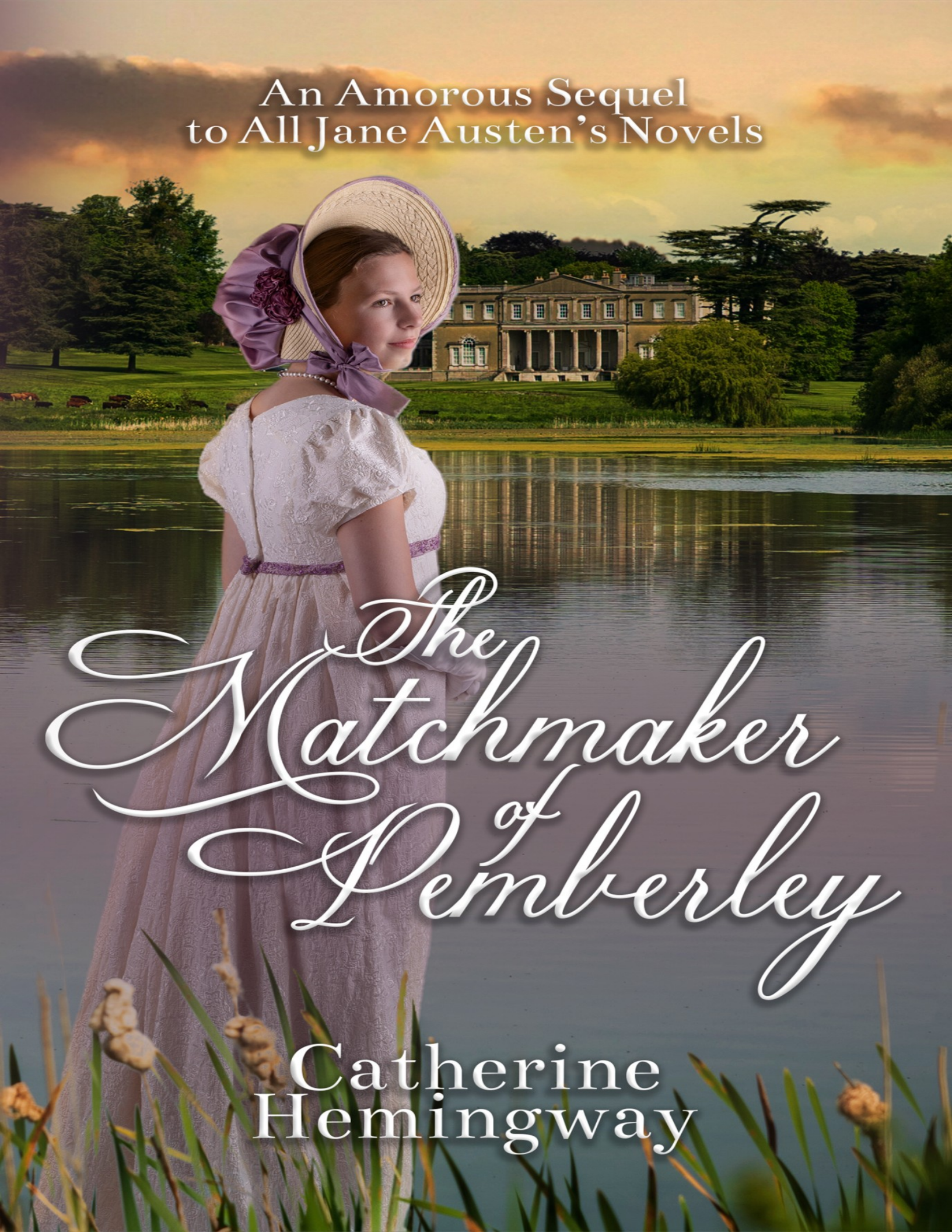


An Amorous Sequel
to All Jane Austen's Novels



*The
Matchmaker
of
Pemberley*

Catherine
Hemingway

THE MATCHMAKER OF PEMBERLEY
*An amorous sequel to all Jane
Austen's Novels*

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THE MATCHMAKER OF PEMBERLEY
*An amorous sequel to all Jane
Austen's Novels*

By

Catherine Hemingway

Dedication

TO TAMSIN WHO ATTENDED THE same school in Reading as Jane Austen and rekindled my interest in her writings with trips to visit her home in Chawton and burial place at Winchester Cathedral. I visited Bath when I attended Tamsin's wedding and I treasure all those memories more than I can say.

Chapter 1

SOME MIGHT CONSIDER ELIZABETH DARCY to have led a charmed life, not by virtue of an indulged upbringing, but rather by a propitious marriage. Even her husband on first meeting her had observed that based on her low connections, her prospects for marrying a man of consequence were materially limited. But that was all in the past, and indeed, her life was charmed in all aspects save one, the lack of an heir to the great estate of Pemberley.

As Elizabeth took a final glance at the contents of her trunk before it was loaded on to the barouche-landau, she gave a small sigh of relief. She had at first been reluctant to leave Pemberley for Bath, but Darcy and her father had convinced her that the change would do both her health and her spirits much good. She hoped their prediction would prove out.

Her sister-in-law, Georgianna and her younger sister, Kitty were delighted with the prospect of spending the season in Bath, anticipating exciting new social outlets complete with concerts, plays, dances, and expanded acquaintances. They had formed an attachment quickly in the days since Darcy took Elizabeth as his wife, and, in many ways, they were a good influence on each other.

Georgianna Darcy was shy by nature, having lived much of her life under the scrutiny of her older brother, who took over care of her and the family estate after the death of his father. She was eager to please, welcomed his indulgences with gratitude, and was greatly attached to Elizabeth, as the sister she had always wanted. In turn, the marriage brought several more sisters into her life including Kitty Bennet, a much more effusive and energetic companion. Kitty had benefited from the influence of her eldest sisters, whom she frequently visited, and spending time in superior society had improved her temperament and behaviour. Being close in age, she and Georgianna had bonded over shared secrets of past indiscretions in both families.

The delights of Bath awaited discovery and they were eager to get started. Elizabeth approached the trip with lower spirits than the young ladies, having recently experienced an early miscarriage during her first pregnancy. Her high hopes of providing an heir to Pemberley were dashed when, early the third month, she had been

confined to bed and eventually lost this greatest prospect for happiness.

Darcy had been sympathetic and supportive, reassuring her that they would surely realise their shared dream soon enough and must accept the disappointment. The doctor, by way of encouragement, assured her that an early miscarriage in a first pregnancy was quite common and that she would certainly achieve her dream of bringing a child to term with the next pregnancy. However, he also suggested they wait a few months before trying again.

It was especially difficult because although she and her beloved sister, Jane, had married at the same time and even shared the same wedding ceremony two years earlier, Jane Bingley had already produced a beautiful baby daughter. They had always been the closest of friends and confidants, so Elizabeth rejoiced in the happiness of her sister and took delight in her little niece. Still, her own slow path to motherhood caused her deep sadness and concern. The pregnancy had provided proof of her fertility, but she had trouble overcoming her despondency at the loss just the same.

To raise her spirits, Darcy had suggested spending the season in Bath with all its diversions so she and the two young ladies were to travel together while he would join them in a fortnight due to business obligations in London. This would allow her more time for recovery and provide social outlets to stimulate her senses and restore her spirits. The excitement of the two young ladies had provided additional motivation to acquiesce to the scheme.

She surrendered herself to making the best of the separation and embraced oversight of the two young ladies in her charge. She hoped the delights of Bath would soothe her sorrow, ease her concerns, and rebuild her self-confidence, so she could finally realise her most cherished dream, that of producing an heir to Pemberley.

Darcy had already leased a suitably luxurious dwelling at Camden Place previously occupied by a baronet from Somerset and they would be met by a Mr. Shepherd, who would introduce them to their new accommodations and facilitate introductions to the best social circles. Distractions and amusements were hoped for by all but Elizabeth, who would have been just as glad to stay quietly at

home and take long walks in the extensive gardens and woods of Pemberley.

Parting with her beloved husband even for two weeks was a difficult choice. Their relationship had grown deeper in the time they'd been together, despite the impediments of getting to know each other when they first met. Each had judged the other as unworthy to be a life partner, and it had taken some time to truly recognise that they would bring out those traits most amiable in the other. Love had come slowly and unexpectedly, but once in evidence, had been embraced and nurtured. His dourness and disdain had been lifted by her spritely personality and good humour. She found her place in the world based on mutual love and respect rather than money and privilege, although the latter had followed the former.

"Oh, Elizabeth, what wonders we shall see in Bath," exclaimed Georgianna. "Just think of visiting the Assembly Rooms and tasting the mineral water at the Pump Room. Do you think it will taste strangely or provide cures for all sorts of maladies and ailments? I hear that people visit the hot springs and publicly bathe in giant vats of water with people looking down at them. Can you imagine such a thing?"

Kitty interjected, "What a lark it will be to visit shops and meet new people. I hope there will be many opportunities to dance at the Assembly Hall; Georgianna and I long for handsome partners who dance well. It will be so exciting, won't it, Georgie?"

With a blush in her cheeks, Georgianna nodded her head. "I do enjoy dancing but meeting new partners always raises my anxiety because I never know what to say."

"Don't be a silly goose. You need say hardly a word; just smile and nod your head. You dance very well and will attract the notice of all the handsome young men, but you must leave a few for me, for there is nothing I love more than dancing."

"I'm sure neither of you will lack for dance partners whenever the opportunity is presented but do contain your enthusiasm and not appear flirtatious or forward. You will attract all the attention you desire, for you are very pretty, young ladies, but must use good judgement as you meet new acquaintances. Remember, you are

ladies first, well born young ladies, responsible to your family for your conduct and reputation.”

Georgianna nodded her head solemnly in agreement while Kitty rolled her eyes and looked out of the window with a confident smile on her face.

While Kitty’s deportment and enthusiasm for flirting had been subdued by the positive influence and close contact with her two eldest sisters, and her more conservative young friend, Elizabeth worried that the influence of her sister, Lydia, was still in evidence. Lydia, the youngest of the Bennet sisters had been overly indulged by their mother and become a renowned flirt, who cast aside all decorum and risked her family’s reputation, to run off with her paramour, Mr. Wickham.

Resentment ran deep on Darcy’s side. He and Wickham had grown up together on the family estate, but their paths had diverged after the death of his father. Wickham, the son of the estate’s steward, had chosen a path of dissolution: gambling, drinking, and carousing. Preying on innocent young ladies had been another pursuit and his efforts to seduce a very young Georgianna into an elopement had been interrupted when discovered by Darcy who then banished him from Pemberley permanently.

Wickham met the Bennet sisters when he was stationed with the militia in nearby Meryton and his attentions were first drawn to Elizabeth who, at the time, regarded him as a dashing and charming gentleman with whom she shared a decided dislike for Mr. Darcy, the guest of Charles Bingley, who was the newly arrived tenant at Netherfield Park. They were both wealthy bachelors and longtime friends, but while Mr. Bingley had immediately endeared himself to the local community, Mr. Darcy had been equally effective in offending everyone with his arrogant behaviour and disdain for his surroundings.

Mr. Wickham had an ingratiating personality and on first meeting Elizabeth, he eagerly shared stories of alleged abuse at the hands of Mr. Darcy, claiming he had been robbed of his inheritance. Elizabeth was already inclined to dislike Darcy due to an affront by him on first becoming acquainted with her where he had declared to his friend, Bingley, that she wasn’t “handsome enough” to tempt him to dance

with her and inferred she had been spurned by other men. Based on the initial insult, she eagerly embraced this new information from Wickham as affirmation of her own discerning judgement that Darcy was proud and arrogant.

As fate would have it, when the regiment to which Wickham was attached was removed from Meryton, his attentions were drawn to her youngest sister, Lydia, who had travelled with the regiment commander and his wife, to Brighton. There, flirtation turned to seduction of the frivolous young girl, who ran off with him, careless of the scandal that would be heaped upon her family. In the end, it was due to Darcy's intervention in both discovering the runaway couple in London, and making financial arrangements for them to marry, that the union was legitimised.

Elizabeth had no intention of allowing such a fate to befall Kitty or Georgianna and resolved to be on full alert to the attention paid them by new acquaintances, dance partners, and potential suitors. Kitty had no great fortune to offer, but Georgianna most certainly did, and would be an object of attention to many for more reasons than her beauty, sweet disposition, and talents. She would be relieved when Darcy arrived to provide support and supervision of the two young ladies with a wary eye for unsuitable acquaintances.

"Elizabeth, will we have to wait for my brother to join us before we can visit the Assembly Hall or the other attractions?" asked Georgianna.

"It will be very dull indeed to sit on the sidelines because we lack proper introductions," added Kitty.

"I can assure you that my thoughtful husband has already planned ahead for your enjoyments, including arranging suitable introductions to society, not to mention elegant accommodations," replied Elizabeth. "You shall not want for entertainments and variety."

"Do you know to whom we will be introduced?" asked Kitty. "I hope young men will be included so we have dance partners and I hope we have a chance to shop for new frocks so that we're fashionably dressed when we're at the Assembly Hall."

"I'm sure the dresses you brought will be quite in vogue, so you need not worry about your appearance. As for introductions, I have no idea what arrangement has been made but I trust in the

judgement of my husband to ensure all will be handled with perfect propriety. He has our best interests in mind in all things," answered Elizabeth.

Winding through the Avon Valley and enjoying the early signs of spring, Elizabeth reflected on the unexpected path that brought her and Darcy together. As the second eldest daughter of a gentleman of property but modest means, there was little by way of fortune to offer any of his five daughters. With his estate entailed to the nearest male relative, their prospects of finding suitable husbands were hampered by undersized dowries. That the two eldest matched beauty with poise, intelligence, and good humour was to their advantage, but pretty women in search of husbands are always far more numerous than men of large fortune looking to marry.

Finding husbands for her daughters was the singular focus of their mother's life, and the greatest contributor to the constant vexation of Mrs. Bennet's poor nerves; a state of being that preoccupied her until three of her daughters were all married in the same year. The unpropitious elopement and eventual marriage of her youngest daughter, Lydia, had been a public scandal. The elevation of her two eldest daughters to matches that far exceeded their fortunes was to be celebrated, and no one revelled in their success in acquiring rich husbands more than Mrs. Bennet. That the first marriage had not materially damaged the prospects of the other two daughters was a miracle of love over commerce. The paths for both Elizabeth and her elder sister, Jane, to marry for love, had faced many obstacles, but who can account for affairs of the heart that bring young people together?

Elizabeth's aspirations were high when she took on the role of mistress of Pemberley. The sheer size and complexity of such a great estate that was already being managed by a large staff prior to her arrival required patience and good humour. Fortunately, she had long ago won the approval of the housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds, and was quickly able to establish her position both there and at their home in London. The fact that she was adored by Darcy's sister, Georgianna, added to the felicity of all.

She knew there was outside scrutiny of the match as well, for many were aware her dowry was far short of the amount that would

ordinarily be expected of a woman to marry a man of such consequence as Fitzwilliam Darcy. That it bothered him not she was grateful. That it was the subject of gossip or disturbed a few judgmental relatives or neighbours did nothing to detract from their happiness. That there would be people seeking to ingratiate themselves to the new mistress of Pemberley seemed certain, but this too would be managed with consideration where it was merited and good humour where it was not.

Mr. Darcy's estate was so vast that it encompassed several villages and townships, each with its own parsonage to serve the spiritual needs of the local community. The living, with an annual income, was bestowed by the local estate owner to a deserving family member or respectable gentleman who had taken orders. Appointments were for a lifetime unless circumstances such as death or illness forced the vicar to retire, the only case in which the living changed hands.

Shortly after returning to the estate following their marriage and a short stay in London, an open house was held at Pemberley, to introduce the new Mrs. Darcy to the local community. Curious residents flocked to the event as much to visit the impressive estate as to meet the fortunate bride who had managed to secure the heart of the estimable Mr. Darcy. Among them was the Reverend Mr. Christopher Wink who availed himself of the invitation with great enthusiasm and deep gratitude.

Darcy had made several appointments since taking over the affairs of the estate including the preferment of Mr. Wink, a respectable, educated local man, to the living at Chatsworth, a small village on the southwest border of the Pemberley estate. He was the second son of a well-to-do landowner who had taken orders at Oxford; plain looking with a pleasing address, he had the air and agreeable manners that come naturally to the well born along with an overtly deferential reverence for his benefactor.

Upon meeting him, Elizabeth was reminded of another clergyman of her acquaintance for his obsequiousness of manner and open veneration of his patron. There was no more grateful a recipient of his appointment to the living and association with the great estate of Pemberley to be found except, perhaps, at Huntsford in the person

of Mr. Collins, whose boundless devotion to his benefactress, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, was matched by the good fortune of being the designated heir of Mr. Bennet's entailed estate. His small conceits about his appointment and status had been amply on display when he first visited the Bennet family in pursuit of a wife.

Similar conceits were demonstrated by Mr. Wink, whose good opinion of himself was abundantly evident and buoyed his efforts to guide his parishioners in the ways of moral living, devotion to God, and service to the community. Instructing his congregants in the ways of the Church at Sunday services and performing traditional ceremonies celebrating village life provided an outlet to support his inclination towards officiousness, with his priority being to demonstrate unctuous deference towards his benefactor and, by extension, to the new Mrs. Darcy.

"Georgie, will you be trying the mineral waters at the Pump Room?" asked Kitty. "I've decided that I must try it at least once, just for the experience, even if I find it disagreeable, and I think you should too."

"I know so little about it," replied Georgianna. "I'm not sure what the benefits are although so many people partake of the waters that it must be of some value. I suppose doctors understand it better than we do or else they wouldn't recommend it. Perhaps we'll learn more when we get there. I dare say I will try it at least once just as you say."

Rising from her reverie briefly, Elizabeth said, "I'm sure it will do you no harm to avail yourself of the mineral waters and we will certainly have an opportunity to learn more when we arrive. I'm quite sure there will be many new experiences for us to encounter and, from what I understand, the Pump Room is the centre of social activity in Bath."

Returning to her thoughts, Elizabeth recalled her early days at Pemberley immersing herself in the rhythms of the estate, the grounds, and the staff. She devoted herself to establishing her role as mistress of the large household with its many complexities, and her astuteness of mind and affable demeanour soon won the respect and admiration of all.

She had been eager to explore and familiarise herself with the occupants who had been raised there and during one of her rounds inspecting the family wing with Mrs. Reynolds, she inquired about a room with an odd collection of furniture, near the chamber she shared with Darcy. This she learned had formerly been the nursery for little Georgianna, who had since moved to larger, beautifully appointed rooms. Curious, she inquired what had become of the nursery items, to be informed they had been removed to a large storage room in another wing of the house.

Given some directions and armed with her household keys, she discovered where it was located, and found her way to the storage room. She opened the door to reveal a marvel of objects including several old clocks that had ceased to strike, a handsome dimity bedframe, mahogany wardrobes with clothing still hanging inside, antiquated portraits, several storage trunks filled with linens and bedding, and, near the door, a small cradle with a carefully wrapped, delicately embroidered christening gown, and an ornate crib with a few dolls and toys piled inside, as well as a rocking chair. Elizabeth sat down in the rocker and picked up an old doll with a beautifully painted bisque face and hands. She cradled the doll and thought of that happy day sometime in the future when many of these items would see a fresh coat of paint and find their way back to the former nursery. Her fondest wish was to bestow a young son and heir to the Pemberley estate and make her husband the happiest of men.

Chapter 2

SEVERAL MONTHS EARLIER, LIZZY'S YOUNGER sisters, Kitty and Mary, had arrived for an extended visit, much to the delight of Georgianna who had quickly formed a warm attachment to Kitty that blossomed into a fast friendship. Mary's devotion to scholarly pursuits and disdain for frivolity excluded her from their more intimate discussions and pursuit of entertainment. Although she shared an interest in music and performing with Georgianna, she affected indifference when the young ladies went into Lambton for shopping and socialising, preferring to stay at home reading, studying, or practicing. Mary's interests in reading, reflection, and musical pursuits left little time for the interests of most young ladies her age, such as dancing, shopping, and mingling with friends.

She was of a serious nature and valued educational pursuits and musical performance, although her intellect and natural talents did not quite align to her high-minded ideals or ability to perform. Lacking both genius and taste, Mary nevertheless applied herself vigorously and with far more conceit than her talents merited.

Evenings presented a particular challenge because entertainment by the ladies was often sought. Darcy's delight when Georgianna performed at the pianoforte' filled him with great pride at her accomplishments and he enjoyed it immensely. While his sister was often shy about performing, and would only play but not sing, Mary was ever eager to display her talents at both, thus disturbing Darcy's tranquillity. Her powers did not measure up to her delight in exhibiting, her voice struggled with pitch, her playing skills were laboured, and her manner affected. He revered his wife's talents and often entreated Elizabeth to join in performing for fear of Mary singing and playing all night.

One day Georgianna and Kitty went off to Lambton shopping, and Mary and Elizabeth sat quietly in the drawing room, the one reading while the other did needlework, when Mrs. Reynolds entered the room to announce that Reverend Mr. Wink had arrived hoping for an audience on an important matter of church business. Soon Mr. Wink was escorted into the drawing room and Mrs. Reynolds was sent off to arrange for tea. He was small of frame with a long face, pronounced ears and nose, and a disarmingly crooked smile. He bowed deeply upon entering and was received courteously.

“Forgive me, madam, for my intrusion. I hope my arrival has not inconvenienced you.”

“You do not importune us, Mr. Wink; you are most welcomed. Allow me to introduce my sister, Miss Bennet. Mary, this is the Reverend Mr. Wink, of the parsonage at Chatsworth, which borders Pemberley on the southwest corner.” Mary curtsied, and Mr. Wink took another deep bow, murmuring his great delight in meeting her, and his extraordinary pleasure at having a second chance to discourse with Mrs. Darcy, the wife of his estimable patron.

“Do sit down, Mr. Wink. What business brings you our way on such a fine day?”

“As a clergyman, I consider myself to have a solemn responsibility to look after the spiritual needs of all my parishioners. My duties afford me the opportunity to commune with the highest ranks, with great humility of course, and with the less advantaged with equal felicity, for I am very mindful of rank and position. Every year the parsonage organises a local harvest festival and relief effort by collecting donations to help the needy of the community. Having been distinguished by the patronage of the most esteemed Mr. Darcy, it has been my singular privilege over the past few years to solicit support from my honourable patron for this most worthy of endeavours, and he has always responded with great generosity.”

“It is a sacred duty to attend to the neediest among us and pour the balm of human kindness in the form of good works to bring comfort to those less fortunate,” said Mary, nodding gravely.

“Indeed, Miss Bennet, you are quite correct, and it reflects highly on the benevolence and discernment of a refined lady like yourself,” he replied with the utmost civility. “I cannot help but notice that you have been reading and must applaud your selection. Not many young ladies are interested in such noble and worthy books of a serious, instructional nature as *Fordyce’s Sermons*. I must commend your excellent taste. So many of the young ladies these days prefer novels that excite unwholesome emotions.”

“I always endeavour to better myself through study, contemplation, and good works,” Mary replied.

By then the tea arrived and was served while the three discussed the upcoming event, to better identify the needs of the community

and ensure how they could best be of service. Elizabeth closed out the audience with a promise to discuss the request with Mr. Darcy and arrange to generously accommodate it by the appointed date, after which Mr. Wink made a deep bow, expressed his excessive gratitude and the hope of seeing them again, pressing upon them an open invitation to visit the parsonage.

“Oh, Lizzy, I do hope we can be of some assistance to the Reverend Mr. Wink for such a worthy cause,” exclaimed Mary. “It is the duty of those blessed with great abundance to be charitable to those less fortunate and I am sure there is much that can be done to help out,” she said with great solicitude.

“I shall speak to my husband for guidance as to the nature of his support in years past, and I have no doubt that he will match, if not exceed his past contributions. I have another thought as well; as I have had the opportunity to acquaint myself with this great house, I came across a storage room with assorted trunks full of linens and wardrobes filled with old clothing. Perhaps you can assist me in identifying suitable items for the donation in addition to whatever Mr. Darcy recommends?”

With that, Mary gravely nodded her assent and smugly reached for her book, *Sermons to Young Women*, a compendium of essays dedicated to the virtues of feminine behaviour including mannerliness of speech and action, and modesty in appearance.

As the family gathered for the evening meal, Elizabeth spoke of Reverend Wink’s unexpected visit and his pursuant solicitation on behalf of the parsonage. Kitty, disappointed at missing out on meeting a new acquaintance and burning with curiosity asked, “What can you tell us of his look and demeanour? Is his countenance pleasing and his address agreeable? Is he attached or still a single man?” she asked with a sideways glance at her friend.

Georgianna, being acquainted with the young man in question through her brother, replied that he was not quite handsome but, while agreeable, his manner was very formal as befitted his station in life. On hearing that he was unattached but having little interest in life at a parsonage, Kitty was soon diverted to other topics.

Darcy went on to discuss past contributions to support the charitable event including meats from the smokehouse, assorted

preserved fruits from the garden, writing tablets purchased for the local school children, and a generous financial donation which he ascertained to be the most important of the contributions. At Elizabeth's suggestion he also acquiesced to donations from the storage room.

"Generosity and compassion for others and bringing relief to those who suffer, elevates both the giver and those blessed to receive, as it brings comfort to their wretchedness," said Mary solemnly. "Mr. Wink must be a very good sort of gentleman to give such consideration to those in his care."

"Indeed, you are right, Mary, and with that thought in mind, I shall solicit you to help organise the effort to gather supplies so we can arrange to have them delivered in time for the event," replied Elizabeth.

"Perhaps we should plan to deliver the goods ourselves to ensure all arrives safely and show those small courtesies that reflect well on our commitment to ensure a successful event. I would be happy to exert myself for this most worthy of causes."

Mary's eagerness to comply with the request from Mr. Wink was matched only by her tenacity in accomplishing the tasks required. Darcy agreed to a generous financial donation that exceeded his contributions in years past, much to Elizabeth's satisfaction. He outlined the victuals that had previously been provided but as the process of gathering the provisions began, Mary was always quick to increase the bounty, asserting that compassion for the distresses of the poor was a virtue to be demonstrated by the generosity of the givers.

Elizabeth discovered her sister had natural organisational skills heretofore unrecognised as the visit to the storage room soon revealed. Mary was exacting in identifying cloaks, shawls, linens and listing the items, ensuring that even the storage trunks were included. The only things that were not up for review were the nursery items, although left to her own devices, Mary would have included them as well. Her assertiveness with the staff was unexpected as well, and she supervised the transfer of the goods to a staging area for eventual transportation to the parsonage. While Elizabeth would have been content to simply have the largesse

delivered by servants, Mary persuaded her they should exert themselves and accompany the donations to their destination.

The day came and all was made ready, a note having been sent in advance to Mr. Wink announcing their pending arrival. Mary was in high spirits, which led to a state of enjoyment for both sisters; the elder observing with a smile that Mary was very much more animated than usual.

As the carriage left the highroad bounded by the Pemberley estate on one side, and turned down Vicarage Lane leading to the parsonage, they could just discern the neatly tended garden and the rectory within. Mr. Wink immediately emerged and greeted them at the small gate with an ebullient welcome and Mary flushed with excitement as the wagon full of victuals pulled in behind them and she recited from her list all the donations aboard. After providing instructions to the driver for where to proceed so the unloading could commence, Mr. Wink invited them inside the rectory with great formality and an offer of refreshments.

His triumph in hosting such consequential visitors was reflected by the obsequiousness of his civility. There could be no more grateful a recipient of the attentions of the two ladies, the generosity of their donations, and the condescension of their delivering the goods in person.

"I am overwhelmed by the bounty and beneficence of your patronage, Mrs. Darcy. That you do me the great honour of visiting me at the rectory, after being distinguished by the preferment of the living by your honourable husband, is highly commendable. As a clergyman, I feel it is my duty to promote and ensure the prosperity of all families within reach of my influence, even the neediest among them, and your generous contribution is most gratefully received. That you and Miss Bennet condescended to make the journey as well is indeed an honour of the highest order."

"Good works are their own reward, and we must all strive to ease the suffering of those less fortunate," Mary offered.

"Thoughts and deeds perfectly aligned bespeak your high moral character, Miss Bennet."

Tea was served and when they had finished, they were offered a tour of the parsonage including the small church. Upon entering the

vestibule, Mary noticed a pianoforte' in the corner partially covered by a blanket.

"Is the instrument faulty?" she asked.

"I cannot say for I do not play, nor do any of our parishioners. It was a gift following the death of one of our most esteemed members, a widow who recently passed away. She was a great lover of music and since we did not have an organ, she graced us with this to accompany our hymns. It is most regrettable that we have not been able to put it to use."

Mary approached the instrument, raised the keyboard cover, and lightly ran her fingers across the keys.

"Oh, Miss Bennet, do you play? To be musically inclined is a gift from God for those who wish to raise their voices in His praise."

"I do indeed play. Along with my studies, I devote time daily to improving my skills, for there is always room to achieve a higher level of performance through practice. I believe in devoting myself to such pursuits whenever possible; if God has granted one any small amount of talent and inclination, one is duty bound to develop it."

"I'm sure you are much too modest, Miss Bennet. I would be eager to hear you play."

Mary almost sat down to the instrument, but Elizabeth thought the better of it and suggested there might be another time in the future to hear her perform. Perhaps Mr. Wink would like to call again at Pemberley some afternoon, to which he eagerly acquiesced and they settled on a day two weeks hence.

On the appointed date Mr. Wink arrived punctually, rapturous to have been invited to the prestigious home of his benefactor and eager to hear Mary Bennet play. Georgianna and Kitty made their excuses to visit a friend in Lambton as neither of them cared to watch Mary exhibit for the local clergyman. They were already privy to her performances, as she had been practicing two hymns tirelessly in preparation. Darcy found he had business elsewhere as well.

Mary was seated in the parlour when Mr. Wink was announced. She had carefully placed her volume of *Fordyce's Sermons* nearby and had a hymnal set up at the pianoforte'. She curtsied in response to his obsequious bow and invited him to sit.

“Miss Bennet, may I say how eagerly I have awaited the opportunity to hear you perform. It is a rare creature that combines musical ability with an ardour for study and learning. I see you continue to keep *Fordyce’s Sermons* nearby. How very admirable are your efforts.”

“You are most kind to say so. May I inquire how the relief effort that you organised turned out? I do so hope it was a great success.”

“Indeed, it was, thanks to your tireless efforts and the benevolence of Mr. and Mrs. Darcy. It was undoubtedly our most successful event ever and raised the spirits and hopes of the neediest of my congregation. I am certain the blessings of the Lord shine down upon this house.”

Elizabeth entered the room and greeted the visitor warmly as he stood again, bowed deeply in approbation, and repeated his acknowledgements of the great service they had provided. Tea was ordered and a discussion proceeded regarding the merits of each item that had been donated, how and to whom it was distributed, followed by his expressions of sincere appreciation which were issued repeatedly.

At last Mary made her way to the pianoforte’ and announced that she had prepared two selections from the church hymnal that she hoped would please him. Her thin, reedy voice lifted in song and her fingers moved with rapidity over the keys, as she played rather better than she sang. At the conclusion of the first number, Mr. Wink was compelled to stand up and applaud with enthusiasm.

After she completed the second hymn, he felt obliged to state, “Miss Bennet, your performance was sublime! To think that you did me the honour of selecting songs from the hymnal. I am humbled by your thoughtfulness and greatly admire the meticulousness with which you play. Might I be so brash as to say that you have the voice of an angel that would elevate the sounds of the Cherubim and Seraphim in heaven. If I am not too emboldened, would you consider coming to play for one of our Sunday services?”

Mary was overwhelmed by the invitation and her face lit up with pleasure, but she modestly replied that she was only in town for another week but would be happy to consider it during her next visit.

She expected to come again at Michaelmas and offered to write to let him know when it was confirmed.

Mary did come back to Pemberley for Michaelmas along with her sister and parents. By then it had been arranged that she would perform at the parsonage and the family was obliged to join her for the service. Mrs. Bennet beamed with pride that day and following the service she effusively whispered to her daughter, "Lizzy, I do believe Mary may have found a suitor. Did you see how he looked at her as she accompanied the entire church in the singing of the hymns? Bless me but I do believe that I will soon be down to only one daughter in need of a husband."

Thusly began the courtship of two people perfectly suited to one another in temperament, way of thinking, and resemblance of character. Both reflected a sort of pompous self-importance matched with a false sense of modesty. When the Reverend Mr. Wink took Mary to be his bride, she moved to the parsonage where she immersed herself in providing musical accompaniment at all services and learned the Church of England hymnal by heart. What the parishioners thought of her accomplishments was a subject of much speculation between Mr. and Mrs. Darcy, but they were exceedingly grateful that their family worshipped at the parsonage in Lambton.

Elizabeth smiled as she considered her role as matchmaker. Unlike her mother, it had never been her intention to find a husband for Mary, but she had to admit that her ability to recognise compatible qualities and peculiarities of personality had been instinctive if not intentional, and she had merely provided opportunities for the happy couple to find each other. As she looked at the two young ladies sitting across from her, she wondered what fate had in store for them. She had no ambition to play matchmaker, but she hoped that they would find suitable partners and that her intuition would allow her to recognise and support true, honest attachment, because she loved them both dearly, and above all, hoped they would share the same felicity in marriage that she enjoyed.

Chapter 3

AS THEY CROSSED THE OLD Bridge over River Avon and climbed the rise that eventually led down into Bath, a view of the city emerged, and Elizabeth was struck by the beauty of the architecture with tall, pale gold structures identically built giving the entire city a creamy, silky glow. Rows of houses emerged looking like wings of country estates. It seemed designed to delight the eye and promote a sense of harmony and serenity that she enjoyed as they drove the long concourse from the Old Bridge to Camden Place, their ultimate destination.

When the barouche and four pulled up to the stately residence, the door opened immediately, and a distinguished, fashionably dressed, middle-aged man emerged to greet them with great cordiality. "Mrs. Darcy, I presume. Welcome to Bath. My name is Mr. Shepherd, and it is my great honour to be here to greet you. Mr. Darcy specified that I give you a tour of the house and make sure that you are comfortably situated. It is a shame he has been delayed in joining you here for what I understand is your first visit to Bath, but I assure you, I will do everything in my power to make you feel at home. Allow me to show you the house, for it is one of the finest in Bath, and I'm sure you will be delighted with it. These must be the young ladies of whom Mr. Darcy wrote."

He bowed deferentially as he was introduced to the Misses Darcy and Bennet. Upon entering, he bowed deeply again before opening the interior doors with a flourish of his arm, and walking triumphantly from one drawing room to another, remarking on the size of the rooms and the superiority of the fittings and furniture, all attributed to the refined, elegant taste of the previous occupant, a baronet from Somerset. Sir Walter Elliot had suffered the misfortune of a

debilitating stroke, after only two years in residence. Every effort had been made to ease his discomfort, including frequent visits to the baths to hasten his recovery from the paralysis that afflicted his left side. As fate would have it, another stroke followed a few months later and he had passed away. The house was now the property of his heir, Sir William Walter Elliot, who had made the decision to lease it since he and his wife were currently residing in London.

Mr. Shepherd eagerly pointed out the arrangement of the pianoforte' that Mr. Darcy had specifically requested so that his sister could continue with her practice during their visit. The young ladies, having viewed the rooms and made their selections, were eager to walk off the discomforts of travel by exploring the town. Elizabeth, wary of letting them wander unaccompanied, was reluctant to agree, but Mr. Shepherd assured her that it was perfectly safe for them to use the pedestrian alleys and in a short time join the shoppers in Milsom Street. After admonishing them to return within the hour and gaining their agreement, she gave her blessing.

"Mrs. Darcy, I hope this wasn't too presumptuous of me, but I've arranged to make some introductions to people of social consequence, that I hope will enhance your enjoyment here in Bath while your husband is away. I'm sure the young ladies will be eager to visit the Pump Room and the Assembly Halls, and it will be so much more enjoyable for them to participate in social gatherings with formal introductions already in place.

"Lady Russell left her card by way of introduction and plans to call on you tomorrow morning. She is a lady of superior society and was a great friend and neighbour to Sir Walter, his wife, and their daughters for many years. She resides at Kellynch Lodge adjacent to the principal seat of the Baronetage, Kellynch Hall, and visits Bath annually for the season. She is eager to make your acquaintance as the new occupants of Camden Place and will be joined by Dr. James Baldwin, under whose care the late Sir Walter was tended following his impairment. He is renowned in the area as a doctor and scientist, greatly respected for his knowledge of the peculiar healing powers of the hot springs and specialises in the care of those seeking treatments for their maladies. He is the younger son of one of Bath's premier families and he will be a most acceptable companion when

the young ladies enter society here in Bath. It would be very disappointing for them to visit the Upper Assembly Hall without proper introductions to dance partners.”

“It appears you have thought of everything, Mr. Shepherd. I’m sure we’ll be delighted to make their acquaintance and I thank you for your thoughtful consideration in planning for our comfort and felicity as new arrivals in the community.”

Mr. Shepherd, with greatest civility, took his leave and Elizabeth could not help but wonder at the pride he seemed to take in showing the residence. Was it his connection with the deceased baronet; an association with someone of higher rank? There was a smugness, almost a conceit about his presentation that begged the question of how he could assume such authority of a property not his own. She was grateful for his effort to make introductions and looked forward to meeting Lady Russell in hopes of gaining a better understanding of his behaviour from her.

To Elizabeth’s great relief, Georgianna and Kitty arrived back from exploring their new surroundings, flushed with excitement, eager to tell of all they had seen, and the shopping expedition they planned for the next day.

“Oh, Lizzy, we visited the most delightful stores and saw new frocks in all the latest fashions straight from London. There is so much more selection than in Lambton. We must plan to go shopping right away because Georgie saw a hat that she greatly admired, and another shop had a wonderful selection of the most beautiful ribbons. You must come with us next time.”

The following morning saw the arrival of Lady Russell and Dr. Baldwin who were escorted into the parlour where Elizabeth and the two young ladies were enjoying tea. Lady Russell was an elegantly dressed woman of around fifty with an open, amiable demeanour. She expressed her delight in visiting Camden Place again and noted how little it had changed from the days when she had been a frequent visitor.

“I understand you were well acquainted with the former occupants,” Elizabeth began.

“Indeed I am. The former Lady Elliot was a great friend of mine, and she was the reason for my relocating to Kellynch Lodge so

many years ago. It was such a tragedy when she passed away, leaving behind three young daughters aged 16, 14, and 10. I endeavoured to provide the maternal support and guidance that their mother could not be there to give.”

“Were the three daughters situated in marriage at the time of the baronet’s untimely demise?”

“All but one, the eldest, named Elizabeth. The youngest daughter, Mary, was married to Charles Musgrove of Uppercross, which is not far from the family estate of Kellynch Hall. Anne, the second born, was married just two years ago to Captain Frederick Wentworth. They also reside in Somerset and we are extremely close. As it happens, when Sir Walter retired to Bath, Kellynch Hall was let to Admiral Croft, whose wife happens to be the sister of Captain Wentworth, a most felicitous arrangement as it allows for frequent family visits. Only Elizabeth, who was devoted to her father, remains unattached.”

“Is Miss Elliot staying with one of her sisters?”

“Following the funeral, Elizabeth stayed for a short while with me, but then travelled to Ireland in the company of her cousin, the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple and her daughter, Miss Carteret. They are expected to return to Bath soon and have taken rooms at the Royal Crescent for the season. The mourning period is now complete, and I expect Elizabeth will take her rightful place in society once again and will certainly be sought after due to her many desirable connections.”

Dr. Baldwin, Georgianna, and Kitty had been politely taking in the conversation, with the girls exchanging glances as they observed the reserved young doctor. He was tall and rather gangly with dark hair and eyes, a full mouth, and a square jaw. He wore spectacles, giving him a serious, studious look. His dress was fashionable but had a certain rumpled appearance of one who is distracted rather than careless. Upon engaging him in the conversation, it was learned that he was the second son of a wealthy landowner who had been party to the revitalisation of Bath after the Roman ruins had been discovered and excavation begun. By way of introduction, Lady Russell mentioned that Dr. Baldwin was a scientist and tended to his

research as well as the care of a few select patients, including Sir Walter when he had been stricken.

“May I ask how you came to pursue a medical career, Dr. Baldwin?” Elizabeth asked.

“Yes, I suppose it makes one wonder at such a choice. As a second son, I was expected to either join the military or take orders, but I’m afraid my inclinations leaned elsewhere. I’ve always had a fascination with the sciences and was able to pursue a medical education. I was fortunate that my father shared some of my interests, especially in geology and architecture. He was perhaps more lenient with me than most fathers might have been. Younger sons are usually dependent and expected to marry well but I’m fortunate to pursue my interests and live independently.”

“Dr. Baldwin, what can you tell us of the mineral water served in the Pump Room?” asked Georgianna. “We’ve not yet visited but understand the water is served warm and has an odd taste? Is it safe to drink? Do you think it healthful?”

The question animated the young doctor and he leaned forward as he answered, “I highly recommend trying the water, but it is not to everyone’s tastes. It has numerous mineral components, many of which we’re still discovering. The Romans built the baths around the main hot spring around 60 A.D. but they were used by the Celtic people for thousands of years prior. Over time the baths fell into disrepair until a young chemistry and medical student, Thomas Guidott, wrote about the health properties of partaking of the baths in 1668 and rekindled interest. My own mother’s relative, John Wood the Elder, redesigned the bath houses in their current style in the 1750’s around the same time the bath chair was invented, which I make use of in my practice. The baths are just underneath where the Pump Room was built, and excavations of the ancient baths go on to this day. Do forgive me for going on.” His cheeks coloured for a moment but his earnestness and enthusiasm for his subject added greatly to his expression and appeal.

“There is so much to be seen of Bath because of the great bounty of its natural resources. I would be happy to give you a tour if you are so disposed. We could start at the top of Beechen Cliff that overlooks this lovely city and then make our way downhill to visit the

Pump Room and tour the excavation site to view the Roman ruins. My medical practice is focused on patients who seem to get great benefit from being immersed in the hot spring water. Sir Walter was taken there three times a week after he was stricken. My theory was to help his paralysed side to relax in the warm waters and slowly move his limbs to stimulate the circulation in hopes of improving his condition. Forgive me. I get carried away when speaking on these subjects.”

By now, Dr. Baldwin had earned the interest and attention of Kitty and Georgianna who were eager for the tour and insisted on planning the scheme. The next morning was appointed for the party and Elizabeth was glad of it for, while she'd only been in Bath a short while, she was used to taking long walks in the country and already felt the confinement and bustle of the city encroaching on her. Climbing Beechen Cliff and enjoying the open air while viewing an appealing prospect was a distraction she welcomed. That it would entertain the two young ladies and increase the acquaintance of the young man was an added advantage.

After tea and settling the plan for tomorrow's tour, the guests took their leave with promises from Elizabeth to call on Lady Russell the day following the excursion. Both ladies were delighted to have made the acquaintance of the other and looked forward to their next meeting.

Want to read more?

Go to *The Matchmaker of Pemberley* by Catherine Hemingway
on your preferred bookstore.

About the Author

CATHERINE KELLY HEMINGWAY WAS A leading player in the digital marketing evolution that saw a paradigm shift in how we consume content. She was a global marketing leader for a Fortune 500 company introducing innovative delivery of content as it shifted from print to online and video. Frequent visits to London allowed her to spend time with a British friend who attended the same school in Reading as Jane Austen two centuries earlier and arranged driving trips to Chawton and Winchester.

She acquired a copy of *The Complete Novels of Jane Austen* in a Winchester bookstore which she read cover to cover many times over. During the pandemic in 2020 she conjured the idea of bringing together characters from all six books and felt compelled to write her first novel, introducing familiar characters and retelling portions of original stories while introducing new characters and plot lines. She is now at work on a sequel to her sequel.

Discussion Guide:

How many matchmakers did you identify in the novel?

How and why were they successful or unsuccessful in their matchmaking efforts?

Which marriages do you predict will be successful and why?

Is there a character from one of Jane Austen's novels you wish had been included?

What would the connection have been to introduce that character?

How would that character have added value to the story?

Which new character/s in the novel did you like or admire?

Which characters from Jane Austen's novels did you like or admire in this novel and why?

Which characters from Jane Austen's novels did you dislike and why?

Are there story lines you would like to see carried forward in future novels?