Pride and Prejudice

by LeahAckerman

Summary

"The big house Stohess Park has a new tenant: Mr. Smith, an attractive, rich and...single young man. Mrs. Jeager is delighted, as his greatest wish is to find a good match for her five kids. But Eren, the most rebellious of the brothers, who really cares about is Mr. Levi, an arrogant and mysterious young man". A poor attempt of a fic based on the novel by Jane Austen. Expect a lot of OOC

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a spouse.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their kids.

"My dear Mr. Jaeger" said his lady to him one day "Have you heard that Stohess Park is let at last?"

Mr. Jaeger replied that he had not.

"But it is" she said "For Mrs. Braun has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr. Jaeger made no answer. "Do you not want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.

"You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough.

"Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Braun says that Stohess is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of Sina; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it, that he agreed with Mr. Bodt immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week."

"What is his name?"

"Smith."

"Is he married or single?"

"Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our kids!"

"How so? How can it affect them?"

"My dear Mr. Jaeger" replied his wife "How can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them."

"Is that his design in settling here?"

"Design! Nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes."

"I see no occasion for that. You and the kids may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Smith may like you the best of the party."
"My dear, you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up kids, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty."

"In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of."

"But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Smith when he comes into the neighbourhood."

"It is more than I engage for, I assure you."

"But consider your kids. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir Yuuki and Lady Ackerman are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know, they visit no new-comers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him if you do not."

"You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Smith will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the kids; though I must throw in a good word for my little Eren."

"I desire you will do no such thing. Eren is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure he is not half so handsome as Armin, nor half so good-humoured as Isabel. But you are always giving his the preference."

"They have none of them much to recommend them" he replied "They are all silly and ignorant like other kids; but Eren has something more of quickness than his siblings."

"Mr. Jaeger, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion for my poor nerves."

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least."

"Ah, you do not know what I suffer."

"But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood."

"It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them."

"Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all."

Mr. Jaeger was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her kids married; its solace was visiting and news.

Chapter End Notes

Well I hope you like it....if not I will not continue
Chapter Two

Mr. Jaeger was among the earliest of those who waited on Mr. Smith. He had always intended to visit him, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go; and till the evening after the visit was paid she had no knowledge of it. It was then disclosed in the following manner. Observing his second child employed in trimming a hat, he suddenly addressed him with:

"I hope Mr. Smith will like it, Eren."

"We are not in a way to know what Mr. Smith likes" said the mother resentfully "Since we are not to visit."

"But you forget, mamma" said Eren "That we shall meet him at the assemblies, and that Mrs. Braun promised to introduce him."

"I do not believe Mrs. Braun will do any such thing. She has two nieces of her own. She is a selfish, hypocritical woman, and I have no opinion of her."

"No more have I" said Mr. Jaeger "And I am glad to find that you do not depend on her serving you."

Mrs. Jaeger deigned not to make any reply, but, unable to contain herself, began scolding one of her daughters.

"Don't keep coughing so, Sasha, for Heaven's sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces."

"Sasha has no discretion in her coughs" said her father "She times them ill."

"I do not cough for my own amusement" replied Sasha fretfully "When is your next ball to be, Eren?"

"Tomorrow night."

"Aye, so it is" cried his mother "And Mrs. Braun does not come back till the day before; so it will be impossible for her to introduce him, for she will not know him herself."

"Then, my dear, you may have the advantage of your friend, and introduce Mr. Smith to her."

"Impossible, Mr. Jaeger, impossible, when I am not acquainted with him myself; how can you be so teasing?"

"I honour your circumspection. A night's acquaintance is certainly very little. One cannot know what a man really is by the end of a fortnight. But if we do not venture somebody else will; and after all, Mrs. Braun and her kids must stand their chance; and, therefore, as she will think it an act of kindness, if you decline the office, I will take it on myself."

The kids stared at their father. Mrs. Jaeger said only, "Nonsense, nonsense!"

"What can be the meaning of that emphatic exclamation?" he cried "Do you consider the forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them, as nonsense? I cannot quite agree with you there."
What say you, Annie? For you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books and make extracts."

Annie wished to say something sensible, but knew not how.

"While Annie is adjusting her ideas" he continued "Let us return to Mr. Smith."

"I am sick of Mr. Smith," cried his wife.

"I am sorry to hear that; but why did not you tell me that before? If I had known as much this morning I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but as I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now."

The astonishment of the family was just what he wished; that of Mrs. Jaeger perhaps surpassing the rest; though, when the first tumult of joy was over, she began to declare that it was what she had expected all the while.

"How good it was in you, my dear Mr. Jaeger! But I knew I should persuade you at last. I was sure you loved your kids too well to neglect such an acquaintance. Well, how pleased I am! and it is such a good joke, too, that you should have gone this morning and never said a word about it till now."

"Now, Sasha, you may cough as much as you choose" said Mr. Jaeger; and, as he spoke, he left the room, fatigued with the raptures of his wife.

"What an excellent father you have, kids!" she said when the door was shut. "I do not know how you will ever make him amends for his kindness; or me, either, for that matter. At our time of life it is not so pleasant, I can tell you, to be making new acquaintances every day; but for your sakes, we would do anything. Isabel, my love, though you are the youngest, I dare say Mr. Smith will dance with you at the next ball."

"Oh!" said Isabel stoutly, "I am not afraid; for though I am the youngest, I'm the tallest."

The rest of the evening was spent in conjecturing how soon he would return Mr. Jaeger's visit, and determining when they should ask him to dinner.

Chapter End Notes

Do you want more?
Chapter Three

Chapter Notes

Let's introduce Mr Erwin Smith and Mr Levi Ackerman!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Not all that Mrs. Jaeger, however, with the assistance of her five kids, could ask on the subject, was sufficient to draw from her husband any satisfactory description of Mr. Smith. They attacked him in various ways—with barefaced questions, ingenious suppositions, and distant surmises; but he eluded the skill of them all, and they were at last obliged to accept the second-hand intelligence of their neighbor, Lady Ackerman. Her report was highly favorable. Sir Yuuki had been delighted with him. He was quite young, wonderfully handsome, extremely agreeable, and, to crown the whole, he meant to be at the next assembly with a large party. Nothing could be more delightful! To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love; and very lively hopes of Mr. Smith's heart were entertained.

"If I can but see one of my kids happily settled at Stohess" said Mrs. Jaeger to her husband "And all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for."

In a few days Mr. Smith returned Mr. Jaeger's visit, and sat about ten minutes with him in his library. He had entertained hopes of being admitted to a sight of the young kids, of whose beauty he had heard much; but he saw only the father. The kids were somewhat more fortunate, for they had the advantage of ascertaining from an upper window that he wore a blue coat, and rode a black horse.

An invitation to dinner was soon afterwards dispatched; and already had Mrs. Jaeger planned the courses that were to do credit to her housekeeping, when an answer arrived which deferred it all. Mr. Smith was obliged to be in town the following day, and, consequently, unable to accept the honour of their invitation, etc. Mrs. Jaeger was quite disconcerted. She could not imagine what business he could have in town so soon after his arrival in Maria; and she began to fear that he might be always flying about from one place to another, and never settled at Stohess as he ought to be. Lady Ackerman quieted her fears a little by starting the idea of his being gone to Maria only to get a large party for the ball; and a report soon followed that Mr. Smith was to bring twelve ladies and seven gentlemen with him to the assembly. The kids grieved over such a number of people, but were comforted the day before the ball by hearing, that instead of twelve he brought only six with him from Sina—his five sisters and a cousin. And when the party entered the assembly room it consisted of only five altogether—Mr. Smith, his two sisters, the husband of the eldest, and another young man.

Mr. Smith was good-looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr. Dok, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend Mr. Ackerman soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, small person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Smith, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be...
proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Sina could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.

Mr. Smith had soon made himself acquainted with all the principal people in the room; he was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, was angry that the ball closed so early, and talked of giving one himself at Stohess. Such amiable qualities must speak for themselves. What a contrast between him and his friend! Mr. Ackerman danced only once with Mrs. Dok and once with Miss Smith, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room, speaking occasionally to one of his own party. His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again. Amongst the most violent against him was Mrs. Jaeger, whose dislike of his general behaviour was sharpened into particular resentment by his having slighted one of her kids.

Eren Jaeger had been obliged, by the scarcity of a partner, to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time, Mr. Ackerman had been standing near enough for him to hear a conversation between him and Mr. Smith, who came from the dance for a few minutes, to press his friend to join it.

"Come, Levi" he said "I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance."

"I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman or man in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with."

"I would not be so fastidious as you are" Mr. Smith cried "For a kingdom! Upon my honour, I never met with so many pleasant girls and boys in my life as I have this evening; and there are several of them you see uncommonly pretty."

"You are dancing with the only handsome boy in the room," said Mr. Ackerman, looking at the eldest Mr Jaeger.

"Oh! He is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of his brothers sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you."

"Which do you mean?" and turning round he looked for a moment at Eren, till catching his eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said: "He is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young gentlemens who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy his smiles, for you are wasting your time with me."

Mr. Smith followed his advice. Mr. Ackerman walked off; and Eren remained with no very cordial feelings toward him. He told the story, however, with great spirit among his friends; for he had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous.

The evening altogether passed off pleasantly to the whole family. Mrs. Jaeger had seen her eldest daughter much admired by the Stohess party. Mr. Smith had danced with him twice, and he had been distinguished by his sisters. Armin was as much gratified by this as his mother could be, though in a quieter way. Eren felt Armin's pleasure. Annie had heard herself mentioned to Miss Smith as the most accomplished girl in the neighborhood; and Sasha and Isabel had been fortunate enough never to be without partners, which was all that they had yet learnt to care for at a ball.

They returned, therefore, in good spirits to Shiganshina, the village where they lived, and of which
they were the principal inhabitants. They found Mr. Jaeger still up. With a book he was regardless of time; and on the present occasion he had a good deal of curiosity as to the event of an evening which had raised such splendid expectations. He had rather hoped that his wife's views on the stranger would be disappointed; but he soon found out that he had a different story to hear.

"Oh! my dear Mr. Jaeger" as she entered the room "We have had a most delightful evening, a most excellent ball. I wish you had been there. Armin was so admired, nothing could be like it. Everybody said how well he looked; and Mr. Smith thought him quite beautiful, and danced with him twice! Only think of that, my dear; he actually danced with him twice! and he was the only creature in the room that he asked a second time. First of all, he asked Miss Ackerman. I was so vexed to see him stand up with her! But, however, he did not admire her at all; indeed, nobody can, you know; and he seemed quite struck with Armin as she was going down the dance. So he inquired who he was, and got introduced, and asked him for the two next. Then the two third he danced with Miss Reiss, and the two fourth with Ayumi Ackerman, and the two fifth with Armin again, and the two sixth with Eren, and the Springer—"

"If he had had any compassion for me" cried her husband impatiently "He would not have danced half so much! For God's sake, say no more of his partners. Oh that he had sprained his ankle in the first dance!"

"Oh! my dear, I am quite delighted with him. He is so excessively handsome! And his sisters are charming women. I never in my life saw anything more elegant than their dresses. I dare say the lace upon Mrs. Dok's gown—"

Here she was interrupted again. Mr. Jaeger protested against any description of finery.

She was therefore obliged to seek another branch of the subject, and related, with much bitterness of spirit and some exaggeration, the shocking rudeness of Mr. Ackerman.

"But I can assure you" she added, "That Eren does not lose much by not suiting his fancy; for he is a most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited that there was no enduring him! He walked here, and he walked there, fancying himself so very great! Not handsome enough to dance with! I wish you had been there, my dear, to have given him one of your set-downs. I quite detest the man."

Chapter End Notes

Three in a row...well chapter 4 will be release soon
When Armin and Eren were alone, the former, who had been cautious in his praise of Mr. Smith before, expressed to his brother just how very much he admired him.

"He is just what a young man ought to be" he said "Sensible, good humored, lively; and I never saw such happy manners! So much ease, with such perfect good breeding!"

"He is also handsome" Eren replied "Which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete."

"I was very much flattered by his asking me to dance a second time. I did not expect such a compliment."

"Did not you? I did for you. But that is one great difference between us. Compliments always take you by surprise and me never. What could be more natural than his asking you again? He could not help seeing that you were about five times as pretty as every other woman or man in the room. No thanks to his gallantry for that. Well, he certainly is very agreeable, and I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person."

"Dear Eren!"

"Oh! you are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody. The entire world is good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in your life."

"I would not wish to be hasty in censuring anyone; but I always speak what I think."

"I know you do; and it is that which makes the wonder. With your good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others! Affectation of candor is common enough one meets with it everywhere. But to be candid without ostentation or design to take the good of everybody's character and make it still better and say nothing of the bad belongs to you alone. And so you like this man's sisters, too, do you? Their manners are not equal to his."

"Certainly not at first. But they are very pleasing women when you converse with them. Miss Smith is to live with her brother, and keep his house; and I am much mistaken if we shall not find a very charming neighbor in her."

Eren listened in silence, but was not convinced; their behavior at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general; and with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than his brother, and with a judgment too unassailed by any attention to himself, he was very little disposed to approve them. They were in fact very fine ladies; not deficient in good humor when they were pleased, nor in the power of making themselves agreeable when they chose it, but proud and conceited. They were rather handsome, had been educated in one of the first private seminaries in town, had a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, were in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of rank, and were therefore in every respect entitled to think well of themselves, and meanly of others. They were of a respectable family in the north of Rose; a circumstance more deeply impressed on their memories than that their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade.
Mr. Smith inherited property to the amount of nearly a hundred thousand pounds from his father, who had intended to purchase an estate, but did not live to do it. Mr. Smith intended it likewise, and sometimes made choice of his county; but as he was now provided with a good house and the liberty of a manor, it was doubtful to many of those who best knew the easiness of his temper, whether he might not spend the remainder of his days at Stohess, and leave the next generation to purchase. His sisters were anxious for his having an estate of his own; but, though he was now only established as a tenant, Miss Smith was by no means unwilling to preside at his table nor was Mrs. Dok, who had married a man of more fashion than fortune, less disposed to consider his house as her home when it suited her. Mr. Smith had not been of age two years, when he was tempted by an accidental recommendation to look at Stohess House. He did look at it and into it for half an hour was pleased with the situation and the principal rooms, satisfied with what the owner said in its praise, and took it immediately.

Between him and Mr. Ackerman there was a very steady friendship, in spite of great opposition of character. Erwin was endeared to Levi by the easiness, openness, and ductility of his temper, though no disposition could offer a greater contrast to his own, and though with his own he never appeared dissatisfied. On the strength of Levi’s regard, Smith had the firmest reliance, and of his judgment the highest opinion. In understanding, Levi was the superior. Smith was by no means deficient, but Levi was clever. He was at the same time haughty, reserved, and fastidious, and his manners, though well bred, were not inviting. In that respect his friend had greatly the advantage. Erwin was sure of being liked wherever he appeared, Levi was continually giving offense.

The manner in which they spoke of the Shiganshina assembly was sufficiently characteristic. Erwin had never met with more pleasant people or prettier girls in his life; everybody had been most kind and attentive to him; there had been no formality, no stiffness; he had soon felt acquainted with all the room; and, as to Mr. Jaeger, he could not conceive an angel more beautiful. Levi, on the contrary, had seen a collection of people in whom there was little beauty and no fashion, for none of whom he had felt the smallest interest and from none received either attention or pleasure. Mr. Jaeger he acknowledged to be pretty, but he smiled too much.

Mrs. Dok and her sister allowed it to be so but still they admired him and liked him, and pronounced him to be a sweet boy, and one whom they would not object to know more of. Mr. Jaeger was therefore established as a sweet boy, and their brother felt authorized by such commendation to think of him as he chose.

Chapter End Notes

More chapters in the next days!

Let me know if there's any mistake
Within a short walk of Trost lived a family with whom the Jaegers were particularly intimate. Sir Yuuki Ackerman had been formerly in trade in Shiganshina, where he had made a tolerable fortune, and risen to the honour of knighthood by an address to the king during his mayoralty. The distinction had perhaps been felt too strongly. It had given him a disgust to his business, and to his residence in a small market town; and, in quitting them both, he had removed with his family to a house about a mile from Shiganshina, denominated from that period Ackerman Lodge, where he could think with pleasure of his own importance, and, unshackled by business, occupy himself solely in being civil to all the world. For, though elated by his rank, it did not render him supercilious; on the contrary, he was all attention to everybody. By nature inoffensive, friendly, and obliging, his presentation at Yalkell had made him courteous.

Lady Ackerman was a very good kind of woman, not too clever to be a valuable neighbour to Mrs. Jaeger. They had several children. The eldest of them, a sensible, intelligent young woman, about twenty-seven, was Eren's intimate friend.

That the Miss Ackermans and the Jaegers should meet to talk over a ball was absolutely necessary; and the morning after the assembly brought the former to Trost to hear and to communicate.

"You began the evening well, Mikasa" Mrs. Jaeger said with civil self-command to Miss Ackerman "You were Mr. Smith's first choice."

"Yes; but he seemed to like his second better."

"Oh! you mean Armin, I suppose, because he danced with him twice. To be sure that did seem as if he admired him—indeed I rather believe he did—I heard something about it—but I hardly know what—something about Mr. Reiss."

"Perhaps you mean what I overheard between him and Mr. Reiss; did not I mention it to you? Mr. Reiss's asking him how he liked our Shiganshina assemblies, and whether he did not think there were a great many pretty women por men in the room, and which he thought the prettiest? and his answering immediately to the last question: 'Oh! the eldest Mr Jaeger, beyond a doubt; there cannot be two opinions on that point.'"

"Upon my word! Well, that is very decided indeed that does seem as if but, however, it may all come to nothing, you know."

"My overhearings were more to the purpose than yours, Eren" Mikasa said "Mr. Ackerman is not so well worth listening to as his friend, is he? Poor Eren! To be only just tolerable."

"I beg you would not put it into Eren's head to be vexed by his ill-treatment, for he is such a disagreeable man, that it would be quite a misfortune to be liked by him. Mrs. Braun told me last night that he sat close to her for half-an-hour without once opening his lips."

"Are you quite sure, ma'am? Is not there a little mistake?" Armin said "I certainly saw Mr. Ackerman speaking to her."

"Aye—because she asked him at last how he liked Stohess, and he could not help answering her; but she said he seemed quite angry at being spoke to."
"Miss Smith told me" Armin said "That he never speaks much, unless among his intimate acquaintances. With them he is remarkably agreeable."

"I do not believe a word of it, my dear. If he had been so very agreeable, he would have talked to Mrs. Braun. But I can guess how it was; everybody says that he is eat up with pride, and I dare say he had heard somehow that Mrs. Braun does not keep a carriage, and had come to the ball in a hack chaise."

"I do not mind his not talking to Mrs. Braun" Miss Ackerman said "But I wish he had danced with Eren."

"Another time, Eren" said his mother "I would not dance with him, if I were you." "I believe, ma'am, I may safely promise you never to dance with him."

"His pride" said Miss Ackerman "Does not offend me so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud."

"That is very true" replied Eren "And I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine."

"Pride" observed Annie, who piqued herself upon the solidity of her reflections "Is a very common failing, I believe. By all that I have ever read, I am convinced that it is very common indeed; that human nature is particularly prone to it, and that there are very few of us who do not cherish a feeling of self-complacency on the score of some quality or other, real or imaginary. Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us."

"If I were as rich as Mr. Ackerman" cried a young Ackerman, who came with his sisters "I should not care how proud I was. I would keep a pack of foxhounds, and drink a bottle of wine a day."

"Then you would drink a great deal more than you ought" said Mrs. Jaeger "And if I were to see you at it, I should take away your bottle directly." The boy protested that she should not; she continued to declare that she would, and the argument ended only with the visit.

Chapter End Notes

If there's any questions let me know
Chapter Six

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The ladies and gentlemen of Trost soon waited on those of Stohess. The visit was soon returned in due form. Mr Jaeger's pleasing manners grew on the goodwill of Mrs. Dok and Miss Smith; and though the mother was found to be intolerable, and the younger sisters not worth speaking to, a wish of being better acquainted with them was expressed towards the two eldest. By Armin, this attention was received with the greatest pleasure, but Eren still saw superciliousness in their treatment of everybody, hardly excepting even his brother, and could not like them; though their kindness to Armin, such as it was, had a value as arising in all probability from the influence of their brother's admiration. It was generally evident whenever they met, that he did admire him and to him it was equally evident that Armin was yielding to the preference which he had begun to entertain for him from the first, and was in a way to be very much in love; but he considered with pleasure that it was not likely to be discovered by the world in general, since Armin united, with great strength of feeling, a composure of temper and a uniform cheerfulness of manner which would guard him from the suspicions of the impertinent. He mentioned this to his friend Miss Ackerman.

"It may perhaps be pleasant" replied Mikasa "To be able to impose on the public in such a case; but it is sometimes a disadvantage to be so very guarded. If a woman or man conceals his affection with the same skill from the object of it, he may lose the opportunity of fixing him; and it will then be but poor consolation to believe the world equally in the dark. There is so much of gratitude or vanity in almost every attachment, that it is not safe to leave any to itself. We can all begin freely a slight preference is natural enough; but there are very few of us who have heart enough to be really in love without encouragement. In nine cases out of ten a women had better show more affection than she feels. Smith likes your brother undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like him, if he does not help him on."

"But he does help him on, as much as her nature will allow. If I can perceive him regard for him, he must be a simpleton, indeed, not to discover it too."

"Remember, Eren, that he does not know Armin's disposition as you do."

"But if a woman or man is partial to a man por woman, and does not endeavour to conceal it, he must find it out."

"Perhaps he must, if he sees enough of him. But, though Smith and Armin meet tolerably often, it is never for many hours together; and, as they always see each other in large mixed parties, it is impossible that every moment should be employed in conversing together. Armin should therefore make the most of every half-hour in which he can command his attention. When he is secure of him, there will be more leisure for falling in love as much as she chooses."

"Your plan is a good one" replied Eren "Where nothing is in question but the desire of being well married, and if I were determined to get a rich husband, or any husband, I dare say I should adopt it. But these are not Armin's feelings; he is not acting by design. As yet, he cannot even be certain of the degree of his own regard nor of its reasonableness. He has known him only a fortnight. He danced four dances with him at Meryton; he saw him one morning at his own house, and has since dined with him in company four times. This is not quite enough to make him understand his character."
"Not as you represent it. Had she merely dined with him, he might only have discovered whether he had a good appetite; but you must remember that four evenings have also been spent together and four evenings may do a great deal."

"Yes; these four evenings have enabled them to ascertain that they both like Vingt-un better than Commerce; but with respect to any other leading characteristic, I do not imagine that much has been unfolded."

"Well" said Mikasa "I wish Armin success with all my heart; and if he were married to him tomorrow, I should think he had as good a chance of happiness as if he were to be studying his character for a twelvemonth. Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life."

"You make me laugh, Mikasa; but it is not sound. You know it is not sound, and that you would never act in this way yourself."

Occupied in observing Mr. Smith's attentions to his brother, Eren was far from suspecting that he was herself becoming an object of some interest in the eyes of his friend. Mr. Ackerman had at first scarcely allowed him to be pretty; he had looked at him without admiration at the ball; and when they next met, he looked at him only to criticise. But no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that he hardly had a good feature in his face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of his light eyes. To this discovery succeeded some others equally mortifying. Though he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in his form, he was forced to acknowledge his figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that his manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness. Of this he was perfectly unaware; to him he was only the man who made himself agreeable nowhere, and who had not thought his handsome enough to dance with.

He began to wish to know more of him, and as a step towards conversing with him himself, attended to his conversation with others. His doing so drew him notice. It was at Sir Yuuki Ackerman's, where a large party were assembled.

"What does Mr. Ackerman mean" he said to Mikasa "By listening to my conversation with Colonel Pixis?"

"That is a question which Mr. Ackerman only can answer."

"But if he does it any more I shall certainly let him know that I see what he is about. He has a very satirical eye, and if I do not begin by being impertinent myself, I shall soon grow afraid of him."

On his approaching them soon afterwards, though without seeming to have any intention of speaking, Miss Ackerman defied her friend to mention such a subject to him; which immediately provoking Eren to do it, he turned to him and said:

"Did you not think, Mr. Ackerman, that I expressed myself uncommonly well just now, when I was teasing Colonel Pixis to give us a ball at Shiganshina?"

"With great energy; but it is always a subject which makes a lady energetic."

"You are severe on us."
"It will be her turn soon to be teased" said Miss Ackerman "I am going to open the instrument, Eren, and you know what follows."

"You are a very strange creature by way of a friend! Always wanting me to play and sing before anybody and everybody! If my vanity had taken a musical turn, you would have been invaluable; but as it is, I would really rather not sit down before those who must be in the habit of hearing the very best performers." On Miss Ackerman's persevering, however, she added, "Very well, if it must be so, it must." And gravely glancing at Mr. Ackerman "There is a fine old saying, which everybody here is of course familiar with: 'Keep your breath to cool your porridge'; and I shall keep mine to swell my song."

His performance was pleasing, though by no means capital. After a song or two, and before he could reply to the entreaties of several that she would sing again, he was eagerly succeeded at the instrument by his sister Annie, who having, in consequence of being the only plain one in the family, worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments, was always impatient for display.

Annie had neither genius nor taste; and though vanity had given her application, it had given her likewise a pedantic air and conceited manner, which would have injured a higher degree of excellence than she had reached. Eren, easy and unaffected, had been listened to with much more pleasure, though not playing half so well; and Annie, at the end of a long concerto, was glad to purchase praise and gratitude by Maria and Sina airs, at the request of his younger sisters, who, with some of the Ackermans, and two or three officers, joined eagerly in dancing at one end of the room.

Mr. Ackerman stood near them in silent indignation at such a mode of passing the evening, to the exclusion of all conversation, and was too much engrossed by his thoughts to perceive that Sir Yuuki Ackerman was his neighbour, till Sir Yuuki thus began:

"What a charming amusement for young people this is, Mr. Ackerman! There is nothing like dancing after all. I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished society."

"Certainly, sir; and it has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world. Every savage can dance."

Sir Yuuki only smiled. "Your friend performs delightfully" he continued after a pause, on seeing Erwin join the group "And I doubt not that you are an adept in the science yourself, Mr. Ackerman."

"You saw me dance at Shiganshina, I believe, sir."

"Yes, indeed, and received no inconsiderable pleasure from the sight. Do you often dance at St. James's?"

"Never, sir."

"Do you not think it would be a proper compliment to the place?"

"It is a compliment which I never pay to any place if I can avoid it."

"You have a house in town, I conclude?"

Mr. Ackerman bowed.

"I had once had some thought of fixing in town myself for I am fond of superior society; but I did not feel quite certain that the air of London would agree with Lady Ackerman."
He paused in hopes of an answer; but his companion was not disposed to make any; and Eren at that instant moving towards them, he was struck with the action of doing a very gallant thing, and called out to her: "My dear Mr Eren, why are you not dancing? Mr. Ackerman, you must allow me to present this young man to you as a very desirable partner. You cannot refuse to dance, I am sure when so much beauty is before you." And, taking his hand, he would have given it to Mr. Ackerman who, though extremely surprised, was not unwilling to receive it, when he instantly drew back, and said with some discomposure to Sir Yuuki:

"Indeed, sir, I have not the least intention of dancing. I entreat you not to suppose that I moved this way in order to beg for a partner."

Mr. Ackerman, with grave propriety, requested to be allowed the honour of his hand, but in vain. Eren was determined; nor did Sir Yuuki at all shake her purpose by his attempt at persuasion.

"You excel so much in the dance, Mr Eren, that it is cruel to deny me the happiness of seeing you; and though this gentleman dislikes the amusement in general, he can have no objection, I am sure, to oblige us for one half-hour."

"Mr. Ackerman is all politeness" Eren said, smiling.

"He is, indeed; but, considering the inducement, my dear Mr Eren, we cannot wonder at his complaisance for who would object to such a partner?"

Eren looked archly, and turned away. His resistance had not injured him with the gentleman, and he was thinking of him with some complacency, when thus accosted by Miss Smith:

"I can guess the subject of your reverie."

"I should imagine not."

"You are considering how insupportable it would be to pass many evenings in this manner in such society; and indeed I am quite of your opinion. I was never more annoyed! The insipidity, and yet the noise the nothingness, and yet the self-importance of all those people! What would I give to hear your strictures on them!"

"Your conjecture is totally wrong, I assure you. My mind was more agreeably engaged. I have been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty man or woman can bestow."

Miss Smith immediately fixed her eyes on his face, and desired he would tell her what lady or gentleman had the credit of inspiring such reflections. Mr. Ackerman replied with great intrepidity:

"Mr Eren Jaeger."

"Mr Eren Jaeger!" repeated Miss Smith. "I am all astonishment. How long has she been such a favourite? And pray, when am I to wish you joy?"

"That is exactly the question which I expected you to ask. A lady's imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony, in a moment. I knew you would be wishing me joy."

"Nay, if you are serious about it, I shall consider the matter is absolutely settled. You will be having a charming mother-in-law, indeed; and, of course, she will always be at Karaness with you."
He listened to her with perfect indifference while she chose to entertain herself in this manner; and as his composure convinced her that all was safe, her wit flowed long.

Chapter End Notes

Want more?
Chapter Seven

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mr. Jaeger's property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately for his kids, was entailed, in default of a kid born within the first year of marriage, on a distant relation; and their mother's fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could but will supply the deficiency of his. Her father had been an attorney in Shiganshina, and had left her four thousand pounds.

She had a sister married to a Mr. Zakarius, who had been a clerk to their father and succeeded him in the business, and a brother settled in Sina in a respectable line of trade.

The village of Ragako was only one mile from Shiganshina; a most convenient distance for the young gentlemen’s and ladies, who were usually tempted thither three or four times a week, to pay their duty to their aunt and to a milliner's shop just over the way. The two youngest of the family, Sasha and Isabel, were particularly frequent in these attentions; their minds were more vacant than their sisters', and when nothing better offered, a walk to Shiganshina was necessary to amuse their morning hours and furnish conversation for the evening; and however bare of news the country in general might be, they always contrived to learn some from their aunt. At present, indeed, they were well supplied both with news and happiness by the recent arrival of a militia regiment in the neighborhood; it was to remain the whole winter, and Shiganshina was the headquarters.

Their visits to Mrs. Zakarius were now productive of the most interesting intelligence. Every day added something to their knowledge of the officers' names and connections. Their lodgings were not long a secret, and at length they began to know the officers themselves. Mr. Zakarius visited them all, and this opened to his nieces a store of felicity unknown before. They could talk of nothing but officers; and Mr. Smith's large fortune, the mention of which gave animation to their mother, was worthless in their eyes when opposed to the regimentals of an ensign.

After listening one morning to their effusions on this subject, Mr. Jaeger coolly observed:

"From all that I can collect by your manner of talking, you must be two of the silliest girls in the country. I have suspected it some time, but I am now convinced."

Sasha was disconcerted, and made no answer; but Isabel, with perfect indifference, continued to express her admiration of Captain Sand, and her hope of seeing him in the course of the day, as he was going the next morning to Sina.

"I am astonished, my dear" said Mrs. Jaeger "That you should be so ready to think your own children silly. If I wished to think slightingly of anybody's children, it should not be of my own, however."

"If my children are silly, I must hope to be always sensible of it."

"Yes but as it happens, they are all of them very clever."
"This is the only point; I flatter myself, on which we do not agree. I had hoped that our sentiments coincided in every particular, but I must so far differ from you as to think our two youngest daughters uncommonly foolish."

"My dear Mr. Jaeger, you must not expect such girls to have the sense of their father and mother. When they get to our age, I dare say they will not think about officers any more than we do. I remember the time when I liked a red coat myself very well and, indeed, so I do still at my heart; and if a smart young colonel, with five or six thousand a year, should want one of my girls I shall not say nay to him; and I thought Colonel Sanes looked very becoming the other night at Sir Ackerman's in his regimentals."

"Mamma" cried Isabel "My aunt says that Colonel Sanes and Captain Sand do not go so often to Miss Ral's as they did when they first came; she sees them now very often standing in Shultz's library."

Mrs. Jaeger was prevented replying by the entrance of the footman with a note for Mr Jaeger; it came from Stohess, and the servant waited for an answer. Mrs. Jaeger's eyes sparkled with pleasure, and she was eagerly calling out, while his son read

"Well, Armin, who is it from? What is it about? What does he say? Well, Armin, make haste and tell us; make haste, my love."

"It is from Miss Smith" said Armin, and then read it aloud.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—

"If you are not so compassionate as to dine to day with Hitch and me, we shall be in danger of hating each other for the rest of our lives, for a whole day's tete-a-tete between two women can never end without a quarrel. Come as soon as you can on receipt of this. My brother and the gentlemen are to dine with the officers. Yours ever,

"HANGE SMITH"

"With the officers!" cried Isabel "I wonder my aunt did not tell us of that."

"Dining out" said Mrs. Jaeger "That is very unlucky."

"Can I have the carriage?" said Armin.

"No, my dear, you had better go on horseback, because it seems likely to rain; and then you must stay all night."

"That would be a good scheme" said Eren "If you were sure that they would not offer to send her home."

"Oh! but the gentlemen will have Mr. Smith's chaise to go to Shiganshina, and the Dok's have no horses to theirs."

"I had much rather go in the coach."

"But, my dear, your father cannot spare the horses, I am sure. They are wanted in the farm, Mr. Jaeger, are they not?"

"They are wanted in the farm much oftener than I can get them."
"But if you have got them today" said Eren "My mother's purpose will be answered."

He did at last extort from his father an acknowledgment that the horses were engaged. Armin was therefore obliged to go on horseback, and his mother attended his to the door with many cheerful prognostics of a bad day. Her hopes were answered; Armin had not been gone long before it rained hard. His brother and sisters were uneasy for him, but his mother was delighted. The rain continued the whole evening without intermission; Armin certainly could not come back.

"This was a lucky idea of mine, indeed!" said Mrs. Jaeger more than once, as if the credit of making it rain were all her own. Till the next morning, however, she was not aware of all the felicity of her contrivance. Breakfast was scarcely over when a servant from Stohess brought the following note for Eren:

"MY DEAREST EREN,—

"I find myself very unwell this morning, which, I suppose, is to be imputed to my getting wet through yesterday. My kind friends will not hear of my returning till I am better. They insist also on my seeing Mr. Langnar therefore do not be alarmed if you should hear of his having been to me and, excepting a sore throat and headache, there is not much the matter with me.—Yours, etc."

"Well, my dear" said Mr. Jaeger, when Eren had read the note aloud "If your son should have a dangerous fit of illness if he should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Smith, and under your orders."

"Oh! I am not afraid of him dying. People do not die of little trifling colds. He will be taken good care of. As long as he stays there, it is all very well. I would go and see him if I could have the carriage."

Eren, feeling really anxious, was determined to go to him, though the carriage was not to be had; and as he was no horseman, walking was his only alternative. He declared his resolution.

"How you can be so silly" cried his mother "As to think of such a thing, in all this dirt! You will not be fit to be seen when you get there."

"I shall be very fit to see Armin which is all I want."

"Is this a hint to me, Eren" said his father "To send for the horses?"

"No, indeed, I do not wish to avoid the walk. The distance is nothing when one has a motive; only three miles. I shall be back by dinner."

"I admire the activity of your benevolence" observed Annie "But every impulse of feeling should be guided by reason; and, in my opinion, exertion should always be in proportion to what is required."

"We will go as far as Shiganshina with you" said Sasha and Isabel. Eren accepted their company, and the three young kids set off together.

"If we make haste" said Isabel, as they walked along "Perhaps we may see something of Captain Sand before he goes."

In Shiganshina they parted; the two youngest repaired to the lodgings of one of the officers' wives, and Eren continued his walk alone, crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity, and finding himself at last within view of the house, with weary ankles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise.
He was shown into the breakfast parlor, where all but Armin were assembled, and where his appearance created a great deal of surprise. That he should have walked three miles so early in the day, in such dirty weather, and by himself, was almost incredible to Mrs. Dok and Miss Smith; and Eren was convinced that they held him in contempt for it. He was received, however, very politely by them; and in their brother's manners there was something better than politeness; there was good humor and kindness. Mr. Levi said very little, and Mr. Dok nothing at all. The former was divided between admiration of the brilliancy which exercise had given to his complexion, and doubt as to the occasion's justifying his coming so far alone. The latter was thinking only of his breakfast.

His inquiries after his brother were not very favorably answered. Mr Jaeger had slept ill, and though up, was very feverish, and not well enough to leave his room. Eren was glad to be taken to him immediately; and Armin, who had only been withheld by the fear of giving alarm or inconvenience from expressing in his note how much he longed for such a visit, was delighted at his entrance. He was not equal, however, to much conversation, and when Miss Smith left them together, could attempt little besides expressions of gratitude for the extraordinary kindness he was treated with. Eren silently attended him.

When breakfast was over they were joined by the sisters; and Eren began to like them himself, when he saw how much affection and solicitude they showed for Armin. The apothecary came, and having examined his patient, said, as might be supposed, that he had caught a violent cold, and that they must endeavor to get the better of it; advised him to return to bed, and promised him some draughts. The advice was followed readily, for the feverish symptoms increased, and his head ached acutely. Eren did not quit him room for a moment; nor were the other ladies often absent; the gentlemen being out, they had, in fact, nothing to do elsewhere.

When the clock struck three, Eren felt that he must go, and very unwillingly said so. Miss Smith offered him the carriage, and he only wanted a little pressing to accept it, when Armin testified such concern in parting with him, that Miss Smith was obliged to convert the offer of the chaise to an invitation to remain at Stohess for the present. Eren most thankfully consented, and a servant was dispatched to Ragako to acquaint the family with him stay and bring back a supply of clothes.
Chapter Eight

Chapter Notes

Finally I'm back!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

At five o'clock the two gentlemen retired to dress, and at half-past six Eren was summoned to dinner. To the civil inquiries which then poured in, and amongst which he had the pleasure of distinguishing the much superior solicitude of Mr. Smith's, he could not make a very favourable answer. Armin was by no means better. The sisters, on hearing this, repeated three or four times how much they were grieved, how shocking it was to have a bad cold, and how excessively they disliked being ill themselves; and then thought no more of the matter: and their indifference towards Armin when not immediately before them restored Eren to the enjoyment of all his former dislike.

Their brother, indeed, was the only one of the party whom she could regard with any complacency. His anxiety for Armin was evident, and his attentions to himself most pleasing, and they prevented his feeling himself so much an intruder as he believed he was considered by the others. He had very little notice from any but him. Miss Smith was engrossed by Mr. Ackerman, her sister scarcely less so; and as for Mr. Dok, by whom Eren sat, he was an indolent man, who lived only to eat, drink, and play at cards; who, when he found him to prefer a plain dish to a ragout, had nothing to say to him.

When dinner was over, he returned directly to Armin, and Miss Smith began abusing him as soon as he was out of the room. His manners were pronounced to be very bad indeed, a mixture of pride and impertinence; he had no conversation, no style, no beauty. Mrs. Dok thought the same, and added:

"He has nothing, in short, to recommend him, but being an excellent walker. I shall never forget his appearance this morning. He really looked almost wild."

"He did, indeed, Hitch. I could hardly keep my countenance. Very nonsensical to come at all! Why must he be scampering about the country, because his brother had a cold? His hair, so untidy, so blowsy!"

"Yes, and his coat; I hope you saw his coat, six inches deep in mud, I am absolutely certain; and the gown which had been let down to hide it not doing its office."

"Your picture may be very exact, Hitch" said Erwin "But this was all lost upon me. I thought Mr Eren Jaeger looked remarkably well when he came into the room this morning. His dirty coat quite escaped my notice."

"You observed it, Mr. Ackerman, I am sure" said Miss Smith "And I am inclined to think that you would not wish to see your sister make such an exhibition."

"Certainly not."

"To walk three miles, or four miles, or five miles, or whatever it is, above his ankles in dirt, and
alone, quite alone! What could he mean by it? It seems to me to show an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country town indifference to decorum."

"It shows an affection for his brother that is very pleasing," said Erwin.

"I am afraid, Mr. Ackerman" observed Miss Smith in a half whisper "That this adventure has rather affected your admiration of his fine eyes."

"Not at all" he replied "They were brightened by the exercise." A short pause followed this speech, and Mrs. Dok began again:

"I have a excessive regard for Mr. Armin Jaeger, he is really a very sweet boy, and I wish with all my heart he were well settled. But with such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it."

"I think I have heard you say that their uncle is an attorney on Maria."

"Yes; and they have another, who lives somewhere near Orvud."

"That is capital" added her sister, and they both laughed heartily.

"If they had uncles enough to fill al Orvud" cried Erwin "It would not make them one jot less agreeable."

"But it must very materially lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world" replied Levi.

To this speech Smith made no answer; but his sisters gave it their hearty assent, and indulged their mirth for some time at the expense of their dear friend's vulgar relations.

With a renewal of tenderness, however, they returned to his room on leaving the dining-parlour, and sat with his till summoned to coffee. He was still very poorly, and Eren would not quit him at all, till late in the evening, when he had the comfort of seeing him sleep, and when it seemed to him rather right than pleasant that he should go downstairs himself. On entering the drawing-room he found the whole party at loo, and was immediately invited to join them; but suspecting them to be playing high, he declined it, for the short time she could stay below, with a book. Mr. Dok looked at him with astonishment.

"Do you prefer reading to cards?" he said "That is rather singular."

"Mr. Eren Jaeger" said Miss Smith "Despises cards. He is a great reader, and has no pleasure in anything else."

"I deserve neither such praise nor such censure" cried Eren "I am NOT a great reader, and I have pleasure in many things."

"In nursing your brother I am sure you have pleasure" Erwin said "And I hope it will be soon increased by seeing him quite well."

Eren thanked him from his heart, and then walked towards the table where a few books were lying. He immediately offered to fetch him others all that his library afforded.

"And I wish my collection were larger for your benefit and my own credit; but I am an idle fellow, and though I have not many, I have more than I ever looked into."
Eren assured him that he could suit himself perfectly with those in the room.

"I am astonished" said Miss Smith "That my father should have left so small a collection of books. What a delightful library you have at Mitras, Mr. Ackerman!"

"It ought to be good" he replied "It has been the work of many generations."

"And then you have added so much to it yourself, you are always buying books."

"I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such days as these."

"Neglect! I am sure you neglect nothing that can add to the beauties of that noble place. Erwin, when you build your house, I wish it may be half as delightful as Mitras."

"I wish it may."

"But I would really advise you to make your purchase in that neighbourhood, and take Mitras for a kind of model. There is not a finer county in Sina than Ehrmich."

"With all my heart; I will buy Mitras itself if Levi will sell it."

"I am talking of possibilities, Erwin."

"Upon my word, Hange, I should think it more possible to get Mitras by purchase than by imitation."

Eren was so much caught with what passed, as to leave his very little attention for his book; and soon laying it wholly aside, he drew near the card-table, and stationed himself between Mr. Smith and his eldest sister, to observe the game."

"Is Miss Levi much grown since the spring?" said Miss Smith "Will she be as tall as I am?"

"I think she will. She is now about Miss Eren Jaeger's height, or rather taller."

"How I long to see her again! I never met with anybody who delighted me so much. Such a countenance, such manners! And so extremely accomplished for her age! Her performance on the pianoforte is exquisite."

"It is amazing to me" said Erwin "How young ladies and gentlemens can have patience to be so very accomplished as they all are."

"All young ladies and gentlemens accomplished! My dear Erwin, what do you mean?"

"Yes, all of them, I think. They all paint tables, cover screens, and net purses. I scarcely know anyone who cannot do all this, and I am sure I never heard a young lady or man spoken of for the first time, without being informed that she or he was very accomplished."

"Your list of the common extent of accomplishments" said Levi "Has too much truth. The word is applied to many a woman por man who deserves it no otherwise than by netting a purse or covering a screen. But I am very far from agreeing with you in your estimation of ladies and men in general. I cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen, in the whole range of my acquaintance, that are really accomplished."

"Nor I, I am sure" said Miss Smith.

"Then" observed Eren "You must comprehend a great deal in your idea of an accomplished man
"Yes, I do comprehend a great deal in it."

"Oh! certainly" cried his faithful assistant "No one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A man or woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, they must possess a certain something in their air and manner of walking, the tone of their voice, address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved."

"All this their must possess," added Levi "And to all this their must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of mind by extensive reading."

"I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished man and women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any."

"Are you so severe upon your own sex as to doubt the possibility of all this?

"I never saw such a man neither a woman. I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe united."

Mrs. Dok and Miss Smith both cried out against the injustice of his implied doubt, and were both protesting that they knew many women who answered this description, when Mr. Dok called them to order, with bitter complaints of their inattention to what was going forward. As all conversation was thereby at an end, Eren soon afterwards left the room.

"Eren Jaeger" said Miss Smith when the door was closed on his "Is one of those young men who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex by undervaluing their own; and with many men por woman, I dare say, it succeeds. But, in my opinion, it is a paltry device, a very mean art."

"Undoubtedly" replied Levi, to whom this remark was chiefly addressed, "There is a meanness in all the arts which ladies sometimes condescend to employ for captivation. Whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable."

Miss Smith was not so entirely satisfied with this reply as to continue the subject.

Eren joined them again only to say that his brother was worse, and that he could not leave him. Erwin urged Mr. Kitts being sent for immediately; while his sisters, convinced that no country advice could be of any service, recommended an express to town for one of the most eminent physicians. This he would not hear of; but he was not so unwilling to comply with their brother's proposal; and it was settled that Mr. Kitts should be sent for early in the morning, if Miss Smith were not decidedly better. Erwin was quite uncomfortable; his sisters declared that they were miserable: They solaced their wretchedness, however, by duets after supper, while he could find no better relief to his feelings than by giving his housekeeper directions that every attention might be paid to the sick gentleman and his brother.
Chapter Nine

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Eren passed the chief of the night in his brother's room, and in the morning had the pleasure of being able to send a tolerable answer to the inquiries which he very early received from Mr. Smith by a housemaid, and some time afterwards from the two elegant ladies who waited on his sisters. In spite of this amendment, however, he requested to have a note sent to Shiganshina, desiring his mother to visit Armin, and form her own judgement of his situation. The note was immediately dispatched, and its contents as quickly complied with. Mrs. Jaeger, accompanied by her two youngest kids, reached Stohess soon after the family breakfast.

Had she found Armin in any apparent danger, Mrs. Jaeger would have been very miserable; but being satisfied on seeing him that his illness was not alarming, she had no wish of his recovering immediately, as his restoration to health would probably remove him from Stohess. She would not listen, therefore, to her son's proposal of being carried home; neither did the apothecary, who arrived about the same time, think it at all advisable. After sitting a little while with Armin, on Miss Smith's appearance and invitation, the mother and three daughters all attended her into the breakfast parlor. Smith met them with hopes that Mrs. Jaeger had not found Miss Jaeger worse than she expected.

"Indeed I have, sir" was her answer "He is a great deal too ill to be moved. Mr. Kitts says we must not think of moving him. We must trespass a little longer on your kindness."

"Removed!" cried Smith "It must not be thought of. My sister, I am sure, will not hear of his removal."

"You may depend upon it, Madam" said Miss Smith, with cold civility "That Mr. Jaeger will receive every possible attention while he remains with us."

Mrs. Jaeger was profuse in her acknowledgments.

"I am sure" she added "If it was not for such good friends I do not know what would become of him, for he is very ill indeed, and suffers a vast deal, though with the greatest patience in the world, which is always the way with him, for he has, without exception, the sweetest temper I have ever met with. I often tell my other kids they are nothing to him. You have a sweet room here, Mr. Smith, and a charming prospect over the gravel walk. I do not know a place in the country that is equal to Stohess. You will not think of quitting it in a hurry, I hope, though you have but a short lease."

"Whatever I do is done in a hurry" he replied "And therefore if I should resolve to quit Stohess, I should probably be off in five minutes. At present, however, I consider myself as quite fixed here."

"That is exactly what I should have supposed of you" said Eren.

"You begin to comprehend me, do you?" he cried, turning towards him.

"Oh! Yes I understand you perfectly."

I wish I might take this for a compliment; but to be so easily seen through I am afraid is pitiful."
"That is as it happens. It does not follow that a deep, intricate character is more or less estimable than such a one as yours."

"Eren" cried her mother "Remember where you are, and do not run on in the wild manner that you are suffered to do at home."

"I did not know before" continued Erwin immediately "That you were a studier of character. It must be an amusing study."

"Yes, but intricate characters are the most amusing. They have at least that advantage."

"The country" Levi said "Can in general supply but a few subjects for such a study. In a country neighborhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society."

"But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them forever."

"Yes, indeed" cried Mrs. Jaeger, offended by his manner of mentioning a country neighborhood "I assure you there is quite as much of that going on in the country as in town."

Everybody was surprised, and Levi, after looking at her for a moment, turned silently away. Mrs. Jaeger, who fancied she had gained a complete victory over him, continued her triumph.

"I cannot see that Sina has any great advantage over the country, for my part, except the shops and public places. The country is a vast deal pleasanter, is it not, Mr. Smith?"

"When I am in the country" he replied "I never wish to leave it; and when I am in town it is pretty much the same. They have each their advantages, and I can be equally happy in either."

"Aye that is because you have the right disposition. But that gentleman" looking at Levi "Aeemed to think the country was nothing at all."

"Indeed, Mamma, you are mistaken" said Eren, blushing for her mother "You quite mistook Mr. Ackerman. He only meant that there was not such a variety of people to be met with in the country as in the town, which you must acknowledge to be true."

"Certainly, my dear, nobody said there were; but as to not meeting with many people in this neighborhood, I believe there are few neighborhoods larger. I know we dine with four and twenty families."

Nothing but concern for Eren could enable Erwin to keep his countenance. His sister was less delicate, and directed her eyes towards Mr. Ackerman with a very expressive smile. Eren, for the sake of saying something that might turn her mother's thoughts, now asked her if Mikasa Ackerman had been at Shiganshina since her coming away.

Yes, she called yesterday with her father. What an agreeable man Sir Yuuki is, Mr. Smith, is not he? So much the man of fashion! So genteel and easy! He has always something to say to everybody. That is my idea of good breeding; and those persons who fancy themselves very important, and never open their mouths, quite mistake the matter."

"Did Mikasa dine with you?"

"No, she would go home. I fancy she was wanted about the mince pies. For my part, Mr. Smith, I always keep servants that can do their own work; my daughters are brought up very differently. But everybody is to judge for themselves, and the Ackermans are a very good sort of girls, I assure
you. It is a pity they are not handsome! Not that I think Mikasa so very plain but then she is our particular friend."

"She seems a very pleasant young woman."

"Oh! Dear, yes; but you must own she is very plain. Lady Ackerman herself has often said so, and envied me Armin's beauty. I do not like to boast of my own child, but to be sure, Armin one does not often see anybody better looking. It is what everybody says. I do not trust my own partiality. When she was only fifteen, there was a man at my brother Gardiner's in town so much in love with her that my sister-in-law was sure he would make her an offer before we came away. But, however, he did not. Perhaps he thought her too young. However, he wrote some verses on her, and very pretty they were."

"And so ended his affection" said Eren impatiently "There has been many a one, I fancy, overcome in the same way. I wonder who first discovered the efficacy of poetry in driving away love!"

"I have been used to consider poetry as the food of love" said Levi.

"Of a fine, stout, healthy love it may. Everything nourishes what is strong already. But if it be only a slight, thin sort of inclination, I am convinced that one good sonnet will starve it entirely away."

Levi only smiled; and the general pause which ensued made Eren tremble lest his mother should be exposing herself again. She longed to speak, but could think of nothing to say; and after a short silence Mrs. Jaeger began repeating her thanks to Mr. Smith for his kindness to Armin, with an apology for troubling him also with Eren. Mr. Smith was unaffectedly civil in his answer, and forced his younger sister to be civil also, and say what the occasion required. She performed her part indeed without much graciousness, but Mrs. Jaeger was satisfied, and soon afterwards ordered her carriage. Upon this signal, the youngest of her daughters put herself forward. The two girls had been whispering to each other during the whole visit, and the result of it was, that the youngest should tax Mr. Smith with having promised on his first coming into the country to give a ball at Stohess. Isabel was a stout, well grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and good humored countenance; a favorite with her mother, whose affection had brought her into public at an early age. She had high animal spirits, and a sort of natural self-consequence, which the attention of the officers, to whom her uncle's good dinners, and her own easy manners recommended her, had increased into assurance. She was very equal, therefore, to address Mr. Smith on the subject of the ball, and abruptly reminded him of his promise; adding, that it would be the most shameful thing in the world if he did not keep it. His answer to this sudden attack was delightful to their mother's ear:

"I am perfectly ready, I assure you, to keep my engagement; and when your brother is recovered, you shall, if you please, name the very day of the ball. But you would not wish to be dancing when he is ill."

Isabel declared herself satisfied. "Oh! Yes it would be much better to wait till Armin was well, and by that time most likely Captain Springer would be at Maria again. And when you have given your ball," she added, "I shall insist on their giving one also. I shall tell Colonel Pixis it will be quite a shame if he does not."

Mrs. Jaeger and her daughters then departed, and Eren returned instantly to Armin, leaving her own and her relations' behavior to the remarks of the two ladies and Mr. Levi; the latter of whom, however, could not be prevailed on to join in their censure of her, in spite of all Miss Smith's witticisms on fine eyes.

Chapter End Notes
Let me know if there's any mistake
Chapter Ten

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The day passed much as the day before had done. Mrs. Dok and Miss Smith had spent some hours of the morning with the invalid, who continued, though slowly, to mend; and in the evening Eren joined their party in the drawing room. The loo table, however, did not appear. Mr. Ackerman was writing, and Miss Smith, seated near him, was watching the progress of his letter and repeatedly calling off his attention by messages to his sister. Mr. Dok and Mr. Smith were at piquet, and Mrs. Dok was observing their game. Eren took up some needlework, and was sufficiently amused in attending to what passed between Levi and his companion. The perpetual commendations of the lady, either on his handwriting, or on the evenness of his lines, or on the length of his letter, with the perfect unconcern with which her praises were received, formed a curious dialogue, and was exactly in union with her opinion of each.

"How delighted Miss Ackerman will be to receive such a letter!"

He made no answer.

"You write uncommonly fast."

"You are mistaken. I write rather slowly."

"How many letters you must have occasion to write in the course of a year! Letters of business, too! How odious I should think them!"

"It is fortunate, then, that they fall to my lot instead of yours."

"Pray tell your sister that I long to see her."

"I have already told her so once, by your desire."

"I am afraid you do not like your pen. Let me mend it for you. I mend pens remarkably well."

"Thank you but I always mend my own."

"How can you contrive to write so even?"

He was silent.

"Tell your sister I am delighted to hear of her improvement on the harp; and pray let her know that I am quite in raptures with her beautiful little design for a table, and I think it infinitely superior to Miss Braus'."

"Will you give me leave to defer your raptures till I write again? At present I have not room to do them justice."

"Oh! it is of no consequence. I shall see her in January. But do you always write such charming long letters to her, Mr. Ackerman?"

"They are generally long; but whether always charming it is not for me to determine."

"It is a rule with me, that a person who can write a long letter with ease, cannot write ill."
"That will not do for a compliment to Levi, Hange" cried her brother "Because he does not write with ease. He studies too much for words of four syllables. Do not you, Levi?"

"My style of writing is very different from yours."

"Oh!" cried Miss Smith "Erwin writes in the most careless way imaginable. He leaves out half his words, and blots the rest."

"My ideas flow so rapidly that I have not time to express them by which means my letters sometimes convey no ideas at all to my correspondents."

"Your humility, Mr. Smith" Eren said "Must disarm reproof."

"Nothing is more deceitful" said Levi "Than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast."

"And which of the two do you call my little recent piece of modesty?"

"The indirect boast; for you are really proud of your defects in writing, because you consider them as proceeding from a rapidity of thought and carelessness of execution, which, if not estimable, you think at least highly interesting. The power of doing anything with quickness is always prized much by the possessor, and often without any attention to the imperfection of the performance. When you told Mrs. Jaeger this morning that if you ever resolved upon quitting Stohess you should be gone in five minutes, you meant it to be a sort of panegyric, of compliment to yourself and yet what is there so very laudable in a precipitance which must leave very necessary business undone, and can be of no real advantage to yourself or anyone else?"

"Nay" cried Erwin "This is too much, to remember at night all the foolish things that were said in the morning. And yet, upon my honour, I believe what I said of myself to be true, and I believe it at this moment. At least, therefore, I did not assume the character of needless precipitance merely to show off before the ladies or gentlemans."

"I dare say you believed it; but I am by no means convinced that you would be gone with such celerity. Your conduct would be quite as dependent on chance as that of any man I know; and if, as you were mounting your horse, a friend were to say, 'Smith, you had better stay till next week,' you would probably do it, you would probably not go and at another word, might stay a month."

"You have only proved by this" Eren cried "That Mr. Smith did not do justice to his own disposition. You have shown him off now much more than he did himself."

"I am exceedingly gratified" Erwin said "By your converting what my friend says into a compliment on the sweetness of my temper. But I am afraid you are giving it a turn which that gentleman did by no means intend; for he would certainly think better of me, if under such a circumstance I were to give a flat denial, and ride off as fast as I could."

"Would Mr. Ackerman then consider the rashness of your original intentions as atoned for by your obstinacy in adhering to it?"

"Upon my word, I cannot exactly explain the matter; Levi must speak for himself."

"You expect me to account for opinions which you choose to call mine, but which I have never acknowledged. Allowing the case, however, to stand according to your representation, you must remember, Mr. Jaeger, that the friend who is supposed to desire his return to the house, and the delay of his plan, has merely desired it, asked it without offering one argument in favour of its propriety."
"To yield readily easily to the persuasion of a friend is no merit with you."

"To yield without conviction is no compliment to the understanding of either."

"You appear to me, Mr. Ackerman, to allow nothing for the influence of friendship and affection. A regard for the requester would often make one readily yield to a request, without waiting for arguments to reason one into it. I am not particularly speaking of such a case as you have supposed about Mr. Smith. We may as well wait, perhaps, till the circumstance occurs before we discuss the discretion of his behaviour thereupon. But in general and ordinary cases between friend and friend, where one of them is desired by the other to change a resolution of no very great moment, should you think ill of that person for complying with the desire, without waiting to be argued into it?"

"Will it not be advisable, before we proceed on this subject, to arrange with rather more precision the degree of importance which is to appertain to this request, as well as the degree of intimacy subsisting between the parties?"

"By all means" Erwin cried "Let us hear all the particulars, not forgetting their comparative height and size; for that will have more weight in the argument, Mr. Jaeger, than you may be aware of. I assure you, that if Levi were not such a great tall fellow, in comparison with myself, I should not pay him half so much deference. I declare I do not know a more awful object than Levi, on particular occasions, and in particular places; at his own house especially, and of a Sunday evening, when he has nothing to do."

Mr. Ackerman smiled; but Eren thought he could perceive that he was rather offended, and therefore checked him laugh. Miss Smith warmly resented the indignity he had received, in an expostulation with her brother for talking such nonsense.

"I see your design, Smith" said his friend "You dislike an argument, and want to silence this."

"Perhaps I do. Arguments are too much like disputes. If you and Mr. Jaeger will defer yours till I am out of the room, I shall be very thankful; and then you may say whatever you like of me."

"What you ask" Eren said "Is no sacrifice on my side; and Mr. Ackerman had much better finish his letter."

Mr. Ackerman took her advice, and did finish his letter. When that business was over, he applied to Miss Smith and Eren for an indulgence of some music. Miss Smith moved with some alacrity to the pianoforte; and, after a polite request that Eren would lead the way which the other as politely and more earnestly negatived, he seated himself. Mrs. Dok sang with her sister, and while they were thus employed, Eren could not help observing, as he turned over some music books that lay on the instrument, how frequently Mr. Ackerman's eyes were fixed on him. He hardly knew how to suppose that he could be an object of admiration to so great a man; and yet that he should look at him because he disliked him, was still more strange. He could only imagine, however, at last that he drew his notice because there was something more wrong and reprehensible, according to his ideas of right, than in any other person present. The supposition did not pain him. He liked him too little to care for his approbation. After playing some Italian songs, Miss Smith varied the charm by a lively Scotch air; and soon afterwards Mr. Ackerman, drawing near Eren, said to him:

"Do not you feel a great inclination, Mr. Jaeger, to seize such an opportunity of dancing a reel?"

He smiled, but made no answer. He repeated the question, with some surprise at him "Oh!" he said "I heard you before, but I could not immediately determine what to say in reply. You wanted me, I know, to say 'Yes,' that you might have the pleasure of despising my taste; but I always delight in overthrowing those kind of schemes, and cheating a person of their premeditated contempt. I have,
therefore, made up my mind to tell you, that I do not want to dance a reel at all and now despise me if you dare."

"Indeed I do not dare."

Eren, having rather expected to affront him, was amazed at his gallantry; but there was a mixture of sweetness and archness in his manner which made it difficult for him to affront anybody; and Levi had never been so bewitched by any man or woman as he was by him. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of his connections, he should be in some danger.

Miss Smith saw, or suspected enough to be jealous; and her great anxiety for the recovery of her dear friend Armin received some assistance from her desire of getting rid of Eren.

She often tried to provoke Levi into disliking her guest, by talking of their supposed marriage, and planning his happiness in such an alliance.

"I hope" she said, as they were walking together in the shrubbery the next day "you will give your mother-in-law a few hints, when this desirable event takes place, as to the advantage of holding her tongue; and if you can compass it, do cure the younger girls of running after officers. And, if I may mention so delicate a subject, endeavour to check that little something, bordering on conceit and impertinence, which your lady possesses."

"Have you anything else to propose for my domestic felicity?"

"Oh! yes. Do let the portraits of your uncle and aunt Zakarius be placed in the gallery at Mitras. Put them next to your great uncle the judge. They are in the same profession, you know, only in different lines. As for your Eren's picture, you must not have it taken, for what painter could do justice to those beautiful eyes?"

"It would not be easy, indeed, to catch their expression, but their colour and shape, and the eyelashes, so remarkably fine, might be copied."

At that moment they were met from another walk by Mrs. Dok and Eren himself.

"I did not know that you intended to walk," said Miss Smith, in some confusion, lest they had been overheard.

"You used us abominably ill" answered Mrs. Dok "Running away without telling us that you were coming out."

Then taking the disengaged arm of Mr. Ackerman, he left Eren to walk by himself. The path just admitted three. Mr. Ackerman felt their rudeness, and immediately said:

"This walk is not wide enough for our party. We had better go into the avenue."

But Eren, who had not the least inclination to remain with them, laughingly answered:

"No, no; stay where you are. You are charmingly grouped, and appear to uncommon advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth. Good bye."

He then ran gaily off, rejoicing as he rambled about, in the hope of being at home again in a day or two. Armin was already so much recovered as to intend leaving him room for a couple of hours that evening.
33 kudos! Thanks everyone!
Chapter Eleven

When the ladies and gentlemans removed after dinner, Eren ran up to his brother, and seeing him well-guarded from cold, attended him into the drawing-room, where he was welcomed by his two friends with many professions of pleasure; and Eren had never seen them so agreeable as they were during the hour which passed before the gentlemen appeared. Their powers of conversation were considerable. They could describe an entertainment with accuracy, relate an anecdote with humor, and laugh at their acquaintance with spirit.

But when the gentlemen entered, Armin was no longer the first object; Miss Smith's eyes were instantly turned toward Levi, and she had something to say to him before he had advanced many steps. He addressed himself to Mr. Jaeger, with a polite congratulation; Mr. Dok also made him a slight bow, and said he was "very glad," but diffuseness and warmth remained for Smith's salutation. He was full of joy and attention. The first half-hour was spent in piling up the fire, lest he should suffer from the change of room; and he removed at his desire to the other side of the fireplace, that he might be further from the door. He then sat down by him, and talked scarcely to anyone else. Eren, at work in the opposite corner, saw it all with great delight.

When tea was over, Mr. Dok reminded his sister-in-law of the card-table—but in vain. She had obtained private intelligence that Mr. Ackerman did not wish for cards; and Mr. Dok soon found even his open petition rejected. He assured him that no one intended to play, and the silence of the whole party on the subject seemed to justify him. Mr. Dok had therefore nothing to do, but to stretch himself on one of the sofas and go to sleep. Levi took up a book; Miss Smith did the same; and Mrs. Dok, principally occupied in playing with her bracelets and rings, joined now and then in her brother's conversation with Mr. Jaeger.

Miss Smith's attention was quite as much engaged in watching Mr. Levi's progress through his book, as in reading her own; and she was perpetually either making some inquiry, or looking at his page. She could not win him, however, to any conversation; he merely answered her question, and read on. At length, quite exhausted by the attempt to be amused with her own book, which she had only chosen because it was the second volume of his, she gave a great yawn and said, "How pleasant it is to spend an evening in this way! I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book! When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library."

No one made any reply. She then yawned again, threw aside her book, and cast her eyes round the room in quest for some amusement; when hearing her brother mentioning a ball to Mr. Jaeger, she turned suddenly towards him and said:

"By the bye, Erwin, are you really serious in meditating a dance at Stohess? I would advise you, before you determine on it, to consult the wishes of the present party; I am much mistaken if there are not some among us to whom a ball would be rather a punishment than a pleasure."

"If you mean Levi" cried her brother "He may go to bed, if he chooses, before it begins—but as for the ball, it is quite a settled thing; and as soon as Nicholls has made white soup enough, I shall send round my cards."

"I should like balls infinitely better" she replied "If they were carried on in a different manner; but there is something insufferably tedious in the usual process of such a meeting. It would surely be much more rational if conversation instead of dancing were made the order of the day."

"Much more rational, my dear Hange, I dare say, but it would not be near so much like a ball."
Miss Smith made no answer, and soon afterwards she got up and walked about the room. Her figure was elegant, and she walked well; but Levi, at whom it was all aimed, was still inflexibly studious. In the desperation of her feelings, she resolved on one effort more, and, turning to Eren, said:

"Mr. Eren Jaeger, let me persuade you to follow my example, and take a turn about the room. I assure you it is very refreshing after sitting so long in one attitude."

Eren was surprised, but agreed to it immediately. Miss Smith succeeded no less in the real object of her civility; Mr. Ackerman looked up. He was as much awake to the novelty of attention in that quarter as Eren herself could be, and unconsciously closed his book.

He was directly invited to join their party, but he declined it, observing that he could imagine but two motives for their choosing to walk up and down the room together, with either of which motives his joining them would interfere. "What could he mean? She was dying to know what could be his meaning?" and asked Eren whether she could at all understand him?

"Not at all" was his answer "But depend upon it, he means to be severe on us, and our surest way of disappointing him will be to ask nothing about it."

Miss Smith, however, was incapable of disappointing Mr. Ackerman in anything, and persevered therefore in requiring an explanation of his two motives.

"I have not the smallest objection to explaining them" said he, as soon as she allowed him to speak. "You either choose this method of passing the evening because you are in each other's confidence, and have secret affairs to discuss, or because you are conscious that your figures appear to the greatest advantage in walking; if the first, I would be completely in your way, and if the second, I can admire you much better as I sit by the fire."

"Oh! shocking!" cried Miss Smith. "I never heard anything so abominable. How shall we punish him for such a speech?"

"Nothing so easy, if you have but the inclination" said Eren "We can all plague and punish one another. Tease him, laugh at him. Intimate as you are, you must know how it is to be done."

"But upon my honor, I do not. I do assure you that my intimacy has not yet taught me that. Tease calmness of manner and presence of mind! No, no; I feel he may defy us there. And as to laughter, we will not expose ourselves, if you please, by attempting to laugh without a subject. Mr. Ackerman may hug himself."

"Mr. Ackerman is not to be laughed at!" cried Eren "That is an uncommon advantage, and uncommon I hope it will continue, for it would be a great loss to me to have many such acquaintances. I dearly love a laugh."

"Miss Smith" he said "Has given me more credit than can be. The wisest and the best of men—nay, the wisest and best of their actions—may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke."

"Certainly" replied Eren "There are such people, but I hope I am not one of them. I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can. But these, I suppose, are precisely what you are without."

"Perhaps that is not possible for anyone. But it has been the study of my life to avoid those
weaknesses which often expose a strong understanding to ridicule."

"Such as vanity and pride."

"Yes, vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride—where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will be always under good regulation."

Eren turned away to hide a smile.

"Your examination of Mr. Ackerman is over; I presume" said Miss Smith "And pray what is the result?"

"I am perfectly convinced by it that Mr. Ackerman has no defect. He owns it himself without disguise."

"No" said Levi "I have made no such pretension. I have faults enough, but they are not, I hope, of understanding. My temper I dare not vouch for. It is, I believe, too little yielding—certainly too little for the convenience of the world. I cannot forget the follies and vices of others so soon as I ought, nor their offenses against myself. My feelings are not puffed about with every attempt to move them. My temper would perhaps be called resentful. My good opinion once lost, is lost forever."

"That is a failing indeed!" cried Eren. "Implacable resentment is a shade in a character. But you have chosen your fault well. I really cannot laugh at it. You are safe from me."

"There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil — natural defects, which not even the best education, can overcome."

"And your defect is to hate everybody."

"And yours" he replied with a smile "is willfully to misunderstand them."

"Do let us have a little music" cried Miss Smith, tired of a conversation in which she had no share. "Hitch, you will not mind my waking Mr. Dok?"

Her sister had not the smallest objection, and the pianoforte was opened; and Levi, after a few moments’ recollection, was not sorry for it. He began to feel the danger of paying Eren too much attention.
In consequence of an agreement between the brothers, Eren wrote the next morning to their mother, to beg that the carriage might be sent for them in the course of the day. But Mrs. Jaeger, who had calculated on her sons remaining at Stohess till the following Tuesday, which would exactly finish Armin's week, could not bring herself to receive them with pleasure before. Her answer, therefore, was not propitious, at least not to Eren's wishes, for he was impatient to get home. Mrs. Jaeger sent them word that they could not possibly have the carriage before Tuesday; and in her postscript it was added, that if Mr. Smith and his sister pressed them to stay longer, he could spare them very well.

Against staying longer, however, Eren was positively resolved nor did he much expect it would be asked; and fearful, on the contrary, as being considered as intruding themselves needlessly long, he urged Armin to borrow Mr. Smith's carriage immediately, and at length it was settled that their original design of leaving Stohess that morning should be mentioned, and the request made.

The communication excited many professions of concern; and enough was said of wishing them to stay at least till the following day to work on Armin; and till the morrow their going was deferred. Miss Smith was then sorry that she had proposed the delay, for her jealousy and dislike of one brother much exceeded her affection for the other.

The master of the house heard with real sorrow that they were to go so soon, and repeatedly tried to persuade Mr. Jaeger that it would not be safe for him that she was not enough recovered; but Armin was firm where he felt herself to be right.

To Levi it was welcome intelligence Eren had been at Stohess long enough. He attracted him more than he liked and Miss Smith was uncivil to him, and more teasing than usual to himself. He wisely resolved to be particularly careful that no sign of admiration should now escape him, nothing that could elevate him with the hope of influencing his felicity; sensible that if such an idea had been suggested, his behavior during the last day must have material weight in confirming or crushing it. Steady to his purpose, he scarcely spoke ten words to him through the whole of Saturday, and though they were at one time left by themselves for half an hour, he adhered most conscientiously to his book, and would not even look at him.

On Sunday, after morning service, the separation, so agreeable to almost all, took place. Miss Smith's civility to Eren increased at last very rapidly, as well as her affection for Armin; and when they parted, after assuring the latter of the pleasure it would always give him to see her either at Shiganshina or Stohess, and embracing her most tenderly, she even shook hands with the former. Eren took leave of the whole party in the liveliest of spirits.

They were not welcomed home very cordially by their mother. Mrs. Jaeger wondered at their coming, and thought them very wrong to give so much trouble, and was sure Armin would have caught cold again. But their father, though very laconic in his expressions of pleasure, was really glad to see them; he had felt their importance in the family circle. The evening conversation, when they were all assembled, had lost much of its animation, and almost all its sense by the absence of Armin and Eren.

They found Annie, as usual, deep in the study of thorough bass and human nature; and had some extracts to admire, and some new observations of threadbare morality to listen to. Sasha and Isabel
had information for them of a different sort. Much had been done and much had been said in the regiment since the preceding Wednesday; several of the officers had dined lately with their uncle, a private had been flogged, and it had actually been hinted that Colonel Pixis was going to be married.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for the kudos and comments!
"I hope, my dear" said Mr. Jaeger to his wife, as they were at breakfast the next morning "That you have ordered a good dinner today, because I have reason to expect an addition to our family party"

"Who do you mean, my dear? I know of nobody that is coming, I am sure, unless Mikasa Ackerman should happen to call in and I hope my dinners are good enough for her. I do not believe she often sees such at home"

"The person of whom I speak is a gentleman, and a stranger"

Mrs. Jaeger's eyes sparkled "A gentleman and a stranger! It is Mr. Bingley, I am sure! Well, I am sure I shall be extremely glad to see Mr. Bingley. But good Lord! How unlucky! There is not a bit of fish to be got to-day. Isabel, my love, ring the bell I must speak to Hill this moment."

"It is not Mr. Bingley" said her husband "It is a person whom I never saw in the whole course of my life"

This roused a general astonishment; and he had the pleasure of being eagerly questioned by his wife and his five daughters at once.

After amusing himself some time with their curiosity, he thus explained:

"About a month ago I received this letter; and about a fortnight ago I answered it, for I thought it a case of some delicacy, and requiring early attention. It is from my cousin, Mr. Kirstein, who, when I am dead, may turn you all out of this house as soon as he pleases."

"Oh! my dear" cried his wife "I cannot bear to hear that mentioned. Pray do not talk of that odious man. I do think it is the hardest thing in the world, that your estate should be entailed away from your own children; and I am sure, if I had been you, I should have tried long ago to do something or other about it."

Armin and Eren tried to explain to her the nature of an entail. They had often attempted to do it before, but it was a subject on which Mrs. Jaeger was beyond the reach of reason, and she continued to rail bitterly against the cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favor of a man whom nobody cared anything about.

"It certainly is a most iniquitous affair" said Mr. Jaeger "And nothing can clear Mr. Kirstein from the guilt of inheriting Shiganshina. But if you will listen to his letter, you may perhaps be a little softened by his manner of expressing himself"

"No, that I am sure I shall not; and I think it is very impertinent of him to write to you at all, and very hypocritical. I hate such false friends. Why could he not keep on quarreling with you, as his father did before him?"

"Why, indeed; he does seem to have had some filial scruples on that head, as you will hear"

"Ragako, near Quinta, Maria, 15th October.

"Dear Sir,—

"The disagreement subsisting between yourself and my late honoured father always gave me much uneasiness, and since I have had the misfortune to lose him, I have frequently wished to heal the
breach; but for some time I was kept back by my own doubts, fearing lest it might seem disrespectful to his memory for me to be on good terms with anyone with whom it had always pleased him to be at variance.—'There, Mrs. Jaeger.'—My mind, however, is now made up on the subject, for having received ordination at Easter, I have been so fortunate as to be distinguished by the patronage of the Right Honorable Sir Darius, heir of the Zackley house, whose bounty and beneficence has preferred me to the valuable rectory of this parish, where it shall be my earnest endeavor to demean myself with grateful respect towards his lordship, and be ever ready to perform those rites and ceremonies which are instituted by the Church of Sina. As a clergyman, moreover, I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessing of peace in all families within the reach of my influence; and on these grounds I flatter myself that my present overtures are highly commendable, and that the circumstance of my being next in the entail of Shiganshia estate will be kindly overlooked on your side, and not lead you to reject the offered olive branch. I cannot be otherwise than concerned at being the means of injuring your amiable childrens, and beg leave to apologize for it, as well as to assure you of my readiness to make them every possible amends but of this hereafter. If you should have no objection to receive me into your house, I propose myself the satisfaction of waiting on you and your family, Monday, November 18th, by four o'clock, and shall probably trespass on your hospitality till the Saturday se'ennight following, which I can do without any inconvenience, as Sir Darius is far from objecting to my occasional absence on a Sunday, provided that some other clergyman is engaged to do the duty of the day. I remain, dear sir, with respectful compliments to your lady and daughters, your well wisher and friend,

"JEAN KIRSTEIN"

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

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

"Though it is difficult" said Armin "To guess in what way he can mean to make us the atonement he thinks our due, the wish is certainly to his credit"

Eren was chiefly struck by his extraordinary deference for Sir Darius Zackley, and his kind intention of christening, marrying, and burying his parishioners whenever it was required.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Kirstein was punctual to his time, and was received with great politeness by the whole family.
Mr. Jaeger indeed said little; but the rest of the family were ready enough to talk, and Mr. Kirstein seemed neither in need of encouragement, nor inclined to be silent himself. He was a tall, heavy looking young man of five and twenty. His air was grave and stately, and his manners were very formal. He had not been long seated before he complimented Mrs. Jaeger on having so fine a family of daughters and sons; said he had heard much of their beauty, but that in this instance fame had fallen short of the truth; and added, that he did not doubt her seeing them all in due time disposed of in marriage. This gallantry was not much to the taste of some of his hearers; but Mrs. Jaeger, who quarreled with no compliments, answered most readily.

"You are very kind, I am sure; and I wish with all my heart it may prove so, for else they will be destitute enough. Things are settled so oddly"

"You allude, perhaps, to the entail of this estate"

"Ah! sir, I do indeed. It is a grievous affair to my poor girls, you must confess. Not that I mean to find fault with you, for such things I know are all chance in this world. There is no knowing how estates will go when once they come to be entailed."

"I am very sensible, madam, of the hardship to my fair cousins, and could say much on the subject, but that I am cautious of appearing forward and precipitate. But I can assure the young ladies that I come prepared to admire them. At present I will not say more; but, perhaps, when we are better acquainted—"

He was interrupted by a summons to dinner; and the kids smiled on each other. They were not the only objects of Mr. Kirstein's admiration. The hall, the dining room, and all its furniture, were examined and praised; and his commendation of everything would have touched Mrs. Jaeger's heart, but for the mortifying supposition of his viewing it all as his own future property. The dinner too in its turn was highly admired; and he begged to know to which of his fair cousins the excellency of its cooking owed. But he was set right there by Mrs. Jaeger, who assured him with some asperity that they were very well able to keep a good cook, and that her daughters and sons had nothing to do in the kitchen. He begged pardon for having displeased her. In a softened tone she declared herself not at all offended; but he continued to apologize for about a quarter of an hour.
During dinner, Mr. Jaeger scarcely spoke at all; but when the servants were withdrawn, he thought it time to have some conversation with his guest, and therefore started a subject in which he expected him to shine, by observing that he seemed very fortunate in his patroness. Sir Darius de Zackley's attention to his wishes, and consideration for his comfort, appeared very remarkable. Mr. Jaeger could not have chosen better. Mr. Kirstein was eloquent in her praise. The subject elevated him to more than usual solemnity of manner, and with a most important aspect he protested that "He had never in his life witnessed such behavior in a person of rank such affability and condescension, as he had himself experienced from Sir Darius. He had been graciously pleased to approve of both of the discourses which he had already had the honor of preaching before him. He had also asked him twice to dine at Yarckel, and had sent for him only the Saturday before, to make up his pool of quadrille in the evening. Sir Darius was reckoned proud by many people he knew, but he had never seen anything but affability in him. He had always spoken to him as he would to any other gentleman; he made not the smallest objection to his joining in the society of the neighborhood nor to his leaving the parish occasionally for a week or two, to visit his relations. He had even condescended to advise him to marry as soon as he could, provided he chose with discretion; and had once paid him a visit in his humble parsonage, where he had perfectly approved all the alterations he had been making, and had even vouchsafed to suggest some himself some shelves in the closet up stairs.

"That is all very proper and civil, I am sure" said Mrs. Jaeger "And I dare say he is a very agreeable man. It is a pity that great lords in general are not more like him. Does he live near you, sir?"

"The garden in which stands my humble abode is separated only by a lane from Yarckel Park, his lordship's residence."

"I think you said he was a widow, sir? Has he any family?"

"He has only one daughter, the heiress of Yarckel, and of very extensive property"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Jaeger, shaking her head "Then she is better off than many girls. And what sort of young lady is she? Is she handsome?"

"She is a most charming young lady indeed. Sir Darius himself says that, in point of true beauty, Miss Zackley is far superior to the handsomest of her sex, because there is that in her features which marks the young lady of distinguished birth. She is unfortunately of a sickly constitution, which has prevented her from making that progress in many accomplishments which she could not have otherwise failed of, as I am informed by the lady who superintended her education, and who still resides with them. But she is perfectly amiable, and often condescends to drive by my humble abode in her little phaeton and ponies."

"Has she been presented? I do not remember her name among the ladies at court"
"Her indifferent state of health unhappily prevents her being in town; and by that means, as I told Sir Darius one day, has deprived the court of Sina its brightest ornament. His lordship seemed pleased with the idea; and you may imagine that I am happy on every occasion to offer those little delicate compliments which are always acceptable to ladies. I have more than once observed to Sir Darius, that his charming daughter seemed born to be a duchess, and that the most elevated rank, instead of giving her consequence, would be adorned by her. These are the kind of little things which please her ladyship, and it is a sort of attention which I conceive myself peculiarly bound to pay"

"You judge very properly" said Mr. Jaeger "And it is happy for you that you possess the talent of flattering with delicacy. May I ask whether these pleasing attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment, or are the result of previous study?"

"They arise chiefly from what is passing at the time, and though I sometimes amuse myself with suggesting and arranging such little elegant compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions, I always wish to give them as unstudied an air as possible."

Mr. Jaeger's expectations were fully answered. His cousin was as absurd as he had hoped, and he listened to him with the keenest enjoyment, maintaining at the same time the most resolute composure of countenance, and, except in an occasional glance at Eren, requiring no partner in his pleasure.

By tea time, however, the dose had been enough, and Mr. Jaeger was glad to take his guest into the drawing room again, and, when tea was over, glad to invite him to read aloud to the ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Kirstein readily assented, and a book was produced; but, on beholding it (for everything announced it to be from a circulating library), he started back, and begging pardon, protested that he never read novels. Kitty stared at him, and Isabel exclaimed. Other books were produced, and after some deliberation he chose Fordyce's Sermons. Isabel gaped as he opened the volume, and before he had, with very monotonous solemnity, read three pages, she interrupted him with:

"Do you know, mamma, that my uncle Zakarius talks of turning away Dazz; and if he does, Colonel Pixis will hire him. My aunt told me so herself on Saturday. I shall walk to Maria tomorrow to hear more about it, and to ask when Mr. Fubar comes back from town."

Isabel was bid by her two eldest sisters to hold her tongue; but Mr. Kirstein, much offended, laid aside his book, and said:

"I have often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit. It amazes me, I confess; for, certainly, there can be nothing so advantageous to them as instruction. But I will no longer importune my young cousin."

Then turning to Mr. Jaeger, he offered himself as his antagonist at backgammon. Mr. Jaeger accepted the challenge, observing that he acted very wisely in leaving the girls to their own trifling amusements. Mrs. Jaeger and her daughters apologised most civilly for Isabel's interruption, and promised that it should not occur again, if he would resume his book; but Mr. Kirstein, after assuring them that he bore his young cousin no ill-will, and should never resent her behaviour as any affront, seated himself at another table with Mr. Jaeger, and prepared for backgammon.

Chapter End Notes
BTW! Remember Levi and Mikasa are not related on this fic, I only use the canon names.
Mr. Kirstein was not a sensible man, and the deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society; the greatest part of his life having been spent under the guidance of an illiterate and miserly father; and though he belonged to one of the universities, he had merely kept the necessary terms, without forming at it any useful acquaintance. The subjection in which his father had brought him up had given him originally great humility of manner; but it was now a good deal counteracted by the self-conceit of a weak head, living in retirement, and the consequent feelings of early and unexpected prosperity. A fortunate chance had recommended him to Sir Darius de Zackley when the living of Hunsford was vacant; and the respect which he felt for her high rank, and his veneration for her as his patroness, mingling with a very good opinion of himself, of his authority as a clergyman, and his right as a rector, made him altogether a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility. Having now a good house and a very sufficient income, he intended to marry; and in seeking reconciliation with the Longbourn family he had a wife in view, as he meant to choose one of the daughters, if he found them as handsome and amiable as they were represented by common report. This was his plan of amends for inheriting their father's estate; and he thought it an excellent one, full of eligibility and suitableness, and excessively generous and disinterested on his own part.

His plan did not vary on seeing them. Mr. Jaeger's lovely face confirmed his views, and established all his strictest notions of what was due to seniority; and for the first evening she was his settled choice. The next morning, however, made an alteration; for in a quarter of an hour's tete-a-tete with Mrs. Jaeger before breakfast, a conversation beginning with his parsonage house, and leading naturally to the avowal of his hopes, that a mistress might be found for it at Shiganshina, produced from her, amid very complaisant smiles and general encouragement, a caution against the very Armin he had fixed on. "As to her younger daughters, she could not take upon her to say she could not positively answer but she did not know of any prepossession; her eldest daughter, she must just mention she felt it incumbent on her to hint, was likely to be very soon engaged."

Mr. Kirstein had only to change from Armin to Eren and it was soon done while Mrs. Jaeger was stirring the fire. Eren, equally next to Armin in birth and beauty, succeeded him of course.

Mrs. Jaeger treasured up the hint, and trusted that she might soon have two son married; and the man whom she could not bear to speak of the day before was now high in her good graces.

Isabel's intention of walking to Maria was not forgotten; every sister and brother except Annie agreed to go with her; and Mr. Kirstein was to attend them, at the request of Mr. Jaeger, who was most anxious to get rid of him, and have his library to himself; for thither Mr. Kirstein had followed him after breakfast; and there he would continue, nominally engaged with one of the largest folios in the collection, but really talking to Mr. Jaeger, with little cessation, of his house and garden at Hunsford. Such doings discomposed Mr. Jaeger exceedingly. In his library he had been always sure of leisure and tranquility; and though prepared, as he told Eren, to meet with folly and conceit in every other room of the house, he was used to be free from them there; his civility, therefore, was most prompt in inviting Mr. Kirstein to join his childrens in their walk; and Mr. Kirstein, being in fact much better fitted for a walker than a reader, was extremely pleased to close his large book, and go.

In pompous nothings on his side, and civil assents on that of his cousins, their time passed till they
entered Meryton. The attention of the younger ones was then no longer to be gained by him. Their
eyes were immediately wandering up in the street in quest of the officers, and nothing less than a
very smart bonnet indeed, or a really new muslin in a shop window, could recall them.

But the attention of every lady and gentleman was soon caught by a young man, whom they had
never seen before, of most gentlemanlike appearance, walking with another officer on the other
side of the way. The officer was the very Mr. Sand concerning whose return from Sina Isabel came
to inquire, and he bowed as they passed. All were struck with the stranger's air, all wondered who
he could be; and Sasha and Isabel, determined if possible to find out, led the way across the street,
under pretense of wanting something in an opposite shop, and fortunately had just gained the
pavement when the two gentlemen, turning back, had reached the same spot. Mr. Sand addressed
them directly, and entreated permission to introduce his friend, Mr. Church, who had returned with
him the day before from town, and he was happy to say had accepted a commission in their corps.
This was exactly as it should be; for the young man wanted only regimentals to make him
completely charming.

His appearance was greatly in his favor; he had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a
good figure, and very pleasing address. The introduction was followed up on his side by a happy
readiness of conversation a readiness at the same time perfectly correct and unassuming; and the
whole party were still standing and talking together very agreeably, when the sound of horses drew
their notice, and Levi and Erwin were seen riding down the street. On distinguishing the ladies and
young gentlemen of the group, the two gentlemen came directly towards them, and began the
usual civilities. Smith was the principal spokesman, and Mr. Jaeger the principal object. He was
then, he said, on his way to Shiganshina on purpose to inquire after him. Mr. Ackerman
corroborated it with a bow, and was beginning to determine not to fix his eyes on Eren, when they
were suddenly arrested by the sight of the stranger, and Eren happening to see the countenance of
both as they looked at each other, was all astonishment at the effect of the meeting. Both changed
color, one looked white, the other red. Mr. Church, after a few moments, touched his hat a
salutation which Mr. Ackerman just deigned to return. What could be the meaning of it? It was
impossible to imagine; it was impossible not to long to know.

In another minute, Mr. Ackerman, but without seeming to have noticed what passed, took leave
and rode on with his friend.

Mr. Sand and Mr. Church walked with the young ladies and mens to the door of Mr. Zackarius'
house, and then made their bows, in spite of Miss Isabel's pressing entreaties that they should come
in, and even in spite of Mrs. Zakarius's throwing up the parlor window and loudly seconding the
invitation.

Mrs. Zakarius was always glad to see her nieces; and the two eldest nephews, from their recent
absence, were particularly welcome, and she was eagerly expressing her surprise at their sudden
return home, which, as their own carriage had not fetched them, she should have known nothing
about, if she had not happened to see Mr. Kefka's shop boy in the street, who had told her that they
were not to send any more draughts to Stohess because the Miss and Mr. Jaegers were come away,
when her civility was claimed towards Mr. Kirstein by Armin's introduction of him. She received
him with her very best politeness, which he returned with as much more, apologising for his
intrusion, without any previous acquaintance with her, which he could not help flattering himself,
however, might be justified by his relationship to the young ladies who introduced him to her
notice. Mrs. Zakarius was quite awed by such an excess of good breeding; but her contemplation of
one stranger was soon put to an end by exclamations and inquiries about the other; of whom,
however, she could only tell her nieces what they already knew, that Mr. Sand had brought him
from Sina, and that he was to have a lieutenant's commission in the shire. She had been watching
him the last hour, she said, as he walked up and down the street, and had Mr. Church appeared,
Sasha and Isabel would certainly have continued the occupation, but unluckily no one passed windows now except a few of the officers, who, in comparison with the stranger, were become "stupid, disagreeable fellows." Some of them were to dine with the Zakariuses the next day, and their aunt promised to make her husband call on Mr. Church, and give him an invitation also, if the family from Longbourn would come in the evening. This was agreed to, and Mrs. Zakarius protested that they would have a nice comfortable noisy game of lottery tickets, and a little bit of hot supper afterwards. The prospect of such delights was very cheering, and they parted in mutual good spirits. Mr. Kirstein repeated his apologies in quitting the room, and was assured with unwearyingly civility that they were perfectly needless.

As they walked home, Eren related to Armin what he had seen pass between the two gentlemen; but though Armin would have defended either or both, had they appeared to be in the wrong, he could no more explain such behavior than his brother.

Mr. Kirstein on his return highly gratified Mrs. Jaeger by admiring Mrs. Zakarius's manners and politeness. He protested that, except Sir Darius' daughter, he had never seen a more elegant woman; for she had not only received him with the utmost civility, but even pointedly included him in her invitation for the next evening, although utterly unknown to her before. Something, he supposed, might be attributed to his connection with them, but yet he had never met with so much attention in the whole course of his life.

Chapter End Notes

It's good for you people?

Let me know if there's any mistake!
Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

As no objection was made to the young people's engagement with their aunt, and all Mr. Kirstein's scruples of leaving Mr. and Mrs. Jaeger for a single evening during his visit were most steadily resisted, the coach conveyed him and his five cousins at a suitable hour to Maria; and the kids had the pleasure of hearing, as they entered the drawing room, that Mr. Church had accepted their uncle's invitation, and was then in the house.

When this information was given, and they had all taken their seats, Mr. Kirstein was at leisure to look around him and admire, and he was so much struck with the size and furniture of the apartment, that he declared he might almost have supposed himself in the small summer breakfast parlor at Karaness; a comparison that did not at first convey much gratification; but when Mrs. Zakarius understood from him what Karaness was, and who was its proprietor when she had listened to the description of only one of Sir Darius' drawing rooms, and found that the chimney piece alone had cost eight hundred pounds, she felt all the force of the compliment, and would hardly have resented a comparison with the housekeeper's room.

In describing to her all the grandeur of Sir Darius and his mansion, with occasional digressions in praise of his own humble abode, and the improvements it was receiving, he was happily employed until the gentlemen joined them; and he found in Mrs. Zakarius a very attentive listener, whose opinion of his consequence increased with what he heard, and who was resolving to retail it all among his neighbors as soon as he could. To the kids, who could not listen to their cousin, and who had nothing to do but to wish for an instrument, and examine their own indifferent imitations of rose on the mantelpiece, the interval of waiting appeared very long. It was over at last, however. The gentlemen did approach, and when Mr. Church walked into the room, Eren felt that he had neither been seeing him before, nor thinking of him since, with the smallest degree of unreasonable admiration. The officers of the shire were in general a very creditable, gentlemanlike set, and the best of them were of the present party; but Mr. Church was as far beyond them all in person, countenance, air, and walk, as they were superior to the broad faced, stuffy uncle Zakarius, breathing port wine, who followed them into the room.

Mr. Church was the happy man towards whom almost every female and male eye was turned, and Eren was the happy man by whom he finally seated himself; and the agreeable manner in which he immediately fell into conversation, though it was only on its being a wet night, made him feel that the commonest, dullest, most threadbare topic might be rendered interesting by the skill of the speaker.

With such rivals for the notice of the fair as Mr. Church and the officers, Mr. Kirstein seemed to sink into insignificance; to the young ladies and gentlemen he certainly was nothing; but he had still at intervals a kind listener in Mrs. Zakarius, and was by her watchfulness, most abundantly supplied with coffee and muffin. When the card tables were placed, he had the opportunity of obliging her in turn, by sitting down to whist.

"I know little of the game at present" he said "But I shall be glad to improve myself, for in my situation in life" Mrs. Zakarius was very glad for his compliance, but could not wait for his reason.

Mr. Church did not play at whist, and with ready delight was he received at the other table between Eren and Isabel. At first there seemed danger of Isabel's engrossing him entirely, for she was a most determined talker; but being likewise extremely fond of lottery tickets, she soon grew too
much interested in the game, too eager in making bets and exclaiming after prizes to have attention for anyone in particular. Allowing for the common demands of the game, Mr. Church was therefore at leisure to talk to Eren, and he was very willing to hear him, though what he chiefly wished to hear he could not hope to be told the history of his acquaintance with Mr. Ackerman. He dared not even mention that gentleman. His curiosity, however, was unexpectedly relieved. Mr. Church began the subject himself. He inquired how far Trost was from Maria; and, after receiving his answer, asked in a hesitating manner how long Mr. Ackerman had been staying there.

"About a month" said Eren; and then, unwilling to let the subject drop, added "He is a man of very large property in Mitras, I understand."

"Yes" replied Mr. Church "His estate there is a noble one. A clear ten thousand per annum. You could not have met with a person more capable of giving you certain information on that head than me, for I have been connected with his family in a particular manner from my infancy."

Eren could not but look surprised.

"You may well be surprised, Mr. Jaeger, at such an assertion, after seeing, as you probably might, the very cold manner of our meeting yesterday. Are you much acquainted with Mr. Ackerman?"

"As much as I ever wish to be" cried Eren very warmly "I have spent four days in the same house with him, and I think him very disagreeable."

"I have no right to give my opinion" said Farlan "As to his being agreeable or otherwise. I am not qualified to form one. I have known him too long and too well to be a fair judge. It is impossible for me to be impartial. But I believe your opinion of him would in general astonish and perhaps you would not express it quite so strongly anywhere else. Here you are in your own family."

"Upon my word, I say no more here than I might say in any house in the neighborhood, except Trost. He is not at all liked in Maria. Everybody is disgusted with his pride. You will not find him more favorably spoken of by anyone."

"I cannot pretend to be sorry" said Church, after a short interruption "That he or that any man should not be estimated beyond their deserts; but with him I believe it does not often happen. The world is blinded by his fortune and consequence, or frightened by his high and imposing manners, and sees him only as he chooses to be seen."

"I should take him, even on my slight acquaintance, to be an ill tempered man" Church only shook his head.

"I wonder" he said, at the next opportunity of speaking "Whether he is likely to be in this country much longer."

"I do not at all know; but I heard nothing of his going away when I was at Trost. I hope your plans in favor of the shire will not be affected by his being in the neighborhood."

"Oh! No it is not for me to be driven away by Mr. Ackerman. If he wishes to avoid seeing me, he must go. We are not on friendly terms, and it always gives me pain to meet him, but I have no reason for avoiding him but what I might proclaim before the entire world, a sense of very great ill usage, and most painful regrets at his being what he is. His father, Mr. Jaeger, the late Mr. Ackerman, was one of the best men that ever breathed, and the truest friend I ever had; and I can never be in company with this Mr. Ackerman without being grieved to the soul by a thousand tender recollections. His behavior to me has been scandalous; but I verily believe I could forgive him anything and everything, rather than his disappointing the hopes and disgracing the memory of
his father."

Eren found the interest of the subject increase, and listened with all his heart; but the delicacy of it prevented further inquiry. Mr. Church began to speak on more general topics, Maria, the neighborhood, the society, appearing highly pleased with all that he had yet seen, and speaking of the latter with gentle but very intelligible gallantry.

"It was the prospect of constant society, and good society" he added "Which was my chief inducement to enter the shire. I knew it to be a most respectable, agreeable corps, and my friend Marlo tempted me further by his account of their present quarters, and the very great attentions and excellent acquaintances Maria had procured them. Society, I own, is necessary to me. I have been a disappointed man, and my spirits will not bear solitude. I must have employment and society. A military life is not what I was intended for, but circumstances have now made it eligible. The church ought to have been my profession I was brought up for the church, and I should at this time have been in possession of a most valuable living, had it pleased the gentleman we were speaking of just now."

"Indeed!"

"Yes the late Mr. Ackerman bequeathed me the next presentation of the best living in his gift. He was my godfather, and excessively attached to me. I cannot do justice to his kindness. He meant to provide for me amply, and thought he had done it; but when the living fell, it was given elsewhere."

"Good heavens!" cried Eren "But how could that be? How could his will be disregarded? Why did you not seek legal redress?"

"There was just such informality in the terms of the bequest as to give me no hope from law. A man of honor could not have doubted the intention, but Mr. Ackerman chose to doubt it or to treat it as a merely conditional recommendation, and to assert that I had forfeited all claim to it by extravagance, imprudence in short anything or nothing. Certain it is, that the living became vacant two years ago, exactly as I was of an age to hold it, and that it was given to another man; and no less certain is it, that I cannot accuse myself of having really done anything to deserve to lose it. I have a warm, unguarded temper, and I may have spoken my opinion of him, and to him, too freely. I can recall nothing worse. But the fact is, that we are very different sort of men, and that he hates me."

"This is quite shocking! He deserves to be publicly disgraced."

"Some time or other he will be but it shall not be by me. Till I can forget his father, I can never defy or expose him."

Eren honored him for such feelings, and thought him handsomer than ever as he expressed them.

"But what" he said after a pause "Can have been his motive? What can have induced him to behave so cruelly?"

"A thorough, determined dislike of me a dislike which I cannot but attribute in some measure to jealousy. Had the late Mr. Ackerman liked me less, his son might have borne with me better; but his father's uncommon attachment to me irritated him, I believe, very early in life. He had not a temper to bear the sort of competition in which we stood the sort of preference which was often given me."

"I had not thought Mr. Ackerman as bad as this though I have never liked him. I had not thought so
very ill of him. I had supposed him to be despising his fellow creatures in general, but did not
suspect him of descending to such malicious revenge, such injustice, such inhumanity as this."

After a few minutes' reflection, however, he continued, "I do remember his boasting one day, at
Trost, of the implacability of his resentments, of his having an unforgiving temper. His disposition
must be dreadful."

"I will not trust myself on the subject" replied Church "I can hardly be just to him."

Eren was again deep in thought, and after a time exclaimed, "To treat in such a manner the godson,
the friend, the favorite of his father!" he could have added "A young man, too, like you, whose
very countenance may vouch for your being amiable" but he contented himself with "And one, too,
who had probably been his companion from childhood, connected together, as I think you said, in
the closest manner!"

"We were born in the same parish, within the same park; the greatest part of our youth was passed
together; inmates of the same house, sharing the same amusements, objects of the same parental
care. My father began life in the profession which your uncle, Mr. Zakarius, appears to do so much
credit to but he gave up everything to be of use to the late Mr. Ackerman and devoted all his time to
the care of the Pemberley property. He was most highly esteemed by Mr. Ackerman, a most
intimate, confidential friend. Mr. Ackerman often acknowledged himself to be under the greatest
obligations to my father's active superintendence, and when, immediately before my father's death,
Mr. Ackerman gave him a voluntary promise of providing for me, I am convinced that he felt it to
be as much a debt of gratitude to him, as of his affection to myself."

"How strange!" cried Eren "How abominable! I wonder that the very pride of this Mr. Ackerman
has not made him just to you! If from no better motive, that he should not have been too proud to be
dishonest for dishonesty I must call it."

"It is wonderful" Farlan replied "For almost all his actions may be traced to pride; and pride had
often been his best friend. It has connected him nearer with virtue than with any other feeling. But
we are none of us consistent, and in his behavior to me there were stronger impulses even than
pride."

"Can such abominable pride as his have ever done him good?"

"Yes. It has often led him to be liberal and generous, to give his money freely, and to display
hospitality, to assist his tenants, and relieve the poor. Family pride and filial pride for he is very
proud of what his father was have done this. Not to appear to disgrace his family, to degenerate
from the popular qualities, or lose the influence of the Mitras House, is a powerful motive. He has
also brotherly pride, which, with some brotherly affection, makes him a very kind and careful
guardian of his sister, and you will hear him generally cried up as the most attentive and best of
brothers."

"What sort of girl is Miss Ackerman?"

He shook his head "I wish I could call her amiable. It gives me pain to speak ill of Levi. But she is
too much like her brother very, very proud. As a child, she was affectionate and pleasing, and
extremely fond of me; and I have devoted hours and hours to her amusement. But she is nothing to
me now. She is a handsome girl, about fifteen or sixteen, and, I understand, highly accomplished.
Since her father's death, her home has been Sina, where a lady lives with her, and superintends her
education."

After many pauses and many trials of other subjects, Eren could not help reverting once more to
"I am astonished at his intimacy with Mr. Smith! How can Mr. Smith, who seems good humor itself, and is, I really believe, truly amiable, be in friendship with such a man? How can they suit each other? Do you know Mr. Smith?"

"Not at all."

"He is a sweet tempered, amiable, charming man. He cannot know what Mr. Ackerman is."

"Probably not; but Mr. Ackerman can please where he chooses. He does not want abilities. He can be a conversable companion if he thinks it worth his while. Among those who are at all his equals in consequence, he is a very different man from what he is to the less prosperous. His pride never deserts him; but with the rich he is liberal minded, just, sincere, rational, honorable, and perhaps agreeable allowing something for fortune and figure."

The whist party soon afterwards breaking up, the players gathered round the other table and Mr. Kirstein took his station between his cousin Eren and Mrs. Zakarius. The usual inquiries as to his success were made by the latter. It had not been very great; he had lost every point; but when Mrs. Zakarius began to express her concern thereupon, he assured her with much earnest gravity that it was not of the least importance, that he considered the money as a mere trifle, and begged that she would not make herself uneasy.

"I know very well, madam" said he "That when persons sit down to a card table, they must take their chances of these things, and happily I am not in such circumstances as to make five shillings any object. There are undoubtedly many who could not say the same, but thanks to Sir Darius de Zackley, I am removed far beyond the necessity of regarding little matters."

Mr. Church's attention was caught; and after observing Mr. Kirstein for a few moments, he asked Eren in a low voice whether his relation was very intimately acquainted with the family of de Zackley. "Sir Darius de Zackley" he replied "Has very lately given him a living. I hardly know how Mr. Kirstein was first introduced to his notice, but he certainly has not known him long."

"You know of course that Sir Darius de Zackley and Lady Kuchel Ackerman were siblings; consequently that he is aunt to the present Mr. Ackerman."

"No, indeed, I did not. I knew nothing at all of Sir Darius' connections. I never heard of her existence till the day before yesterday."

"His daughter, Miss de Zackley, will have a very large fortune, and it is believed that she and her cousin will unite the two estates."

This information made Eren smile, as he thought of poor Miss Smith. Vain indeed must be all her attentions, vain and useless her affection for his sister and her praise of himself, if he were already self destined for another.

"Mr. Kirstein" he said "Speaks highly both of Sir Darius and his daughter; but from some particulars that he has related of his lordship, I suspect his gratitude misleads him, and that in spite of him being his patroness, he is an arrogant, conceited man."

"I believe him to be both in a great degree" replied Church "I have not seen him for many years, but I very well remember that I never liked him, and that his manners were dictatorial and insolent. He has the reputation of being remarkably sensible and clever; but I rather believe he derives part of his abilities from his rank and fortune, part from his authoritative manner, and the rest from the
pride for his nephew, who chooses that everyone connected with him, should have an understanding of the first class."

Eren allowed that he had given a very rational account of it, and they continued talking together, with mutual satisfaction till supper put an end to cards, and gave the rest of the presents their share of Mr. Church's attentions. There could be no conversation in the noise of Mrs. Zakarius's supper party, but his manners recommended him to everybody.

Whatever he said, was said well; and whatever he did, done gracefully. Eren went away with his head full of him. He could think of nothing but of Mr. Church, and of what he had told him, all the way home; but there was not time for him even to mention his name as they went, for neither Isabel nor Mr. Kirstein were once silent. Isabel talked incessantly of lottery tickets, of the fish she had lost and the fish she had won; and Mr. Kirstein in describing the civility of Mr. and Mrs. Zakarius, protesting that he did not in the least regard his losses at whist, enumerating all the dishes at supper, and repeatedly fearing that he crowded his cousins, had more to say than he could well manage before the carriage stopped at Shiganshina House.

Chapter End Notes

I think I'll hate Farlan in my own fic...

If you have any ideas for another Riren/Ereri fic based on novels let me know!

Thanks for all the kudos, comments, bookmarks and all!
This fic it's for you guys!
Eren related to Armin the next day what had passed between Mr. Church and himself. Armin listened with astonishment and concern; he knew not how to believe that Mr. Ackerman could be so unworthy of Mr. Smith's regard; and yet, it was not in his nature to question the veracity of a young man of such amiable appearance as Church. The possibility of his having endured such unkindness, was enough to interest all her tender feelings; and nothing remained therefore to be done, but to think well of them both, to defend the conduct of each, and throw into the account of accident or mistake whatever could not be otherwise explained.

"They have both" he said "Been deceived, I dare say, in some way or other, of which we can form no idea. Interested people have perhaps misrepresented each to the other. It is in short, impossible for us to conjecture the causes or circumstances which may have alienated them, without actual blame on either side."

"Very true, indeed; and now, my dear Armin, what have you got to say on behalf of the interested people who have probably been concerned in the business? Do clear them too, or we shall be obliged to think ill of somebody."

"Laugh as much as you choose, but you will not laugh me out of my opinion. My dearest Eren, do but consider in what a disgraceful light it places Mr. Ackerman, to be treating his father's favorite in such a manner, one whom his father had promised to provide for. It is impossible. No man of common humanity, no man who had any value for his character, could be capable of it. Can his most intimate friends be so excessively deceived in him? Oh! No."

"I can much more easily believe Mr. Smith's being imposed on, than that Mr. Church should invent such a history of himself as he gave me last night; names, facts, everything mentioned without ceremony. If it be not so, let Mr. Ackerman contradict it. Besides, there was truth in his looks."

"It is difficult indeed it is distressing. One does not know what to think."

"I beg your pardon; one knows exactly what to think."

But Armin could think with certainty on only one point that Mr. Smith, if he had been imposed on, would have much to suffer when the affair became public.

The two young gentlemen were summoned from the shrubbery, where this conversation passed, by the arrival of the very persons of whom they had been speaking; Mr. Smith and his sisters came to give their personal invitation for the long expected ball at Stohess, which was fixed for the following Tuesday. The two gentlemen were delighted to see their dear friend again, called it an age since they had met, and repeatedly asked what she had been doing with herself since their separation. To the rest of the family they paid little attention; avoiding Mrs. Jaeger as much as possible, saying not much to Eren, and nothing at all to the others. They were soon gone again, rising from their seats with an activity which took their brother by surprise, and hurrying off as if eager to escape from Mrs. Jaeger's civilities.

The prospect of the Stohess ball was extremely agreeable to every female and male of the family. Mrs. Jaeger chose to consider it as given in compliment to her eldest son, and was particularly flattered by receiving the invitation from Mr. Smith himself, instead of a ceremonious card. Armin
pictured to himself a happy evening in the society of his two friends, and the attentions of his brother; and Eren thought with pleasure of dancing a great deal with Mr. Church, and of seeing a confirmation of everything in Mr. Ackerman's' look and behavior. The happiness anticipated by Sasha and Isabel depended less on any single event, or any particular person, for though they each, like Eren, meant to dance half the evening with Mr. Church, he was by no means the only partner who could satisfy them, and a ball was, at any rate, a ball. And even Annie could assure her family that she had no disinclination for it.

"While I can have my mornings to myself" she said "It is enough I think it is no sacrifice to join occasionally in evening engagements. Society has claims on us all; and I profess myself one of those who consider intervals of recreation and amusement as desirable for everybody."

Eren's spirits were so high on this occasion, that though he did not often speak unnecessarily to Mr. Kirstein, he could not help asking him whether he intended to accept Mr. Smith's invitation, and if he did, whether he would think it proper to join in the evening's amusement; and he was rather surprised to find that he entertained no scruple whatever on that head, and was very far from dreading a rebuke either from the Archbishop, or Sir Darius de Zackley, by venturing to dance.

"I am by no means of the opinion, I assure you" he said "That a ball of this kind, given by a young man of character, to respectable people, can have any evil tendency; and I am so far from objecting to dancing myself, that I shall hope to be honored with the hands of all my fair cousins in the course of the evening; and I take this opportunity of soliciting yours, Mr. Eren, for the two first dances especially, a preference which I trust my cousin Armin will attribute to the right cause, and not to any disrespect for him."

Eren felt himself completely taken in. He had fully proposed being engaged by Mr. Church for those very dances; and to have Mr. Kirstein instead! His liveliness had never been worse timed. There was no help for it, however. Mr. Church's happiness and his own were perforce delayed a little longer, and Mr. Kirstein's proposal accepted with as good a grace as he could. He was not the better pleased with his gallantry from the idea it suggested of something more. It now first struck him that he was selected from among his siblings as worthy of being master of Klorva Parsonage, and of assisting to form a quadrille table at Sina, in the absence of more eligible visitors. The idea soon reached to conviction, as he observed his increasing civilities toward himself, and heard his frequent attempt at a compliment on him wit and vivacity; and though more astonished than gratified himself by this effect of his charms, it was not long before his mother gave him to understand that the probability of their marriage was extremely agreeable to her. Eren, however, did not choose to take the hint, being well aware that a serious dispute must be the consequence of any reply. Mr. Kirstein might never make the offer, and till he did, it was useless to quarrel about him.

If there had not been a Stohess ball to prepare for and talk of, the younger Miss Jaegers would have been in a very pitiable state at this time, for from the day of the invitation, to the day of the ball, there was such a succession of rain as prevented their walking to Maria once. No aunt, no officers, no news could be sought after the very shoe roses for Stohess were got by proxy. Even Eren might have found some trial of his patience in weather which totally suspended the improvement of his acquaintance with Mr. Church; and nothing less than a dance on Tuesday, could have made such a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday endurable to Sasha and Isabel.
If there's any mistake, let me know!

End Notes

With regular updates on Wednesday and Saturday!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!