diddicote, 2nd November

We have completed the task of the inventory. Mr Middleton has everything he needs to take to London so that the contract can be prepared by the lawyers. I detected today a sudden sadness on the brows of Mr Shire. I knew what he was thinking. He was facing a removal from the place that has been his home and his ancestors' home for generations. There was little I could do to soften the crease on his brow, but I did tell him of my wife's dear wish to meet him.

"Your wife must undoubtedly be an intelligent young lady, Mr Darcy. I shall not promise to visit Pemberley, not yet, but you never know." He stopped before adding, "Did you say she wished to visit me in Bath?"

I confirmed it and explained that one of her sisters was currently in Bath with my aunt's daughter.

"Ah, that is most helpful Mr Darcy. Your aunt, is she a woman of substance?"

I confirmed again and added that we had become estranged because of my marriage to a lady my aunt felt was beneath me, but that the estrangement had not stopped her from taking my wife's sister, Miss Mary Bennet, to Bath as her daughter's companion.

"This Lady Catherine de Burgh, would she be friendly enough to enquire for me for some suitable lodgings or a house in Bath?"

Suddenly, I was almost willing to embrace Mr Shire and told him what made me so happy. "If my aunt will not undertake this commission then I shall go to Bath myself." I explained how I could possibly use his presence in Bath to contrive a meeting between myself, my dear wife and Lady Catherine and restore relations between us.

He laughed again and I was pleased that we finished the day on such a happy thought.

I was just about to bid him goodnight when Mr Shire spoke again. "You will not consider me strange, Mr Darcy, I do know that you understand me better now, so please oblige me and the dear wish of mine to meet Mr Bingley before the contract is signed."

I agreed willingly and promised that I would bring Bingley with me within the next four days, time enough to make the arrangements. The contract date was settled between us for the tenth of November. It would therefore, be possible for Charles to spend a few days with Mr Shire before the lawyers and the contract papers would arrive from London.

Pemberley, 5th November

Bingley has written an enthusiastic letter in response to my missive summoning his presence at Diddicote Manor for the sixth of November. My son and dear wife are well. Mr Bennet has now departed, so all worry about the information reaching him here about Bingley's purchase is removed. Dr Summers comes regularly, I am told, and is in no way displeased with the progress of both mother and child. This is reassuring to me given the lack of my presence at Pemberley.

We spent many happy hours together talking about every little thing that has happened both here in Pemberley and in Diddicote. Elizabeth cannot wait to meet Mr Shire and has written a note of invitation to him to visit us before he removes to Bath. I am taking it with me tomorrow. She is greatly anxious to learn how Lady Catherine de Burgh has replied to Mr Shire's plea for help in finding suitable lodgings for him in Bath. And I am to write to Elizabeth from Diddicote with all speed as soon as this is known to me. Dear Elizabeth has written to her sister Mary telling her about Mr Shire and his desire to settle in Bath. She believes that Mary will use her influence with Lady Anne to recommend Mr Shire to my aunt.

Miss Kitty Bennet entertained us this evening. I am very pleased with her progress on the pianoforte. Her special application has been most beneficial. Georgiana did not want to play. I understood that she wished Kitty to take all the credit. I am so very proud of my sister.

Great Diddicote, 9th November

Although I had written to Bingley giving a very detailed description of the Manor and the lands, I was a little worried how he would find them on his arrival here. But there was all affability from dear Bingley, all condescension and particularly towards Mr Shire.

I think that the bailiff here, Mr Smith, is not strong enough for Charles' management, but we can attend to that later. Bingley's knowledge of estate management is also very weak, but he listened attentively to Mr Shire and Mr Smith throughout these two days and asked sensible questions. He also inspected the house surprisingly thoroughly and spent a good hour with Mrs Willow, the housekeeper. I imagine he was telling her of the excellent qualities of his dear wife, Jane.

As our second dinner with Mr Shire was coming towards port, Mr Shire spoke out in all earnestness.

"I thought I liked you best of all men I have ever come in contact with in my long life, Mr Darcy, but I must say that I like Mr Bingley even more!" He was laughing, but I detected a small misting of his eyes.

I was delighted and told him what a dear friend Charles has been to me ever since we met. Charles coloured with embarrassment and told us both off saying that unless we would stop this nonsense, he would leave our "excellent, but over-partial company."

Mr Shire laughed again with true merriment and I proposed a toast to many more such happy moments between us all.

"Mr Shire, it is not often that one is privileged to meet an older man who is pleased with life and reconciled to the ways of the younger generation. May I please assure you that the pleasure of your company is all mine, and that both my wife and myself will desire to visit you in Bath as soon as you give us leave." Bingley replied on a serious note.

Mr Shire wiped his eyes and said, "Mr Bingley, I shall have my door always open to your good wife and yourself in

Bath.” He turned towards me and extended the invitation to me and my family. Then he said, “When my sisters died I tried not to think of families and other people enjoying family life. I closed myself in and became preoccupied with the estate and my people here. Now, I feel I have relations.” Again he stopped, and with his voice quivering with emotion, he said that he could not continue.

Charles and I raised our glasses to him and proceeded to drink his health. Then Charles went over to the pianoforte and gave a good rendition of two of his best songs, apologising that he was only second best in the absence of any accomplished young ladies. Mr Shire told us that the pianoforte had not been in use since 1770 when his last sister died.

Great Diddicote, 10th November

Mr Shire surprised us tonight with the company of his two closest neighbours: Mr and Mrs Archibald Dwyer and Sir Colin and Lady Harefield. He explained that he wanted Charles to meet his future neighbours and to receive from him advice how best to avoid any possible problems with fences, and the occasional encroachment on his woods. In particular Mr Dwyer’s eldest son, Michael, a very sporting gentleman, could cause an occasional disturbance because he would stray into Mr Shire’s woods in hot pursuit of a fox or some other game.

Mr and Mrs Dwyer came not only with their eldest son Michael, but also two other sons and one twenty three year old daughter. I was asked in direct terms by Mrs Dwyer if I was eligible!

I assured her that I was married and a father of a son.

“Lillian has not had her season in town, you must understand Mr Darcy, and we are not sure how we could proceed on this.” Mrs Dwyer continued to look at me with intent.

I considered Miss Dwyer and could not see anything that would recommend her to any of my relations. The girl was as

plain as I have seen, but Mrs Dwyer would not let me go without some answer.

She said, “Mr Darcy, you should know Lillian’s excellent character, her mastery at the pianoforte, her exquisite needlework. There is no other young lady in the neighbourhood who is her equal.”

“Have you no relations, no friends who could help Miss Dwyer once she was established in London?” I asked, being as open with Mrs Dwyer as she was to me.

“Indeed not, Mr Darcy. Lady Harefield’s daughters are all married and do not live in London, and neither my husband’s family nor any of my relations plan to remove to London in the near future. In fact my sister, the only one who could do it, will not have her daughter out until the season of 1804.”

The poor lady’s voice was broken. I thought she would start crying at any moment and so in desperation I bowed, and making it clear that I intended to excuse myself, I said in parting, “Mrs Dwyer, if my wife can think of any scheme for your daughter, she will write to you.”

I could hear profuse thanks from the good lady and her quick dash to Mr Shire’s side. As I observed her with a corner of my eye, she was telling her host of the “generous offer” I had made!

Michael Dwyer was quite close in years to Bingley and I saw how they chatted amicably. I am sure that Charles is more likely to join him in his sport than worry about any encroachment on his lands. I then engaged one of his brothers in conversation and discovered that he was destined for the Church. “My brother Algernon would also like to receive the orders, but my father thinks that one son in the Church is enough. He wants him to enter into some occupation now that he has come down from Oxford.”

I asked if he had any idea where he wanted him to work.

“This is another of my father’s problems. He has no connections in London and although Algernon studied law, he did not make any useful friends at Oxford. He is rather like

me, a quiet sort of a man.” Although he had a serious expression on his face, I detected a slight uneasiness in his manners. It was probable that he was trying to help his brother and was very uncomfortable about it.

Whereas I felt imposed on by Mrs Dwyer, I felt compassion for this young man and his brother. “Would your brother not wish to join some lawyer’s firm? Surely, his law studies have prepared him for it?”

“Yes, perhaps,” shy Mr Trevor Dwyer answered. As it happened Mr Algernon Dwyer came to join us before I began to look for him. I explained that my lawyers were coming with the sale contract to Diddicote and if he wished to talk to my family’s solicitor, Mr Spencer, I would be very happy to introduce him once the business of the contract was over.

“But to help you get into some London post, that is completely out of my power. My uncle Lord Astwode has a friend or two close to the King, but he is a very old man and I doubt if he would be able to help you.” I explained.

Suddenly Mr Algernon Dwyer was all animation and asked if my uncle would agree if he paid him a visit “wherever and whenever it is possible”. I wished I had never mentioned Uncle Robert for here I was engaged to write more letters on behalf of the Dwyer family.

Not to forget my promises, I wrote first to dear Eliza about Miss Dwyer and then to Uncle Robert, using the opportunity to enclose an invitation to Pemberley for Christmas as has been our custom for as long as I can remember. I was very glad that the other guests of Mr Shire, Sir Colin and Lady Harefield had brought no children with them.

Pemberley, 17th November

My diary has been neglected lately. The contract of the purchase of Diddicote Manor and the estate has been successfully completed. Bingley has agreed for Mr Shire to stay in the Manor until he has found a suitable place in Bath. The contract, through Mr. Shire’s insistence is complicated, mentioning all kinds of eventualities (Mr. Shire keeps on

talking of his impending death!) thus making it clear that the estate belongs to Charles even though he is not taking possession on the day of completion. It took me quite some time to understand all the legal clauses! The additional complication is the fact that the date of Charles' removal from Netherfield is not set, yet. Bingley feels that since he is still a tenant there until the autumn of next year, he can take his time. The only incentive to remove is the overpowering presence of Mrs Bennet. I cannot help myself noticing how differently Charles looks at his life!

While I was away, my dear wife received news from Miss Mary Bennet. Lady Catherine was most unhappy to help Mr Shire at first, but after "Lady Anne's persistent reminders to her mother of our Christian duty" my aunt relented and has started making enquiries.

Yesterday and today I spent with my steward, Mr Dutton, and Mr Brown of Uplands who was giving us account of the harvest there. Once this is finished, I shall continue my review with Mr Dutton alone. We need to assess how we are doing as a combined estate. The results of cheese making are excellent and the money earned should cover all the expenses of the bank loan. This has surprised me greatly. I need to understand therefore, if it would be advisable to transfer the poorer yielding fields into pasture.

Mr Price, as usual very aware of what is going on, has spoken to me lately about the latest innovations with the spinning machine. He tells me that a part of our lands would be ideal for a spinning mill. It is cotton now that preoccupies every merchant's mind. Mr Price thinks that we could easily install Mr Arkwright's machine, and assures me that I shall have better returns from this venture than anything else. I am to visit with him and Mr Dutton the mill he knows, and talk to Mr Arkwright himself.

Pemberley, 25th November

Aunt Barrow has written to say that she is excessively pleased with Louisa's engagement. This was news as I had not spotted it in the papers! Louisa's betrothal ball will be on the fifth of January and she expects all of us at Roxbury. "Please

bring my little nephew Edward. I am most eager to get a look at your first son..."

My dear wife was quite foxed with the scant mention of whom Louisa is going to marry. He is called Lord Frederick Sebastian Rolly but I cannot recall anyone of that name. We have decided that a gentle enquiry from Elizabeth to my aunt would certainly be acceptable. Elizabeth will write on our behalf excusing the journey to Oxfordshire as Edward will only be four months then. Perhaps travelling with him in the summer would not be a folly, but in the midst of winter I will not consider it.

Whilst talking about the removal of the young ladies to Roxbury in early January we remembered poor Miss Lillian Dwyer. Elizabeth is going to invite her to stay with us for a time in January.

"If we are to think of introducing this young lady to our friends and acquaintances, we must meet her first," Eliza added.

I had of course met her, but could not form an opinion on such a brief meeting.

"Dear Fitzwilliam, even if you had come to some conclusion on Miss Dwyer's character, I would still wish to meet her. You tell me that she has no beauty. Men can look at the same lady and each one will tell you a different thing about her. External beauty is often disputed, but when one talks of internal beauty then you are even deeper into uncertainties."

I listened with interest and although I agreed with what she was saying, I said, "Please do accept my opinion on Miss Dwyer's external beauty; she has none."

"Fitzwilliam, I accept it now, but allow me to hope that you are mistaken."

I looked at my wife for a little while and commended her on wanting to help a person she has never met before and left to attend to my duties.

Pemberley, 2nd December

Little Edward is smiling at me! Or so I am told. He does seem a quiet sort of fellow, only crying when he is hungry. Elizabeth finds his nurse, Dorothy, most helpful. The girl is local but seems to have a natural gift of cheerfulness. She sings and tries to amuse him whenever he is awake. We are both delighted with her. Mrs Reynolds, our housekeeper, recommended her to us.

Miss Kitty Bennet is doing extremely well in her lessons and Miss White gave us a very pleasing report. I called Kitty to my study. She arrived rather frightened and I had to assure her that the conversation was not to be too demanding of her.

After I congratulated her on her diligence and progress, I asked her if she had any special wishes.

“I do,” came her simple answer and then a long pause.

“What is it, Kitty?” I asked again, hoping that my tone was encouraging enough.

“If I were bold, I would tell you straight away, but although I do love living here, I am still aware how inadequate are my manners and how I cannot expect to have every wish of mine granted.”

This was probably the longest sentence I had ever heard from Kitty and it filled me with surprise. I could still remember the uncouth young lady running wildly around the house when she first came here.

She continued. “Georgiana and I are to attend the season in London this spring. Last year when this was mentioned I could not wait. Now I have been in society a little and with Lady Catersham where we met so many fine people...” She stopped.

“Are you worried about the clothes? Were you in any way disadvantaged at my aunt’s?” I asked.

“Oh, no. Lady Catersham made sure that my wardrobe was as good as any. My worry is that I am unequal to the task of polite conversation. The young ladies in Berkshire were dropping in French in their conversations and I have none.”

“You would like to learn French?”

She nodded. "I would. I asked Miss White, but she said that she was not told to do that."

"No, she was not, but it does not mean that she cannot. I shall ask right away. I am sure Miss White will oblige you."

"Thank you, Mr Darcy. It is most kind of you." She paused and I thought the conversation over, but then she said, "There is something else. Georgiana is looking forward to her season. I would prefer to wait another year."

"Is your French the only reason why you do not want to have the season this year?" I asked.

"It is the main reason. I should have worked harder at home. I wish truly now to be as good in all the arts as any young lady."

I would have been surprised to hear any young lady wish to defer her London season, but I could see that Kitty's motivations were sincere. "Can you leave this wish of yours with me?" I said. "As soon as I know what is best to be done, I shall let you know."

Once Kitty went out I asked Miss White to see me. The results of that conversation were as I expected. Miss White felt sure that if she had a whole year exclusively devoted to the teaching of Miss Kitty Bennet it would make all the difference, and that she would also have enough French to allow her to understand most of the simple conversations in any drawing room.

I then went in search of my dear wife. She was as usual in the nursery and listened attentively to all my news.

"But dear Fitzwilliam, if we wanted to make Kitty perfect we would need another five years with Miss White's exclusive tuition. I am not denying that it is gratifying to hear Kitty so interested in learning, but are you sure she will not fret when she is left alone while Georgiana enjoys herself in London? Will this enthusiasm not wane?"

I could not answer such a question. Elizabeth has known her sister since she was little and yet was not sure how to

respond to Kitty's request. I was in no better position. The answer came to both of us at once.

"Lady Catersham, we must write to her."

While Elizabeth went to write to my aunt, I was dispatched to find Georgiana and speak to her alone about Kitty's suggestion.

Georgiana was adamant. She does not wish for a season without Kitty.

We are all now waiting for the reply from my aunt.

Pemberley, 5th December

Lady Catersham replied by return. Her letter started with a reminder to us that she would be spending Christmas at Pemberley and that we should expect her no later than the twentieth.

"...As to Kitty's desire to become an even more diligent pupil, I am not surprised. I shall explain to you the reasons for my opinion when I am at Pemberley, but please accept that Kitty is one of the more ambitious young ladies that I have ever come to know. In the absence of any meaningful employment at home, she became dissatisfied and wild, never realising that she could enjoy something else.... My advice at the moment is to agree to as many lessons as she wants, but still encourage her to go to London, even if only as a disinterested spectator. Miss White could still cram her with knowledge whenever she felt she wished it and had some time to spare."

My dear wife and I were amazed at the sense and the deep understanding of Kitty's character pouring out of my aunt's letter. Elizabeth had tears in her eyes.

"I am ashamed of myself," she said. "I have not understood Kitty. No one in my family has done anything to help her. It is your aunt who has done so."

I stayed in the nursery until my dear Eliza cheered enough to promise me to think of some surprise for Kitty.

I have made my visit to a mill in Wroxton. Mr Dutton came with me and was very impressed. It was all most interesting and Mr Dutton has added this scheme to his responsibilities. He assured me that he could work with Mr Price.

I feel somewhat uneasy about Mr Dutton's mounting duties. If I suggest that we employ an assistant to help him with his work, he might take it badly. I am convinced though that the man is overworked and the addition of the mill will be more than he could be expected to carry.

I am resolved to find some excuse to talk to Mr Dutton about splitting his duties somehow, or making him suggest to me himself that we employ another man to assist him.

Pemberley, 15th December

I am travelling to London on the morrow. My Uncle Robert has written to say that he feels unable to come to Pemberley for Christmas this year. Elizabeth and I think that he might be worried to travel on his own, so I shall go to Welliborough on my way home from London.

I am to buy our young ladies some small pieces of jewellery to wear for the Roxbury ball in January. Eliza thought that this would be the best surprise for Kitty. Aunt Catersham wrote to say that she had already ordered two ball gowns for our young ladies in London, and I am going to collect these too.

Besides these commissions, I am to visit my bankers. The loan should be reconsidered in view of the good progress I have made with our harvest this year. Uncle Robert has also written to tell me that he would be very happy for me to borrow from him the remainder of the money I owe Hoares. I admit, I was touched to read of such a generous offer. He assures me in his letter that he has enough in his bank for both my and his needs. I am undecided what to do. As I write, I begin to see that if I were to consider my uncle's offer seriously (he might be upset if I do not), I should visit him on my way to London rather than on my return journey.

Yes, I'll do just that, and send my valet to Northamptonshire right away to prepare Lord Astwode for my arrival tomorrow. Hawkins, if he hurries, should make it to Welliborough before my uncle removes himself to his bedchamber.

Welliborough, 17th December

I am now armed with a letter written by my uncle and addressed to his bankers. I should have left for London today, but seeing Uncle Robert last night I felt uneasy. He is not complaining, but insisted upon taking me around the house, telling me of various "treasures".

"I am not long to go to my Maker, my boy," he said. "I would feel much better if you knew about the family portraits, some of the family jewels, before you read all about it in my will."

My heart was pounding and I wished my dear Eliza was with me. She would have embraced him at the most trying moments. She does know how to bring comfort in such situations.

"You have no idea, dear boy, how happy you have made me when you sent me that letter announcing the birth of your son, and so soon after your nuptials! Well done, well done!"

I told him the latest news about Edward's progress and how everyone thinks that he will be a most handsome fellow.

"More handsome than William? I would not be surprised. Your wife brought some good blood into the family, there is no doubt about that." Uncle Robert was smiling.

"What do you think of William's news?" I thought it a good excuse to introduce a new topic.

"Capital news, certainly. I would like to see him before I die. He was full of mischief, but he's probably grown out of his wild ways. You said he was about thirty five? Yes, that must be right. And you said that Lady Catersham would leave him all her money?"

I confirmed it.

“Well, now that he is found, I shall leave him a little too, in case he has not made himself a nabob in India.” He laughed and we spent some time chatting about India and what Uncle William could have been doing there all these years.

“You will like him, my boy. He had this way with him that endeared him to most people he met. I suppose his looks helped him, mind you!” Uncle Robert laughed again and I began to really search my mind for any memories of my Uncle William.

I was not yet thirteen when he left for India. My grandmother preferred to stay with Aunt Catersham once my grandfather died. William had spent most of his time either in Berkshire with Aunt C. or in London once he joined his regiment.

But what I do remember is one occasion when he took me with him shooting. I could barely hold a gun, so he tied it to my body and told me to push it with my arm into its proper position when I was ready to shoot. I never managed it, but I do recall his great amusement when I shouted in despair seeing a hare running right in front of me. I did not think it was a laughing matter that the animal was too fast for me.

I am to travel to London on the morrow and return for Uncle Robert on my way back to Derbyshire. He was reluctant to agree to this journey, but I managed to convince him that with my presence in the carriage and all the attendant servants, we shall be comfortable. I also dismissed his worry that he might die on the way. I know that my dear wife will make great fuss of him and distract him from these morbid thoughts of his. I have also promised that I shall bring him home when the weather turns for the better. He will stay at Pemberley for at least three months.

“I tell you, my boy, were it not for your son Edward whom I do want to clap my eyes on before I die, I would be staying here!” he announced.

London, 19th December

I have used the opportunity to enquire at Uncle William’s regimental headquarters. All I learnt was that he is indeed on

his way to England, but there were no more details. He is to report to London first, so I left a note for him inviting him to Pemberley and explaining that Aunt Catersham will be with Georgiana at Roxbury in early January. Of necessity the letter was quite long, for I had to outline my own marriage and so on.

The choice of jewels for Georgiana and Kitty was simple enough. I took the ideas from the colour of the gowns, as my dear wife instructed me. I purchased a good string of pearls for Kitty and an aquamarine necklace for Georgiana. These were mentioned by Eliza as becoming to her colouring.

Pemberley, 24th December

Uncle Robert has not been harmed by the journey, although he has remained in bed longer today than his usual early morning breakfast. All our guests are here: the Gardiners and Aunt C. The Rattens are spending Christmas with Lord Belvoir and the Bennets at Netherfield. Miss Mary Bennet is returned to Longbourn and will be spending Christmas with the Bingleys too. She has written that Lady Catherine has found a house for Mr Shire in Bath and he is to take it from the first of March, when my aunt will also return to Bath with Lady Anne "... because of the beneficial effect the waters have had on her daughter, but I know otherwise. Lady Anne would prefer to have a season in London rather than staying in Bath. But, she assures me that Bath is infinitely preferable to the complete boredom of Rosings. And to Rosings I am to hurry soon after Christmas..."

Pemberley, 28th December

Our Christmas celebrations have been most unusual. Uncle William Darcy arrived here on Christmas Day! We were all in total stupefaction. Eliza told me that it was like receiving the best Christmas present and to all of us at once. Uncle Robert's eyes misted several times and my Aunt Catersham, after she had spent considerable time crying profusely, did not want to let him out of her sight even for one minute for the rest of the day. The distribution of presents was forgotten until the evening. Uncle William had brought many gifts from India

and the ladies especially were admiring the Indian silks and shawls.

He has not told us much yet, although he promised to give Elizabeth and I a thorough rendition of his harrowing time when the young ladies remove to Roxbury to attend Louisa's engagement ball. Aunt C. has now heard most of Uncle William's story, but was asked by him not to tell us. Her departure for Roxbury and her closeness with her brother explain why he had shared his adventures with her already.

Uncle Robert has also managed to find out some details of Uncle William's fortune. He told me today that he would need to alter his will a little, but added that I should not be worried. "Welliborough will be yours, my boy."

Uncle William is vastly changed. My boyhood memories of him are sparse, but even I see a different man. He is tanned and lean looking as if he has had a difficult passage home, and perhaps before that too. He begged us to forgive him the want of solitude and gone to "walk off the Indian landscape", as he explained it. He has been sleeping long hours and for this he apologised to me. I repeated my delight in seeing him and assured him that he was to treat Pemberley as his home.

Aunt Barrow wrote to Eliza just before Christmas in reply to her letter. It appears that Lord Frederick Sebastian Rolly is the third son of the Duke of Scole. Aunt B. assures Eliza that he is an excellent gentleman and that Louisa will want for nothing. After their marriage they will reside in Norfolk near his parents. She also mentions that the Duke and Duchess of Scole will grace Roxbury, and in every possible way my aunt tries to impress upon us to change our mind and attend the ball.

Neither my dear wife nor I feel inclined to expose our little son to the arduous journey to Oxfordshire. It is enough that Georgiana and Kitty will go with Aunt Catersham. I think that Aunt Catersham has tried to sway William to make the journey too, but I understand that he would prefer to stay at Pemberley for the time being.

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Pemberley, 7th January

The Roxbury party left on the second of January and since then Uncle William and Uncle Robert have spent most of their time together: both staying in their bedchambers until ten in the morning and retiring early. Finally today, when neither I nor Eliza had much to do after luncheon, he invited us to hear his story.

I cannot possibly describe all the details in this diary, but I shall attempt a summary. His first ten years in India were uneventful. He was thinking then of taking his leave and coming back to England. His voyage was paid for and he was waiting for the vessel when some trouble brewed up in the neighbouring province. He had a reputation for espionage because he had learnt the local language. In the heat of the moment his general asked him if he would take three men and try to cross the enemy lines to see what he could learn. This was an unwise decision and Uncle William knew it, but out of obedience he went.

The command of the enemy was in the hands of the local Indian Prince who was in strong opposition to the English interests. The local East India Company trading was effectively blocked. But the Prince was not satisfied with that and began to create further havoc, also spreading his influence to the neighbouring rulers who had accepted the English dominion.

Uncle William's three companions were killed and he was wounded as they approached the enemy camp. Knowing that if he betrayed his knowledge of the local language he would have been instantly killed, he kept quiet and prayed to be spared. His prayers were answered for he heard how the Indians who carried him thought he would be useful in any negotiations with the English or for an exchange of prisoners. He was brought to the palace of the Prince and kept captive. Time went by and he got better. The Prince seemed to have

forgotten about him. One day a younger son of the Prince chanced upon him. This young man of no more than twenty was intrigued to find an Englishman in the Palace and began to visit him. At first all he wanted was to learn some English words and teach the prisoner his own language. Uncle William pretended he knew nothing and in this way their acquaintance prospered.

Meanwhile the political situation in the province was changing. The Prince was finding it more and more difficult to retain control. Some two years later, the young son admitted to his father that he was taking English lessons. The Prince removed all Uncle William's privileges, but then he began to change his attitude, and decided that the whole family would start to learn English.

The following two years were not so arduous, but Uncle William was still kept under constant surveillance. At first only the male members of the family were taught, but then the Prince's daughters began to be included. One of the daughters fell in love with my uncle and tried to help him to escape. She was willing to go with him all the way to England. She began to prepare for this by removing precious stones and jewellery from the Palace and placing them in the safekeeping of an aunt who lived nearby.

The day came for their escape. Uncle William was armed with the precise instructions how to find the aunt and the box deposited with her. She was to join him a week later in Calcutta. He managed to make his own escape, but the young lady never came to Calcutta. He stayed in Calcutta for three months hoping that she would come, but there was no news of her. He had already reported to the regiment and took his leave, but did not board a boat going to England because he still hoped that she might come. This was the reason why we heard of his safe arrival at the regiment, but not that he took the passage home, which he could have done right away.

When the story ended Elizabeth asked me to see her in the nursery. She was much affected by what she had heard and told me that my uncle must still be in love with the Indian lady, and that we should do something to help him out of his

depression of spirits. I was surprised. My uncle does need rest, but I detected no strong feelings when he spoke to us about the Indian lady.

Pemberley, 10th January

Eliza confided in me that she had managed to take Uncle William on a walk. This was the first time that he had ventured outside with someone else. This news alone pleased me. Mr dear wife is a clever lady and she has succeeded in obtaining more details about the Indian lady. Eliza is now firmly of the opinion that Uncle William's full recovery will not happen until he is able to understand why the lady never reached Calcutta.

Uncle William seems to be still living in the Indian climate. Eliza is convinced of this. She says that he thinks and says things strangely. I began to agree with her when she quoted some of his responses to her questions. We are at a loss, however, what to do. We must hope that with time he will become more accustomed to our ways.

Miss Dwyer arrived today. Elizabeth thinks that having another female in the house should help Uncle William's own adjustment to society. I am not sure.

Pemberley, 15th January

Uncle Robert has requested that his lawyers come to Pemberley to "slightly" change his will, as he explained it to me. I imagine that he has been worried about his nephew William. I do hope Uncle Robert leaves him a reasonable bequest. I have not heard about any wealth he may have accumulated in India. I suspect that there is nothing or very little. My grandmother and his mother have left him their portions. But if my memory serves me right that is only two thousand a year.

Miss Dwyer is indeed an excellent musician. She plays and sings very well. Eliza came up to me after her performance and asked, "Deny it if you will, dear Fitzwilliam, but with such a voice and such mastery at the pianoforte, have you once thought about her not quite perfect looks?"

I confessed that it was true, I had not and that Miss Dwyer was truly an accomplished young lady. I understood what my dear wife was saying to me, that the character of a person takes predominance over the external looks.

“And if you will just pay attention to Uncle William when she plays,” Eliza added. “You will notice that his brow smoothes, his body is all relaxed. I can just begin to see the amazing man behind those hunched shoulders.”

I tried to discover what my dear wife meant by an “amazing man”, but all she would say was that I would have to be patient and wait a little longer.

Pemberley, 17th January

The Roxbury party have returned. The ball was a resounding success, and Aunt Catersham says that both Georgiana and Kitty were much admired. Georgiana told Elizabeth that she suspected Aunt Barrow’s eldest son, Lord Adam, to have been rather smitten with Kitty. She also said that both the Earl of Barrow and my aunt were not pleased about it. Aunt Catersham has mentioned nothing, so I am not going to worry about Georgiana’s report.

My dear wife has convinced Uncle William that he should try to find out what has happened to the Indian lady. A report from India about her father and whether he has now accepted the English dominance would be useful. I find all this rather trying and cannot envisage a happy ending.

Uncle William is travelling to London and will stay there until he has succeeded in sending his enquiry to India. I am also sending Hawkins, my valet, with him, so that he can help Uncle William get himself kitted out into the latest fashions.

Miss Dwyer is quiet and studious. Elizabeth finds her company soothing and told me today that she would be very happy to have her stay at Pemberley for some time. I placed no objection, but reminded her that the aim of the visit was to see how we might introduce this young lady to any eligible gentlemen, and in particular to satisfy the request of her mother’s that we help with Miss Dwyer’s London season.

“That is your department, my dear Fitzwilliam,” Eliza replied. “I have my mind preoccupied with only one other gentleman and that is my wonderful Edward. You must know a number of young gentlemen who might suit.”

I was at a loss and said that I had never been asked to be on the lookout for an eligible parti for any young lady, and would not undertake such a task now.

Eliza laughed and laughed, and told me that she has never enjoyed such a scene as this before. When she came to kiss me in apology, we parted in good cheer.

Pemberley, 28th January

Miss Lillian Dwyer has been with us over two weeks now. The young lady seems indeed to be of a very pleasant disposition and a great reader. She has also started a very complex piece of embroidery in honour of the birth of our Edward. She entertains us most evenings and now that Uncle William is gone, it is most often than not Uncle Robert who encourages her to keep on singing and playing. Georgiana has asked Miss Dwyer to help her improve her own diction in singing. It is just as well that Mrs Annesley is no longer with us, for it would have been embarrassing for her former pupil to be speaking in such terms to Miss Dwyer.

Miss Kitty Bennet is still very studious. I cannot see her anywhere without a book in her hand or practising French with Georgiana whenever she is free of Miss White’s lessons. She does not neglect her music either, and in order to have a full day of study goes out riding early in the morning only twice a week. Miss Dwyer has agreed to help Kitty to sing better too.

Georgiana’s earlier report to me on Kitty’s progress has had me think that this attitude to studies would not last long. But I am proved wrong. Kitty still leaves early after dinner and in fact, it would only be a most unusual circumstance that would keep her in the salon after dinner.

Eliza laughed when we talked about Kitty. “It must be the effect of not being anywhere near her mother these last few months.”

Perhaps Eliza meant this as a joke, but I think there is some truth in it.

Hawkins is back and I am glad to have my valet again. Uncle William has now engaged his own man.

Pemberley, 3rd February

My dear wife keeps worrying about Uncle William and his prolonged stay in London. During our conversation about this today she had an idea of writing to him to ask him if he had checked the contents of the box he collected from the Indian lady's aunt.

“Being a man and totally disinterested in the jewels this thought may not have occurred to him. I only wish I had thought of this when he was still with us.”

After further consideration we agreed that there could not be any harm in writing to my uncle about it. We decided that the letter should come from me.

Uncle Robert has asked his bailiff to come to Pemberley. He feels impatient to be doing something. We have noticed that he chats amicably with Miss Dwyer and she managed to convince him to go for a little walk with her in the gardens today. The sun was out and although it is still quite cold they returned pleased to have made the effort.

Pemberley, 8th February

The reply from Uncle William has come. He admitted that he had not thought of unlocking the box, but that my letter prompted him to do it. He writes,

“ ... I shall never be able to thank you enough for making me attend to this. There were three bags of jewels which I have not yet examined in detail, but I have read and re-read the letter contained inside. Ushia writes that she discovered some days before our planned departure that her father intended her to marry an Indian gentleman. Unusual though the request was, her father granted her wish to meet the man before the nuptials. She was hoping to find the man totally unacceptable and so be ever more determined to run away with me. To her great surprise she found the man “acceptable” and began to

realize that her foolish ideas of abandoning her country and her father were unworthy of her.

In short, she explains in the letter that when I would board my ship she would be marrying this man. The jewels are her gift to me for the extreme cruelty of my position and treatment in her father's captivity. If you know or use a trustworthy jeweller in London please write to me, Darcy so that I can place the bags in his hands."

I do not need to write how delighted both Elizabeth and I were to be in receipt of such a happy missive. It made me realize again how fortunate I am to have married my dearest Eliza. Having talked over the letter together we have come to the conclusion that he should take only one bag to my jewellers.

Pemberley, 15th February

Uncle William is still in London. Georgiana and Kitty will be going there at the end of the month to have time to assemble their gowns for the season. Miss White is going with them and Aunt Catersham will meet them in London. Since we do not know how long Uncle William will remain in London, Aunt C. suggested that Georgiana and Kitty stay with her in her London house rather than in my house. She feels that her brother William may need to be left alone, and not be disturbed with constant chatter and excitement of young ladies. She is probably right and I have given my permission. Uncle William can look forward to quiet, undisturbed peace in our London house for as long as he wishes to remain there.

Elizabeth is convinced that Georgiana will find a worthy young man this year, but she feels that Kitty will not even try. And if this will be so, then she proposes that we remove to London next year with Kitty and Mary, if she is willing, and take Miss Dwyer with us. I am happy to comply but I have recommended that no promises are made to Miss Dwyer as yet. Let us wait and see what the season brings first.

Miss Dwyer has received a very good letter from her brother with the news that Uncle Robert's introduction for this young man has resulted in a position with the Horse Guards.

The King is very much attached to the Guards and has spoken for him. This is both unexpected and gratifying. I am sure that Uncle Robert must feel happy to have been an instrument in that young man's career. I am to expect another letter from Mr Dwyer. I presume he will write to Uncle Robert first, since my part in this is very slight.

Pemberley, 22nd February

Uncle William has returned. He is visibly rested and a changed man. Eliza describes it as "his brow is now up in anticipation of future happiness". He shared with Uncle Robert and I that the jeweller had valued the one bag he gave him in the region of £15,000 and more if he would reset some of the jewels into more fashionable settings. I understand that this was the smallest of the three bags found in the box. We are all delighted, but Uncle Robert feels that this is still not enough of a recompense for the hardships of his nephew's five years of Indian captivity.

Once I told Eliza, she laughed and said that the other two bags could have jewels worth hundreds of thousands. I had to admit that we would be in the dark until the complete contents of the box were valued. My dear wife made me promise to impress on Uncle William to examine the whole contents of that box.

Pemberley, 25th February

I spoke to Uncle William after breakfast. He listened to my suggestion with a quirky smile on his face and his reply surprised me.

"I know what I shall do. I shall invite your wife to examine the contents with me. She will find it much more exciting than I will, and more likely will know how the value compares with the first bag I took to Bond Street."

In all honesty I could not concur with his statement, but admitted that ladies in general were much more interested in such things.

When later I was ready to collect my dear wife for dinner, I found her still undressed. The contents of Uncle William's

box were piled high on the dressing table and she was staring at her image bedecked in a sparkling tiara and with an enormous string of emeralds hanging around her neck in three heavy layers.

“Fitzwilliam, just look at this! I told you that Uncle William would take the wrong bag to be valued. I would be much mistaken if these were not worth at least treble what the first bag contained.”

I had to call to put dinner back to allow Eliza sufficient time to change.

Pemberley, 1st March

Uncle William has been most generous to Eliza today. As we sat to dinner Eliza found a box placed on her plate and asked our butler what it meant. Poor man was tongue tied and looked at Uncle William in a questioning gaze.

“Well, Elizabeth, I thought you might appreciate this little box as a memento of your help towards me.” Replied my uncle, thus relieving the suspense in the room. I knew nothing of this.

Eliza opened the box to find inside the string of emeralds she so admired the other day. She was all confusion and tried to stop my uncle giving her this most generous gift. But he was not to be swayed.

“There is no special lady in my life, and you, Elizabeth being the wife of my closest relative, deserve this gift.”

“No, indeed. I cannot deny that what you say about being your very close relation is true, yet it must be rush of you to dispose of your, probably the most valuable jewel, in this cavalier fashion!” By this stage, my dear Eliza was almost laughing.

“Oh, yes, cavalier, is an excellent word to use. May I be your cavalier for the evening?” Uncle William replied and turning to me added, “Darcy, surely you have no objection to share your lady’s favours with me just for the night?”

“You mean, evening?” I said with a broad smile in Eliza’s direction.

There was a moment of silence around the table and then everyone just laughed.

Eliza made some more protestations, but Uncle William was adamant. Her role in helping him has been invaluable and it had to be acknowledged.

Later that evening when we were alone together, Eliza returned to the subject of her gift and tried to explain to me that since we were not experts at valuing jewels, it was too irresponsible of Uncle William to dispose of his potential wealth in this way. I assured her that my uncle was not destitute, and if he felt inclined to reward her for helping him to solve the Indian mystery, then he was entitled to do it.

I admire Eliza’s common sense, her concern for the wellbeing of everyone. If it is possible, I am ever more in love with my dearest Elizabeth.

Pemberley, 7th March

Jane Bingley has written to Eliza to tell her of her immense joy on finding her new home, Diddicote Manor, such a grand and special place. Mr Philip Shire moved out on the first of March, as agreed and they took possession on the third. We are to pay them our first visit on the tenth.

Miss Dwyer left us today. Elizabeth told me that she thought Mr Dutton was somewhat distressed when he took leave of our guest. If this is true then I would be more than grateful to the whole Dwyer family and especially Mrs Dwyer for forcing me to take note of her daughter. I do not know if Miss Dwyer feels anything for Mr Dutton but Elizabeth is determined to have Miss Dwyer back if only to allow Mr Dutton to see her again. I cannot think of any man whom I admire more and feel at the same time such compassion for. And he is so totally alone.

We are both hopeful that the Dwyer family would not disdain his advances. Although his job as a steward does not

recommend him to a high born lady, he is a gentleman and but for a want of money would be as high in society as I am.

Pemberley, 9th March

Uncle Robert is staying with us till May. The visit from his bailiff was most useful. Both Eliza and I are very pleased. He seems to be ailing a little at the moment, but Dr Summers has found no cause for it other than old age.

Miss Mary Bennet has written to say that she has now met Mr Shire in Bath. Their own return to Bath happened a few days later than planned because my aunt developed a cold. "... I must describe to you our first meeting of Mr Shire. Lady Catherine was taken aback when she realised that Mr Shire was such a gallant man. He kissed her ladyship's hand several times that evening and Lady Catherine beamed each time he did it. He seems to have a very old fashioned way about him, but it has served him well. I have been asked to play for him and read to him, whenever I have some spare time. In fact, both Lady Anne and I have visited him three times already and I am become so fond of him..."

Yes, Mr Shire's charm is irresistible. Elizabeth thinks that as soon as May is out we should go to Bath for a couple of weeks, least of all to pay Mr Shire the promised visit.

Pemberley, 11th March

Our visit to Diddicote was of necessity very brief. We stayed one night only, but even that required little Edward, his nurse, Elizabeth's maid and Hawkins to be with us. Jane and Eliza stayed in a sisterly embrace longer than I have ever seen two ladies thus occupied. I even thought for a moment that something was wrong, that my wife was not feeling well for she had tears in her eyes. But once apart the two sisters chatted with animation and proceeded to soundly kiss each other's babies!

Edward was declared to be the most handsome of any young gentleman that ever lived and Isabella the prettiest little baby girl ever. We were ushered into Mr Shire's commodious drawing room and when the two babies stopped being the centre of attention, I examined the room to see if Charles or

Jane had made any changes. I am a poor observer of such things, yet I concluded with all certainty that the Bingleys have not added even a small piece of their own. The room was exactly as I remembered it, except for one or two missing pictures which Bingley explained were Mr Shire's favourites and he had taken them with him to Bath.

Charles later confirmed to me that they had not brought anything of their own to Diddicote, preferring rather to get used to the manor first before deciding what changes they wanted to make or what new furniture to buy. It seemed sensible, but I could not help thinking that were I moving into someone's home, I would have tried to immediately make it my own. I talked to Eliza about it later and she agreed with me entirely.

"Jane has a very complaisant nature," she explained. "Whatever Charles would like, she would also like. I have often tried to shake her on this point, but to no avail. You can see though that they are extremely happy together?"

I have to admit that Charles is a different man. Gone are the deep shadows under his eyes which I noted in Netherfield. He is rested and full of his usual charm. Their move into their own house has been sufficient to bring my friend back.

Drinking port after dinner I asked him about Mr and Mrs Bennet and what they thought of this removal to Nottinghamshire.

"Mr Bennet was delighted and told me that I had done the right thing to remove Jane from her mother's constant interference. Mrs Bennet, I thought, would be very cross with me. Instead, she stopped talking to me altogether and I have had an easy time ever since I made the announcement. Peace, Darcy, complete peace!" Bingley's eyes were glowing and he was visibly enjoying himself.

"I gather from Eliza that Jane is very pleased with Diddicote and is not missing her mother," I said.

"No, by Jove, she is not!" Bingley was in high spirits. "And we are both thankful that Mrs Bennet is such a poor traveller! Long may it continue!" He raised his glass and I

joined in his good cheer admitting that there were good reasons to celebrate.

We made the rounds the next day as was only proper, and I introduced my wife to the general position and pleasant views of Diddicote. The rain caught us half way through and we returned to the house with Eliza promising Jane to come again soon to complete the inspection.

Pemberley, 13th March

The rain has continued unabated ever since our return from Nottinghamshire. The roads are getting into an ever worse state and Mr Dutton, who has just been to Uplands, tells me that we must repair the roof of Uplands Manor in its north-eastern corner. I am beginning to consider leasing the house to some merchant or military man. We could remove the valuable items into Pemberley and offer the house on a twenty year lease.

Mr Dutton approves of the idea and we have sketched an advertisement to be inserted in one of the London papers. Uplands is only five miles distant from Buxton and this could prove attractive.

I have mentioned this to Eliza and asked her which items of furniture or pictures she would like to bring to Pemberley. I am to get a list after another trip there. It is unlikely that we will find someone soon, so there is as yet, no hurry to attend to this.

As soon as the weather improves Uncle William is planning to remove himself to London. I caught him riding into Derby the other day and we chatted a little. He tells me that a great weight fell off his shoulders on the discovery of Princess Ushia's letter. I quizzed him more in Eliza's style than my own, yet he bore my questions without rancour.

I asked him if his feelings were still attached to that young lady and he replied that being in India was not the same as being in England. "I feel Darcy as if there are two of me. The new man is now in England and is confused about the future. I do not know if I want to be a soldier again and if I do not, then I do not know what I want to do. The person I was in India, I

am beginning to consider now to be the figment of my imagination. I tell you, Darcy I am still unsure who I am and what I want.”

I told him that it was no surprise to me. I assured him again that he was to treat my London house as his own and feel free to stay in Pemberley for as long as he wished. I even suggested that he joins the social scene and helps Lady Catersham escort our young ladies once the season starts in earnest.

“I might do just that!” he told me with good humour.

Pemberley, 15th March

Eliza praised me excessively for my conversation with Uncle William. She is certain that London is what he needs. Ever since that generous gift of emeralds Eliza finds it extremely easy to chat to Uncle William. I am delighted and can see how the family bonds are being established. Uncle William told me the other day that he admires Elizabeth and congratulated me on my excellent choice.

“If ever I marry, I shall turn to you and Elizabeth for approval. Had I married my Indian lady, I can see now that I would have found life in England difficult.”

“Why do you say this?” I enquired intrigued, but also pleased that he was able to talk about his past to me.

“The customs, the expectations, the ritual connected with life in India has very little resemblance to our own. My Indian wife would, most likely, find life here either unacceptable or so strange that she might have developed into some new creature. No, it just would not be good.” And then he added, “I am already thinking in a different way to what I thought and behaved like in India.”

“If you mean that you are returning to being your own self again, then I am delighted.”

“Yes. This is just that. I feel I am peeling off my Indian skin. I have been there too long, but I finally begin to realize I am at home, in England and that this is where I want to stay.”

I invited him to partake in a celebratory glass and he chose port of all things!

Pemberley, 17th March

Eliza has just received a letter from Mrs Dwyer. That good lady will be coming to visit us together with her husband and Miss Dwyer on March 25th. My dear wife has convinced me that inviting Mr and Mrs Dwyer would help Mr Dutton present his suit in the future. I am concerned that Mr Dwyer does not dwell too long on the part my Uncle Robert played in obtaining a post for his son Algernon. Lord Astwode is not feeling too well and we are rather worried about exposing him to any stressful situations.

Georgiana writes from London that Lady Catersham is truly spoiling her and Kitty. "...I dare not tell you, Fitzwilliam, how many ball dresses are already hanging in our closets and yet, we are not even half way through the purchases, as my aunt tells me..." It is gratifying to hear Georgiana in such an exuberant mood.

Pemberley, 20th March

Uncle William has left for London. He promised Eliza to write with the details of the valuations of the second bag. He has agreed with her that the best thing would be to leave the remaining jewels here. She was successful in convincing him that his future wife might find them appealing. He laughed and we both thought this an excellent sign.

Pemberley, 23rd March

A letter from Admiral Winstanly arrived today in response to my advertisement in The Gazette. Eliza was eager for me to invite the Admiral to Pemberley with all speed. I tried to explain to her that we have not attended to the roof at Uplands, but she seemed to think it would be a small thing. Eliza is convinced that the Admiral will either like the house or he will not. The state of the roof will not bother him until he has to decide on the lease arrangements.

Mr Dutton proved to be in perfect accord with Eliza's views and thus I am writing to the Admiral to enquire if he

would wish to view the property. Following Eliza's suggestion I am inviting him to stay with us in Pemberley.

A most unusual weather today! Snow first thing this morning and then sun, and a day good enough for a pleasant walk. Eliza insisted doing just that with Edward.

Pemberley, 26th March

Mr and Mrs Dwyer are rather overwhelmed with Pemberley. This should help Mr Dutton's suit, Eliza is certain. Miss Dwyer has not had an opportunity to see Mr Dutton on her own yet, I am informed, but Eliza is making some arrangements and assures me that this will happen.

Uncle Robert welcomed our visitors most cordially last night and surprised us by staying up after dinner rather late. Miss Dwyer played and sang for us, and I had to admit with all sincerity that we had missed her. Mrs Dwyer was overwhelmed again and almost cried. My dear Eliza stopped her by telling her of Uncle Robert's delight on seeing Miss Dwyer with us again. I shamefully stole several glances in Mr Dutton's direction and am certain that he must be in love. The effusive thanks of both Mr and Mrs Dwyer on behalf of their son were accepted by Lord Astwoode with good grace. Uncle Robert added that his friend had dropped him a note saying that young Dwyer was a real asset.

Eliza and I talked afterwards about the possibility of Mr Dutton occupying the Dower House after his marriage. We both hope that this would be acceptable to Miss Dwyer and her parents. If Uplands Manor were smaller and needing fewer servants, I would have been willing to offer that house to him. I know the man, however and feel that he would not accept it realizing that his finances would be stretched.

Pemberley, 30th March

We have a rather full house. The Admiral has arrived just as Jane and Charles Bingley have come to stay for a few days. The Admiral's wife is a most jovial lady it has been my pleasure to meet. She laughs and smiles and chatters, but all done with greatest decorum. The Admiral seems surprisingly

shy for a military man. We are to visit Uplands tomorrow, for the rains have been with us these last two days.

Mr Dwyer and the Admiral seem to have found joint interest in many topics, so I am free to spend time with Bingley. He reported to me that the management of Diddicote was rather more demanding than Netherfield. I was certain of this when I got the measure of the quiet bailiff there. I am advising Bingley to either spend more time learning about his lands and people or to change the bailiff.

I suspect that Bingley will do neither of these things and that the estate will suffer for it. Eliza says that I should talk to her father and encourage him to spend time in Diddicote. Bingley could learn a lot attending to the estate business with her father. I gave Eliza leave to write to Mr Bennet and invite him here at his convenience.

Pemberley, 2nd April

The Admiral and his wife have left us with a pleasant thought that Uplands Manor will most likely be let within weeks. Middleton in London will prepare the contract, but it is most probable that I shall have to visit that city myself soon. If it was not for the wrench it is to leave my dear wife and Edward behind, I would be delighted with the prospect of looking in on Georgiana and Kitty making their social debut.

Both girls are keeping us well informed of their various balls and entertainments. Uncle William has been a definite asset, Aunt Catersham reports. His good looks alone have created quite a stir among many debutantes. Georgiana also mentions this in her letter. They are all in great demand and find it hard at times to decide which invitations to accept.

“... and Fitzwilliam you must believe me that when I say we are surrounded by great crowds as we enter any ballroom, you must also believe me that it has nothing to do with either Kitty or myself. It is the imposing statue and good looks of our Uncle William are the reason for it. How is he to choose a wife among such a throng?”

Pemberley, 5th April

I had to prompt Mr Dutton to declare his feelings for Miss Dwyer. Her parents are to leave us on the morrow and I felt that he would be missing a wonderful opportunity. He left me so worried that I felt like suggesting that I do the talking for him! But of course that was nonsense and so I kept quiet.

Mr Dwyer sought me out later and wanted to know my opinion on the proposed marriage, and my assessment of Mr Dutton's character. I assured him that Miss Dwyer could not possibly have met a better man and explained that we would provide the Dower House for them, if they would accept it. Mr Dwyer told me that his wife had always hoped for a more advantageous marriage for her daughter, but for himself, he would be happy to accept Mr Dutton, especially as he could see how devoted this gentleman was to his daughter.

We made a special celebration at dinner and I have already dispatched a letter to Georgiana telling her of the engagement. The engagement will not be long. The young couple are to marry as soon as the banns have been read. It seems most sensible to me.

Pemberley, 10th April

I am to remove to London by the fifteenth of April. Middleton assures me that the lease agreement will be ready no later than that date. The Admiral has been rather difficult to deal with according to Middleton, but that most things have now been agreed. We visited Uplands yesterday and removed a number of pictures and some china. The rest is well inventoried and Middleton should have the list tomorrow.

The repairs to the roof are now the Admiral's responsibility, but he has insisted on a reduction in rent for the first quarter. He has also demanded that we allocate ten acres to the side of the house as part of the agreement. He wants the option to breed horses and finds that the park and gardens are not sufficient for it. The request came rather late in negotiations and Middleton reported to me that the Admiral was unwilling to increase the amount of rent. I wrote back saying that I trusted in his ability to provide the best deal possible and heard a day or so later, that he had managed to increase the rent very slightly.

London, 16th April

The contract is signed and I am staying a few days in London to oblige Aunt Catersham. Lord Repton is attending the season and Georgiana is often found conversing with him. My aunt wishes me to observe the young couple before I return to Pemberley.

Late evening: I have been to Lady Dalrymple's ball together with Uncle William, Georgiana, Kitty and Lady Catersham. I could witness for myself the demand for my uncle's company, but could detect no partiality towards any of the young ladies he danced with. However, I am quite certain that Georgiana and Lord Repton are on very easy terms and if not in love, they are certainly very fond of each other's company. Uncle William danced with Kitty twice. I do not know if this was by design or if there is some pleasure they both find in vexing me, for I caught them looking at me in a rather amused way.

Kitty also danced twice with Lord Adam Barrow, Uncle Barrow's eldest son. I was reminded of Georgiana's comment after they returned from Louisa's engagement ball at Roxbury. That young man is so different to his brother Colonel Fitzwilliam that I always find it hard to know how to treat him. We exchanged a few words. I was told that Fitzwilliam is so domesticated now that he refuses to come to London. His wife is increasing too.

I made an appropriate comment that ladies in her condition should not really travel, but he did not seem interested in listening to me. He left the ball soon after and I followed suit.

It is agreed between my aunt and I that Georgiana's and Kitty's come out ball will take place later in the season. We have fixed the date for May 25th.

London, 18th April

Eliza writes that she is very worried about Lord Astwode and begs me to return home soon. I have already ordered my carriage and will depart within the hour.

Pemberley, 22nd April

Dr Summers tells me that there is very little he can do for my uncle. His breathing is laboured and he has not left his bed these three days. I am writing to Aunt Catersham in London.

Pemberley, 24th April

My Uncle Robert died in his sleep yesterday. Our plans to visit Bingleys at Diddicote Manor in early May have now been postponed. I am writing all the letters I need to send. Elizabeth and I are so very, very sad. I am not thinking too clearly.

Mr Dutton says that he will postpone his wedding. It will now take place in Nottinghamshire at the end of May.

Pemberley, 26th April

We decided to bury Uncle Robert here in our Pemberley church. The funeral service was simple, but beautifully done. I thanked our vicar profusely. Apart from Aunt Catersham and Uncle William who are both here, we have not asked anyone else to share these painful moments with us. Georgiana and Kitty have been crying rather a lot. I had not realised how fond Georgiana had been of Uncle Robert. Kitty also seems very sensitive to our grief and I am most grateful to her for her support to Georgiana.

There is no question of resuming the London season, nor would Georgiana and Kitty want it.

The lawyers are coming tomorrow for the reading of the will.

Pemberley, 27th April

We were all astounded with the wealth in my uncle's possession. I personally have benefited immensely, not only through his will, but also because Uncle Robert insisted on paying off my Hoares bankers' loan in December. He must have been very careful all his life, as well as a very shrewd investor. He left me Welliborough House and the lands (some seven villages in all) which once belonged to the earls of Astwoode. He left Uncle William all his investments which amount to more than one hundred and twenty thousand

pounds. He left Georgiana an annuity of one thousand pounds as well as most of the jewels in his possession. When he took me round Welliborough he explained to me that apart from Astwode family jewels (these can now be worn by my dear Elizabeth!), there were also jewels of a distant aunt who left these to him. Then he has provided very generous amounts to all his servants. He has remembered to leave something for Miss Kitty and Miss Mary Bennet. They have received five thousands each. This last bequest was so truly generous and unexpected that we perhaps cried more after that news than any other. Eliza will write to her sister Mary in Bath with the news today.

There was a lot of crying and consternation as the lawyers read out my uncle's wishes. He also left a personal message to me:

“... I want my heir, Baron Fosston Darcy, the Eighth Earl of Astwode and Pemberley, my dear Fitzwilliam George Darcy to forgive me for my constant calling him,” my boy”. But I was so very fond of him that I often wished he had indeed been my own son. And this in a way he has become, through his unstinting care and love he has always shown me. Where I am going you, Lord Astwode and Pemberley, cannot go yet, but when you do, my dear boy, rest easy that I shall use any influence I may have there to ensure a great feast for your reception! May God keep you in His tender care and may your whole family be as loving and as close together always as I have personally witnessed it. God bless you all. Amen.”

Pemberley, 30th April

We are still mainly talking of my Uncle Robert, his generosity, his lonely life and his many bequests. Mary Bennet has written a letter which I wish to quote here, at least in part: “... How is it that a man I hardly know would even deign to think of me, even less so to consider me in his will! I do not deserve it. Lady Catherine told me some details of his life which made me cry, yet she looked at me with uncomprehending eyes. Lady Anne, however, told me later she understood the depth of my emotions. This made her ever more dear to me. If I succeed in removing Lady Anne from the

overpowering influence of her mother, at least that could be said of me: “she did a good deed once in her life”. Nothing, of course as wonderful and generous as your Uncle Robert, the earl of Astwode, a saint of a man...”

Uncle William, astounded as he was by the enormous bequest, has now decided to remain at Pemberley till the summer. This pleases everyone. Aunt Catersham was also pleased, but added that since he was to be the owner of her lands one day, she thought he might want to attend to the harvest with her. He was all compliance.

Mr Dutton and Miss Dwyer will live in Welliborough after I find a replacement to steward my estates in Pemberley and Uplands. The arrangements I have proposed are generous but this is the least I could do in view of the total trust I have in the man to look after that estate as if it was his very own. Mr Dutton tried to make me change my mind on the terms of his living in the Manor, but I insisted that all the costs connected with the upkeep of the house, most of the servants and their expenses would be covered by the estate. He will only make a very small contribution by paying for his personal servants. In fact, I am now thinking that I might offer him some personal gain once I have observed the average yields over the next two to three years.

I feel almost ashamed that I did not think generously enough about Uplands Manor for Mr Dutton earlier, but as it is, Uncle Robert’s estate is even more prestigious, the house is truly grand and better situated. Mr and Mrs Dutton will live in some ease and style. He deserves it. Miss Dwyer’s mother will surely be pleased! Eliza remarked about this to me. Kitty and Georgiana were equally in agreement. Ladies do see things in a deeper way, or should I say differently?

The question remains as to how soon they could move into Welliborough. I have no immediate ideas who could take over the stewardship of Pemberley and Uplands, but I shall attend to this with all speed. Meanwhile, it is agreeable to all concerned that they will live in the Pemberley Dower House after the wedding. The question of the management of the mill

becomes ever more urgent and this I must also attend to with equal speed.

I went yesterday to Derby to meet some fellows to talk over the mill scheme further. One of them addressed me as Lord Astwode. I looked at the man perhaps a moment too long, but he took me by surprise. When I got home I used the title on my dear wife. I can still see the amusement and the surprise in her eyes, the dear, dear eyes of my countess, Lady Elizabeth.

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