occasionally introduced, and who now sat happily occupied in lamenting, with tender melancholy, over the departure of the 'poor little boys,' or in fondly pointing out, as he took up any stray letter near him, how beautifully Emma had written it.

Frank Churchill placed a word before Miss Fairfax. She gave a slight glance round the table, and applied herself to it. Frank was next to Emma, Jane opposite to them—and Mr Knightley so placed as to see them all; and it was his object to see as much as he could, with as little apparent observation. The word was discovered, and with a faint smile pushed away. If meant to be immediately mixed with the others, and buried from sight, she should have looked on the table instead of looking just across, for it was not mixed; and Harriet, eager after every fresh word, and finding out none, directly took it up, and fell to work. She was sitting by Mr Knightley, and turned to him for help. The word was blunder; and as Harriet exultingly proclaimed it, there was a blush on Jane's cheek which gave it a meaning not otherwise ostensible. Mr Knightley connected it with the dream; but how it could all be, was beyond his comprehension. How the delicacy, the discretion of his favourite could have been so lain asleep! He feared there must be some decided involvement. Disingenuousness and double dealing seemed to meet him at every turn. These letters were but the vehicle for gallantry and trick. It was a child's play, chosen to conceal a deeper game on Frank Churchill's part.

With great indignation did he continue to observe him; with great alarm and distrust, to observe also his two blinded companions. He saw a short word prepared for Emma, and given to her with a look sly and demure. He saw that Emma had soon made it out, and found it highly entertaining, though it was something which she judged it proper to appear to censure; for she said, 'Nonsense! for shame!' He heard Frank Churchill next say, with a glance towards Jane, 'I will give it to her—shall I?'—and as clearly heard Emma opposing it with eager laughing warmth. 'No, no, you must not; you shall not, indeed.'

It was done however. This gallant young man, who seemed to love without feeling, and to recommend himself without complaisance, directly handed over the word to Miss Fairfax, and with a particular degree of sedate civility entreated her to study it. Mr Knightley's excessive curiosity to know what this word might be, made him seize every possible

moment for darting his eye towards it, and it was not long before he saw it to be Dixon. Jane Fairfax's perception seemed to accompany his; her comprehension was certainly more equal to the covert meaning, the superior intelligence, of those five letters so arranged. She was evidently displeased; looked up, and seeing herself watched, blushed more deeply than he had ever perceived her, and saying only, 'I did not know that proper names were allowed,' pushed away the letters with even an angry spirit, and looked resolved to be engaged by no other word that could be offered. Her face was averted from those who had made the attack, and turned towards her aunt.

'Aye, very true, my dear,' cried the latter, though Jane had not spoken a word—'I was just going to say the same thing. It is time for us to be going indeed. The evening is closing in, and grandmama will be looking for us. My dear sir, you are too obliging. We really must wish you good night.'

Jane's alertness in moving, proved her as ready as her aunt had preconceived. She was immediately up, and wanting to quit the table; but so many were also moving, that she could not get away; and Mr Knightley thought he saw another collection of letters anxiously pushed towards her, and resolutely swept away by her unexamined. She was afterwards looking for her shawl—Frank Churchill was looking also—it was growing dusk, and the room was in confusion; and how they parted, Mr Knightley could not tell.

He remained at Hartfield after all the rest, his thoughts full of what he had seen; so full, that when the candles came to assist his observations, he must—yes, he certainly must, as a friend—an anxious friend—give Emma some hint, ask her some question. He could not see her in a situation of such danger, without trying to preserve her. It was his duty.

'Pray, Emma,' said he, 'may I ask in what lay the great amusement, the poignant sting of the last word given to you and Miss Fairfax? I saw the word, and am curious to know how it could be so very entertaining to the one, and so very distressing to the other.'

Emma was extremely confused. She could not endure to give him the true explanation; for though her suspicions were by no means removed, she was really ashamed of having ever imparted them.

'Oh!' she cried in evident embarrassment, 'it all meant nothing; a mere joke among ourselves.'

'The joke,' he replied gravely, 'seemed confined to you and Mr Churchill.'

He had hoped she would speak again, but she did not. She would rather busy herself about any thing than speak. He sat a little while in doubt. A variety of evils crossed his mind. Interference—fruitless interference. Emma's confusion, and the acknowledged intimacy, seemed to declare her affection engaged. Yet he would speak. He owed it to her, to risk any thing that might be involved in an unwelcome interference, rather than her welfare; to encounter any thing, rather than the remembrance of neglect in such a cause.

'My dear Emma,' said he at last, with earnest kindness, 'do you think you perfectly understand the degree of acquaintance between the gentleman and lady we have been speaking of?'

'Between Mr Frank Churchill and Miss Fairfax? Oh! yes, perfectly.—Why do you make a doubt of it?'

'Have you never at any time had reason to think that he admired her, or that she admired him?'

'Never, never!' she cried with a most open eagerness—'Never, for the twentieth part of a moment, did such an idea occur to me. And how could it possibly come into your head?'

'I have lately imagined that I saw symptoms of attachment between them—certain expressive looks, which I did not believe meant to be public.'

'Oh! you amuse me excessively. I am delighted to find that you can vouchsafe to let your imagination wander—but it will not do—very sorry to check you in your first essay—but indeed it will not do. There is no admiration between them, I do assure you; and the appearances which have caught you, have arisen from some peculiar circumstances—feelings rather of a totally different nature—it is impossible exactly to explain:—there is a good deal of nonsense in it—but the part which is capable of being communicated, which is sense, is, that they are as far from any attachment or admiration for one another, as any two beings in the world can be. That is, I presume it to be so on her side, and I can answer for its being so on his. I will answer for the gentleman's indifference.'

She spoke with a confidence which staggered, with a satisfaction which silenced, Mr Knightley. She was in gay spirits, and would have prolonged the conversation, wanting to hear the particulars of his suspicions, every

mentioned it to her in confidence; she had no objection to her telling us, of course, but it was not to go beyond: and, from that day to this, I never mentioned it to a soul that I know of. At the same time, I will not positively answer for my having never dropt a hint, because I know I do sometimes pop out a thing before I am aware. I am a talker, you know; I am rather a talker; and now and then I have let a thing escape me which I should not. I am not like Jane; I wish I were. I will answer for it she never betrayed the least thing in the world. Where is she?—Oh! just behind. Perfectly remember Mrs Perry's coming.—Extraordinary dream, indeed!'

They were entering the hall. Mr Knightley's eyes had preceded Miss Bates's in a glance at Jane. From Frank Churchill's face, where he thought he saw confusion suppressed or laughed away, he had involuntarily turned to hers; but she was indeed behind, and too busy with her shawl. Mr Weston had walked in. The two other gentlemen waited at the door to let her pass. Mr Knightley suspected in Frank Churchill the determination of catching her eye—he seemed watching her intently—in vain, however, if it were so—Jane passed between them into the hall, and looked at neither.

There was no time for farther remark or explanation. The dream must be borne with, and Mr Knightley must take his seat with the rest round the large modern circular table which Emma had introduced at Hartfield, and which none but Emma could have had power to place there and persuade her father to use, instead of the small-sized Pembroke, on which two of his daily meals had, for forty years been crowded. Tea passed pleasantly, and nobody seemed in a hurry to move.

'Miss Woodhouse,' said Frank Churchill, after examining a table behind him, which he could reach as he sat, 'have your nephews taken away their alphabets—their box of letters? It used to stand here. Where is it? This is a sort of dull-looking evening, that ought to be treated rather as winter than summer. We had great amusement with those letters one morning. I want to puzzle you again.'

Emma was pleased with the thought; and producing the box, the table was quickly scattered over with alphabets, which no one seemed so much disposed to employ as their two selves. They were rapidly forming words for each other, or for any body else who would be puzzled. The quietness of the game made it particularly eligible for Mr Woodhouse, who had often been distressed by the more animated sort, which Mr Weston had

'What is this?—What is this?' cried Mr Weston, 'about Perry and a carriage? Is Perry going to set up his carriage, Frank? I am glad he can afford it. You had it from himself, had you?'

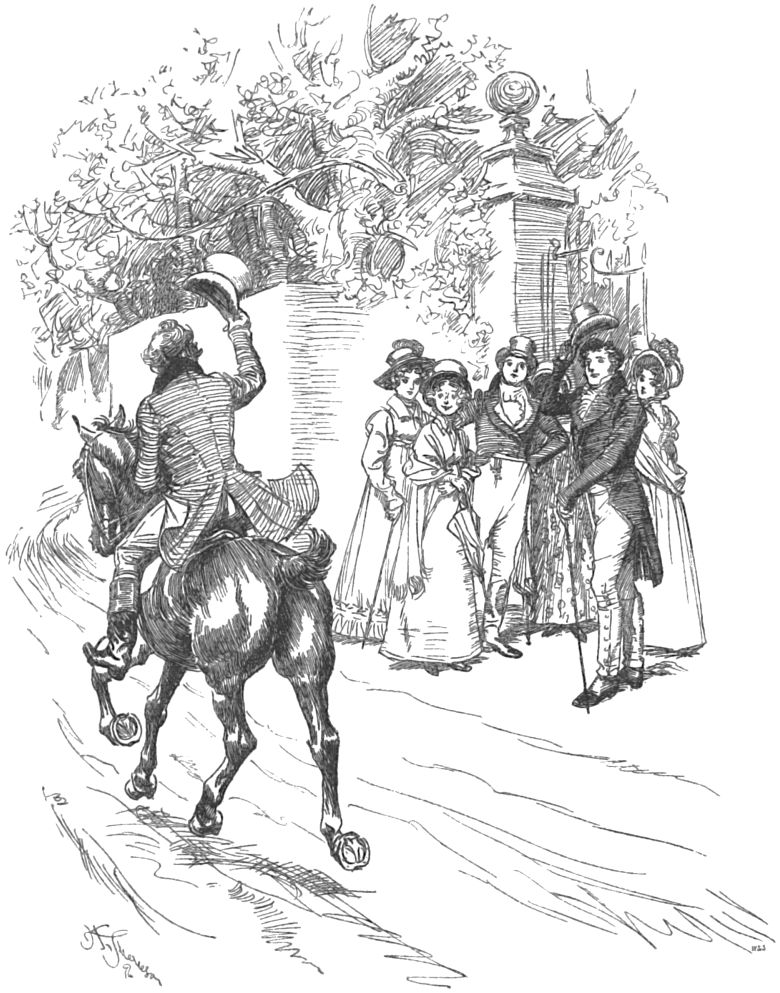
'No, sir,' replied his son, laughing, 'I seem to have had it from nobody.—Very odd!—I really was persuaded of Mrs Weston's having mentioned it in one of her letters to Enscombe, many weeks ago, with all these particulars—but as she declares she never heard a syllable of it before, of course it must have been a dream. I am a great dreamer. I dream of every body at Highbury when I am away—and when I have gone through my particular friends, then I begin dreaming of Mr and Mrs Perry.'

'It is odd though,' observed his father, 'that you should have had such a regular connected dream about people whom it was not very likely you should be thinking of at Enscombe. Perry's setting up his carriage! and his wife's persuading him to it, out of care for his health—just what will happen, I have no doubt, some time or other; only a little premature. What an air of probability sometimes runs through a dream! And at others, what a heap of absurdities it is! Well, Frank, your dream certainly shews that Highbury is in your thoughts when you are absent. Emma, you are a great dreamer, I think?'

Emma was out of hearing. She had hurried on before her guests to prepare her father for their appearance, and was beyond the reach of Mr Weston's hint.

'Why, to own the truth,' cried Miss Bates, who had been trying in vain to be heard the last two minutes, 'if I must speak on this subject, there is no denying that Mr Frank Churchill might have—I do not mean to say that he did not dream it—I am sure I have sometimes the oddest dreams in the world—but if I am questioned about it, I must acknowledge that there was such an idea last spring; for Mrs Perry herself mentioned it to my mother, and the Coles knew of it as well as ourselves—but it was quite a secret, known to nobody else, and only thought of about three days. Mrs Perry was very anxious that he should have a carriage, and came to my mother in great spirits one morning because she thought she had prevailed. Jane, don't you remember grandmama's telling us of it when we got home? I forget where we had been walking to—very likely to Randalls; yes, I think it was to Randalls. Mrs Perry was always particularly fond of my mother—indeed I do not know who is not—and she had

look described, and all the wheres and hows of a circumstance which highly entertained her: but his gaiety did not meet hers. He found he could not be useful, and his feelings were too much irritated for talking. That he might not be irritated into an absolute fever, by the fire which Mr Woodhouse's tender habits required almost every evening throughout the year, he soon afterwards took a hasty leave, and walked home to the coolness and solitude of Donwell Abbey.



Mr Perry passed by on horseback

was again in their company, he could not help remembering what he had seen; nor could he avoid observations which, unless it were like Cowper and his fire at twilight,

'Myself creating what I saw,'

brought him yet stronger suspicion of there being a something of private liking, of private understanding even, between Frank Churchill and Jane.

He had walked up one day after dinner, as he very often did, to spend his evening at Hartfield. Emma and Harriet were going to walk; he joined them; and, on returning, they fell in with a larger party, who, like themselves, judged it wisest to take their exercise early, as the weather threatened rain; Mr and Mrs Weston and their son, Miss Bates and her niece, who had accidentally met. They all united; and, on reaching Hartfield gates, Emma, who knew it was exactly the sort of visiting that would be welcome to her father, pressed them all to go in and drink tea with him. The Randalls party agreed to it immediately; and after a pretty long speech from Miss Bates, which few persons listened to, she also found it possible to accept dear Miss Woodhouse's most obliging invitation.

As they were turning into the grounds, Mr Perry passed by on horseback. The gentlemen spoke of his horse.

'By the bye,' said Frank Churchill to Mrs Weston presently, 'what became of Mr Perry's plan of setting up his carriage?'

Mrs Weston looked surprized, and said, 'I did not know that he ever had any such plan.'

'Nay, I had it from you. You wrote me word of it three months ago.'

'Me! impossible!'

'Indeed you did. I remember it perfectly. You mentioned it as what was certainly to be very soon. Mrs Perry had told somebody, and was extremely happy about it. It was owing to her persuasion, as she thought his being out in bad weather did him a great deal of harm. You must remember it now?'

'Upon my word I never heard of it till this moment.'

'Never! really, never!—Bless me! how could it be?—Then I must have dreamt it—but I was completely persuaded—Miss Smith, you walk as if you were tired. You will not be sorry to find yourself at home.'

Chapter XLII

After being long fed with hopes of a speedy visit from Mr and Mrs Suckling, the Highbury world were obliged to endure the mortification of hearing that they could not possibly come till the autumn. No such importation of novelties could enrich their intellectual stores at present. In the daily interchange of news, they must be again restricted to the other topics with which for a while the Sucklings' coming had been united, such as the last accounts of Mrs Churchill, whose health seemed every day to supply a different report, and the situation of Mrs Weston, whose happiness it was to be hoped might eventually be as much increased by the arrival of a child, as that of all her neighbours was by the approach of it.

Mrs Elton was very much disappointed. It was the delay of a great deal of pleasure and parade. Her introductions and recommendations must all wait, and every projected party be still only talked of. So she thought at first;—but a little consideration convinced her that every thing need not be put off. Why should not they explore to Box Hill though the Sucklings did not come? They could go there again with them in the autumn. It was settled that they should go to Box Hill. That there was to be such a party had been long generally known: it had even given the idea of another. Emma had never been to Box Hill; she wished to see what every body found so well worth seeing, and she and Mr Weston had agreed to chuse some fine morning and drive thither. Two or three more of the chosen only were to be admitted to join them, and it was to be done in a quiet, unpretending, elegant way, infinitely superior to the bustle and preparation, the regular eating and drinking, and picnic parade of the Eltons and the Sucklings.

This was so very well understood between them, that Emma could not but feel some surprise, and a little displeasure, on hearing from Mr Weston that he had been proposing to Mrs Elton, as her brother and sister had failed her, that the two parties should unite, and go together; and that as Mrs Elton had very readily acceded to it, so it was to be, if she had no objection. Now, as her objection was nothing but her very great dislike of Mrs Elton, of which Mr Weston must already be perfectly aware, it was not worth bringing forward again:—it could not be done without a reproof to him, which would be giving pain to his wife; and she found herself therefore obliged to consent to an arrangement which she would have done a great deal to avoid; an arrangement which would probably expose her even to the degradation of being said to be of Mrs Elton's party! Every feeling was offended; and the forbearance of her outward submission left a heavy arrear due of secret severity in her reflections on the unmanageable goodwill of Mr Weston's temper.

'I am glad you approve of what I have done,' said he very comfortably. 'But I thought you would. Such schemes as these are nothing without numbers. One cannot have too large a party. A large party secures its own amusement. And she is a good-natured woman after all. One could not leave her out.'

Emma denied none of it aloud, and agreed to none of it in private.

It was now the middle of June, and the weather fine; and Mrs Elton was growing impatient to name the day, and settle with Mr Weston as to pigeon-pies and cold lamb, when a lame carriage-horse threw every thing into sad uncertainty. It might be weeks, it might be only a few days, before the horse were useable; but no preparations could be ventured on, and it was all melancholy stagnation. Mrs Elton's resources were inadequate to such an attack.

'Is not this most vexatious, Knightley?' she cried.—'And such weather for exploring!—These delays and disappointments are quite odious. What are we to do?—The year will wear away at this rate, and nothing done. Before this time last year I assure you we had had a delightful exploring party from Maple Grove to Kings Weston.'

'You had better explore to Donwell,' replied Mr Knightley. 'That may be done without horses. Come, and eat my strawberries. They are ripening fast.'

Chapter XLI

In this state of schemes, and hopes, and connivance, June opened upon Hartfield. To Highbury in general it brought no material change. The Eltons were still talking of a visit from the Sucklings, and of the use to be made of their barouche-landau; and Jane Fairfax was still at her grandmother's; and as the return of the Campbells from Ireland was again delayed, and August, instead of Midsummer, fixed for it, she was likely to remain there full two months longer, provided at least she were able to defeat Mrs Elton's activity in her service, and save herself from being hurried into a delightful situation against her will.

Mr Knightley, who, for some reason best known to himself, had certainly taken an early dislike to Frank Churchill, was only growing to dislike him more. He began to suspect him of some double dealing in his pursuit of Emma. That Emma was his object appeared indisputable. Every thing declared it; his own attentions, his father's hints, his mother-in-law's guarded silence; it was all in unison; words, conduct, discretion, and indiscretion, told the same story. But while so many were devoting him to Emma, and Emma herself making him over to Harriet, Mr Knightley began to suspect him of some inclination to trifle with Jane Fairfax. He could not understand it; but there were symptoms of intelligence between them—he thought so at least—symptoms of admiration on his side, which, having once observed, he could not persuade himself to think entirely void of meaning, however he might wish to escape any of Emma's errors of imagination. She was not present when the suspicion first arose. He was dining with the Randalls family, and Jane, at the Eltons'; and he had seen a look, more than a single look, at Miss Fairfax, which, from the admirer of Miss Woodhouse, seemed somewhat out of place. When he

your raising your thoughts to him, is a mark of good taste which I shall always know how to value.'

Harriet kissed her hand in silent and submissive gratitude. Emma was very decided in thinking such an attachment no bad thing for her friend. Its tendency would be to raise and refine her mind—and it must be saving her from the danger of degradation.

If Mr Knightley did not begin seriously, he was obliged to proceed so, for his proposal was caught at with delight; and the 'Oh! I should like it of all things,' was not plainer in words than manner. Donwell was famous for its strawberry-beds, which seemed a plea for the invitation: but no plea was necessary; cabbage-beds would have been enough to tempt the lady, who only wanted to be going somewhere. She promised him again and again to come—much oftener than he doubted—and was extremely gratified by such a proof of intimacy, such a distinguishing compliment as she chose to consider it.

'You may depend upon me,' said she. 'I certainly will come. Name your day, and I will come. You will allow me to bring Jane Fairfax?'

'I cannot name a day,' said he, 'till I have spoken to some others whom I would wish to meet you.'

'Oh! leave all that to me. Only give me a carte-blanche.—I am Lady Patroness, you know. It is my party. I will bring friends with me.'

'I hope you will bring Elton,' said he: 'but I will not trouble you to give any other invitations.'

'Oh! now you are looking very sly. But consider—you need not be afraid of delegating power to me. I am no young lady on her preferment. Married women, you know, may be safely authorised. It is my party. Leave it all to me. I will invite your guests.'

'No,'—he calmly replied,—'there is but one married woman in the world whom I can ever allow to invite what guests she pleases to Donwell, and that one is— '

'—Mrs Weston, I suppose,' interrupted Mrs Elton, rather mortified.

'No—Mrs Knightley;—and till she is in being, I will manage such matters myself.'

'Ah! you are an odd creature!' she cried, satisfied to have no one preferred to herself.—'You are a humourist, and may say what you like. Quite a humourist. Well, I shall bring Jane with me—Jane and her aunt.—The rest I leave to you. I have no objections at all to meeting the Hartfield family. Don't scruple. I know you are attached to them.'

'You certainly will meet them if I can prevail; and I shall call on Miss Bates in my way home.'

'That's quite unnecessary; I see Jane every day:—but as you like. It is to be a morning scheme, you know, Knightley; quite a simple thing. I

'Oh! now you are looking very sly.'

She believed it would be wiser for her to say and know at once, all that she meant to say and know. Plain dealing was always best. She had previously determined how far she would proceed, on any application of the sort; and it would be safer for both, to have the judicious law of her own brain laid down with speed.—She was decided, and thus spoke—

'Harriet, I will not affect to be in doubt of your meaning. Your resolution, or rather your expectation of never marrying, results from an idea that the person whom you might prefer, would be too greatly your superior in situation to think of you. Is not it so?'

'Oh! Miss Woodhouse, believe me I have not the presumption to suppose— Indeed I am not so mad.—But it is a pleasure to me to admire him at a distance—and to think of his infinite superiority to all the rest of the world, with the gratitude, wonder, and veneration, which are so proper, in me especially.'

'I am not at all surprized at you, Harriet. The service he rendered you was enough to warm your heart.'

'Service! oh! it was such an inexpressible obligation!—The very recollection of it, and all that I felt at the time—when I saw him coming—his noble look—and my wretchedness before. Such a change! In one moment such a change! From perfect misery to perfect happiness!'

'It is very natural. It is natural, and it is honourable.—Yes, honourable, I think, to chuse so well and so gratefully.—But that it will be a fortunate preference is more than I can promise. I do not advise you to give way to it, Harriet. I do not by any means engage for its being returned. Consider what you are about. Perhaps it will be wisest in you to check your feelings while you can: at any rate do not let them carry you far, unless you are persuaded of his liking you. Be observant of him. Let his behaviour be the guide of your sensations. I give you this caution now, because I shall never speak to you again on the subject. I am determined against all interference. Henceforward I know nothing of the matter. Let no name ever pass our lips. We were very wrong before; we will be cautious now.—He is your superior, no doubt, and there do seem objections and obstacles of a very serious nature; but yet, Harriet, more wonderful things have taken place, there have been matches of greater disparity. But take care of yourself. I would not have you too sanguine; though, however it may end, be assured

'My poor dear Harriet! and have you actually found happiness in treasuring up these things?'

'Yes, simpleton as I was!—but I am quite ashamed of it now, and wish I could forget as easily as I can burn them. It was very wrong of me, you know, to keep any remembrances, after he was married. I knew it was—but had not resolution enough to part with them.'

'But, Harriet, is it necessary to burn the court-plaister?—I have not a word to say for the bit of old pencil, but the court-plaister might be useful.'

'I shall be happier to burn it,' replied Harriet. 'It has a disagreeable look to me. I must get rid of every thing.—There it goes, and there is an end, thank Heaven! of Mr Elton.'

'And when,' thought Emma, 'will there be a beginning of Mr Churchill?'

She had soon afterwards reason to believe that the beginning was already made, and could not but hope that the gipsy, though she had told no fortune, might be proved to have made Harriet's.—About a fortnight after the alarm, they came to a sufficient explanation, and quite undesignedly. Emma was not thinking of it at the moment, which made the information she received more valuable. She merely said, in the course of some trivial chat, 'Well, Harriet, whenever you marry I would advise you to do so and so'—and thought no more of it, till after a minute's silence she heard Harriet say in a very serious tone, 'I shall never marry.'

Emma then looked up, and immediately saw how it was; and after a moment's debate, as to whether it should pass unnoticed or not, replied,

'Never marry!—This is a new resolution.'

'It is one that I shall never change, however.'

After another short hesitation, 'I hope it does not proceed from—I hope it is not in compliment to Mr Elton?'

'Mr Elton indeed!' cried Harriet indignantly.—'Oh! no'—and Emma could just catch the words, 'so superior to Mr Elton!'

She then took a longer time for consideration. Should she proceed no farther?—should she let it pass, and seem to suspect nothing?—Perhaps Harriet might think her cold or angry if she did; or perhaps if she were totally silent, it might only drive Harriet into asking her to hear too much; and against any thing like such an unreserve as had been, such an open and frequent discussion of hopes and chances, she was perfectly resolved.—

shall wear a large bonnet, and bring one of my little baskets hanging on my arm. Here,—probably this basket with pink ribbon. Nothing can be more simple, you see. And Jane will have such another. There is to be no form or parade—a sort of gipsy party. We are to walk about your gardens, and gather the strawberries ourselves, and sit under trees;—and whatever else you may like to provide, it is to be all out of doors—a table spread in the shade, you know. Every thing as natural and simple as possible. Is not that your idea?'

'Not quite. My idea of the simple and the natural will be to have the table spread in the dining-room. The nature and the simplicity of gentlemen and ladies, with their servants and furniture, I think is best observed by meals within doors. When you are tired of eating strawberries in the garden, there shall be cold meat in the house.'

'Well—as you please; only don't have a great set out. And, by the bye, can I or my housekeeper be of any use to you with our opinion?—Pray be sincere, Knightley. If you wish me to talk to Mrs Hodges, or to inspect anything— '

'I have not the least wish for it, I thank you.'

'Well—but if any difficulties should arise, my housekeeper is extremely clever.'

'I will answer for it, that mine thinks herself full as clever, and would spurn any body's assistance.'

'I wish we had a donkey. The thing would be for us all to come on donkeys, Jane, Miss Bates, and me—and my caro sposo walking by. I really must talk to him about purchasing a donkey. In a country life I conceive it to be a sort of necessary; for, let a woman have ever so many resources, it is not possible for her to be always shut up at home;—and very long walks, you know—in summer there is dust, and in winter there is dirt.'

'You will not find either, between Donwell and Highbury. Donwell Lane is never dusty, and now it is perfectly dry. Come on a donkey, however, if you prefer it. You can borrow Mrs Cole's. I would wish every thing to be as much to your taste as possible.'

'That I am sure you would. Indeed I do you justice, my good friend. Under that peculiar sort of dry, blunt manner, I know you have the warmest heart. As I tell Mr E., you are a thorough humourist.—Yes, believe me,

Knightley, I am fully sensible of your attention to me in the whole of this scheme. You have hit upon the very thing to please me.'

Mr Knightley had another reason for avoiding a table in the shade. He wished to persuade Mr Woodhouse, as well as Emma, to join the party; and he knew that to have any of them sitting down out of doors to eat would inevitably make him ill. Mr Woodhouse must not, under the specious pretence of a morning drive, and an hour or two spent at Donwell, be tempted away to his misery.

He was invited on good faith. No lurking horrors were to upbraid him for his easy credulity. He did consent. He had not been at Donwell for two years. 'Some very fine morning, he, and Emma, and Harriet, could go very well; and he could sit still with Mrs Weston, while the dear girls walked about the gardens. He did not suppose they could be damp now, in the middle of the day. He should like to see the old house again exceedingly, and should be very happy to meet Mr and Mrs Elton, and any other of his neighbours.—He could not see any objection at all to his, and Emma's, and Harriet's going there some very fine morning. He thought it very well done of Mr Knightley to invite them—very kind and sensible—much cleverer than dining out.—He was not fond of dining out.'

Mr Knightley was fortunate in every body's most ready concurrence. The invitation was everywhere so well received, that it seemed as if, like Mrs Elton, they were all taking the scheme as a particular compliment to themselves.—Emma and Harriet professed very high expectations of pleasure from it; and Mr Weston, unasked, promised to get Frank over to join them, if possible; a proof of approbation and gratitude which could have been dispensed with.—Mr Knightley was then obliged to say that he should be glad to see him; and Mr Weston engaged to lose no time in writing, and spare no arguments to induce him to come.

In the meanwhile the lame horse recovered so fast, that the party to Box Hill was again under happy consideration; and at last Donwell was settled for one day, and Box Hill for the next,—the weather appearing exactly right.

Under a bright mid-day sun, at almost Midsummer, Mr Woodhouse was safely conveyed in his carriage, with one window down, to partake of this al-fresco party; and in one of the most comfortable rooms in the Abbey, especially prepared for him by a fire all the morning, he was happily

'And had you really some at hand yourself? I am sure I never suspected it, you did it so naturally.'

'And so you actually put this piece of court-plaister by for his sake!' said Emma, recovering from her state of shame and feeling divided between wonder and amusement. And secretly she added to herself, 'Lord bless me! when should I ever have thought of putting by in cotton a piece of court-plaister that Frank Churchill had been pulling about! I never was equal to this.'

'Here,' resumed Harriet, turning to her box again, 'here is something still more valuable, I mean that has been more valuable, because this is what did really once belong to him, which the court-plaister never did.'

Emma was quite eager to see this superior treasure. It was the end of an old pencil,—the part without any lead.

'This was really his,' said Harriet.—'Do not you remember one morning?—no, I dare say you do not. But one morning—I forget exactly the day—but perhaps it was the Tuesday or Wednesday before that evening, he wanted to make a memorandum in his pocket-book; it was about spruce-beer. Mr Knightley had been telling him something about brewing spruce-beer, and he wanted to put it down; but when he took out his pencil, there was so little lead that he soon cut it all away, and it would not do, so you lent him another, and this was left upon the table as good for nothing. But I kept my eye on it; and, as soon as I dared, caught it up, and never parted with it again from that moment.'

'I do remember it,' cried Emma; 'I perfectly remember it.—Talking about spruce-beer.—Oh! yes—Mr Knightley and I both saying we liked it, and Mr Elton's seeming resolved to learn to like it too. I perfectly remember it.—Stop; Mr Knightley was standing just here, was not he? I have an idea he was standing just here.'

'Ah! I do not know. I cannot recollect.—It is very odd, but I cannot recollect.—Mr Elton was sitting here, I remember, much about where I am now.'—

'Well, go on.'

'Oh! that's all. I have nothing more to shew you, or to say—except that I am now going to throw them both behind the fire, and I wish you to see me do it.'