

MR. BENNET

I am glad to see you both. In your absence our evening conversation has lost much of its animation and almost all of its sense. This promises to be an eventful day. I hope, my dear, that you have ordered a particularly good dinner, for we have reason to expect an addition to our little family's reunion.

MRS. BENNET

*Mr. Bingley!* And not a good fish to be got today!

MR. BENNET

It is my cousin, Mr. Collins, a person whom I never saw in the whole course of my life and, when I am dead, may turn you all out of this house as soon as he pleases.

*The mantelpiece begins to strike 4 o'clock.*

*MR. COLLINS begins his entrance.*

MRS. BENNET

Oh, it is the wickedest thing in the world that this estate should be entailed away from your own children.

MR. BENNET

We are to expect him promptly at four. And he plans to stay the week.

*MR COLLINS speaks immediately at the fourth bell.*

MR. COLLINS

What a fine family of daughters have you, my dear Mr. Bennet! I have heard, of course, of their beauty, but, in this instance, fame has fallen short of truth. I do not doubt, Mrs. Bennet, in your seeing them all, in due time, disposed of in marriage.

MRS. BENNET

If not, they will be destitute enough. Things are settled so oddly.

MR. COLLINS

Ah. You allude, perhaps, to the entail of this estate?

MRS. BENNET

It is a grievous affair to my poor girls, you must confess.

MR. COLLINS

Madam, be assured, as a recently ordained clergyman and one so fortunate as to be distinguished by the patronage of the Right Honourable Lady Catherine de Bourgh, whose bounty and beneficence has preferred me to the Hunsford parsonage, where it shall be my duty and privilege to perform those rites and ceremonies as instituted by the Church of England, I cannot be otherwise than concerned at being the means of injuring your amiable daughters. At present, I will not say more.

*COLLINS'S eyes rest upon a chair that he then settles into.*

A handsome piece, and rather rare, I believe - its lines are quite restful to the eye and to the form.

*Tea is served as the clock sounds.*

*Time passes to dusk during the scene.*

*The BENNETS, with the exception of MARY, show the strain of a lengthy conversation with MR. COLLINS.*

MR. BENNET

Mr. Collins, you are most fortunate, in your patroness.

MR. COLLINS

Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Indeed, I am, sir. By many, she is reckoned proud, but I have been treated with such affability and condescension as to have *twice* been invited to dine at her Lady's residence. To merely convey a sense of the magnitude of Rosings Park, the chimneypiece in the second drawing room alone cost *eight hundred* pounds.

MR. BENNET

*(Attempting to be impressed)* Eight hundred...?

MR. COLLINS

Indeed. And - no more than a lane separates Rosings from the plot upon which stands my humble abode.

MR. BENNET

Imagine that. The mere width of a lane...

MRS. BENNET

May I ask if Lady Catherine de Bourgh has any sons?