always judge for themselves, and are by no means implicitly guided by others. I give you notice that as I find your son, so I shall judge of him.—I am no flatterer.'

Mr Weston was musing.

'I hope,' said he presently, 'I have not been severe upon poor Mrs Churchill. If she is ill I should be sorry to do her injustice; but there are some traits in her character which make it difficult for me to speak of her with the forbearance I could wish. You cannot be ignorant, Mrs Elton, of my connexion with the family, nor of the treatment I have met with; and, between ourselves, the whole blame of it is to be laid to her. She was the instigator. Frank's mother would never have been slighted as she was but for her. Mr Churchill has pride; but his pride is nothing to his wife's: his is a quiet, indolent, gentlemanlike sort of pride that would harm nobody, and only make himself a little helpless and tiresome; but her pride is arrogance and insolence! And what inclines one less to bear, she has no fair pretence of family or blood. She was nobody when he married her, barely the daughter of a gentleman; but ever since her being turned into a Churchill she has out-Churchill'd them all in high and mighty claims: but in herself, I assure you, she is an upstart.'

'Only think! well, that must be infinitely provoking! I have quite a horror of upstarts. Maple Grove has given me a thorough disgust to people of that sort; for there is a family in that neighbourhood who are such an annoyance to my brother and sister from the airs they give themselves! Your description of Mrs Churchill made me think of them directly. People of the name of Tupman, very lately settled there, and encumbered with many low connexions, but giving themselves immense airs, and expecting to be on a footing with the old established families. A year and a half is the very utmost that they can have lived at West Hall; and how they got their fortune nobody knows. They came from Birmingham, which is not a place to promise much, you know, Mr Weston. One has not great hopes from Birmingham. I always say there is something direful in the sound: but nothing more is positively known of the Tupmans, though a good many things I assure you are suspected; and yet by their manners they evidently think themselves equal even to my brother, Mr Suckling, who happens to be one of their nearest neighbours. It is infinitely too bad. Mr Suckling, who has been eleven years a resident at Maple Grove,

and whose father had it before him—I believe, at least—I am almost sure that old Mr Suckling had completed the purchase before his death.'

They were interrupted. Tea was carrying round, and Mr Weston, having said all that he wanted, soon took the opportunity of walking away.

After tea, Mr and Mrs Weston, and Mr Elton sat down with Mr Woodhouse to cards. The remaining five were left to their own powers, and Emma doubted their getting on very well; for Mr Knightley seemed little disposed for conversation; Mrs Elton was wanting notice, which nobody had inclination to pay, and she was herself in a worry of spirits which would have made her prefer being silent.

Mr John Knightley proved more talkative than his brother. He was to leave them early the next day; and he soon began with—

'Well, Emma, I do not believe I have any thing more to say about the boys; but you have your sister's letter, and every thing is down at full length there we may be sure. My charge would be much more concise than her's, and probably not much in the same spirit; all that I have to recommend being comprised in, do not spoil them, and do not physic them.'

'I rather hope to satisfy you both,' said Emma, 'for I shall do all in my power to make them happy, which will be enough for Isabella; and happiness must preclude false indulgence and physic.'

'And if you find them troublesome, you must send them home again.'

'That is very likely. You think so, do not you?'

'I hope I am aware that they may be too noisy for your father—or even may be some encumbrance to you, if your visiting engagements continue to increase as much as they have done lately.'

'Increase!'

'Certainly; you must be sensible that the last half-year has made a great difference in your way of life.'

'Difference! No indeed I am not.'

'There can be no doubt of your being much more engaged with company than you used to be. Witness this very time. Here am I come down for only one day, and you are engaged with a dinner-party!—When did it happen before, or any thing like it? Your neighbourhood is increasing, and you mix more with it. A little while ago, every letter to Isabella brought an account of fresh gaieties;

dinners at Mr Cole's, or balls at the Crown. The difference which Randalls, Randalls alone makes in your goings-on, is very great.'

'Yes,' said his brother quickly, 'it is Randalls that does it all.'

'Very well—and as Randalls, I suppose, is not likely to have less influence than heretofore, it strikes me as a possible thing, Emma, that Henry and John may be sometimes in the way. And if they are, I only beg you to send them home.'

'No,' cried Mr Knightley, 'that need not be the consequence. Let them be sent to Donwell. I shall certainly be at leisure.'

'Upon my word,' exclaimed Emma, 'you amuse me! I should like to know how many of all my numerous engagements take place without your being of the party; and why I am to be supposed in danger of wanting leisure to attend to the little boys. These amazing engagements of mine—what have they been? Dining once with the Coles—and having a ball talked of, which never took place. I can understand you—(nodding at Mr John Knightley)—your good fortune in meeting with so many of your friends at once here, delights you too much to pass unnoticed. But you, (turning to Mr Knightley,) who know how very, very seldom I am ever two hours from Hartfield, why you should foresee such a series of dissipation for me, I cannot imagine. And as to my dear little boys, I must say, that if Aunt Emma has not time for them, I do not think they would fare much better with Uncle Knightley, who is absent from home about five hours where she is absent one—and who, when he is at home, is either reading to himself or settling his accounts.'

Mr Knightley seemed to be trying not to smile; and succeeded without difficulty, upon Mrs Elton's beginning to talk to him.

and aunt would spare him again?" and so forth—I always felt that something would happen in our favour; and so it has, you see. I have observed, Mrs Elton, in the course of my life, that if things are going untowardly one month, they are sure to mend the next.'

'Very true, Mr Weston, perfectly true. It is just what I used to say to a certain gentleman in company in the days of courtship, when, because things did not go quite right, did not proceed with all the rapidity which suited his feelings, he was apt to be in despair, and exclaim that he was sure at this rate it would be May before Hymen's saffron robe would be put on for us. Oh! the pains I have been at to dispel those gloomy ideas and give him cheerfuller views! The carriage—we had disappointments about the carriage;—one morning, I remember, he came to me quite in despair.'

She was stopped by a slight fit of coughing, and Mr Weston instantly seized the opportunity of going on.

'You were mentioning May. May is the very month which Mrs Churchill is ordered, or has ordered herself, to spend in some warmer place than Enscombe—in short, to spend in London; so that we have the agreeable prospect of frequent visits from Frank the whole spring—precisely the season of the year which one should have chosen for it: days almost at the longest; weather genial and pleasant, always inviting one out, and never too hot for exercise. When he was here before, we made the best of it; but there was a good deal of wet, damp, cheerless weather; there always is in February, you know, and we could not do half that we intended. Now will be the time. This will be complete enjoyment; and I do not know, Mrs Elton, whether the uncertainty of our meetings, the sort of constant expectation there will be of his coming in to-day or to-morrow, and at any hour, may not be more friendly to happiness than having him actually in the house. I think it is so. I think it is the state of mind which gives most spirit and delight. I hope you will be pleased with my son; but you must not expect a prodigy. He is generally thought a fine young man, but do not expect a prodigy. Mrs Weston's partiality for him is very great, and, as you may suppose, most gratifying to me. She thinks nobody equal to him.'

'And I assure you, Mr Weston, I have very little doubt that my opinion will be decidedly in his favour. I have heard so much in praise of Mr Frank Churchill.—At the same time it is fair to observe, that I am one of those who

'Mrs Churchill is not much in my good graces, as you may suspect—but this is quite between ourselves. She is very fond of Frank, and therefore I would not speak ill of her. Besides, she is out of health now; but that indeed, by her own account, she has always been. I would not say so to every body, Mrs Elton, but I have not much faith in Mrs Churchill's illness.'

'If she is really ill, why not go to Bath, Mr Weston?—To Bath, or to Clifton?'

'She has taken it into her head that Enscombe is too cold for her. The fact is, I suppose, that she is tired of Enscombe. She has now been a longer time stationary there, than she ever was before, and she begins to want change. It is a retired place. A fine place, but very retired.'

'Aye—like Maple Grove, I dare say. Nothing can stand more retired from the road than Maple Grove. Such an immense plantation all round it! You seem shut out from every thing—in the most complete retirement.—And Mrs Churchill probably has not health or spirits like Selina to enjoy that sort of seclusion. Or, perhaps she may not have resources enough in herself to be qualified for a country life. I always say a woman cannot have too many resources—and I feel very thankful that I have so many myself as to be quite independent of society.'

'Frank was here in February for a fortnight.'

'So I remember to have heard. He will find an addition to the society of Highbury when he comes again; that is, if I may presume to call myself an addition. But perhaps he may never have heard of there being such a creature in the world.'

This was too loud a call for a compliment to be passed by, and Mr Weston, with a very good grace, immediately exclaimed,

'My dear madam! Nobody but yourself could imagine such a thing possible. Not heard of you!—I believe Mrs Weston's letters lately have been full of very little else than Mrs Elton.'

He had done his duty and could return to his son.

'When Frank left us,' continued he, 'it was quite uncertain when we might see him again, which makes this day's news doubly welcome. It has been completely unexpected. That is, I always had a strong persuasion he would be here again soon, I was sure something favourable would turn up—but nobody believed me. He and Mrs Weston were both dreadfully desponding. "How could he contrive to come? And how could it be supposed that his uncle

Chapter XXXVII

A very little quiet reflection was enough to satisfy Emma as to the nature of her agitation on hearing this news of Frank Churchill. She was soon convinced that it was not for herself she was feeling at all apprehensive or embarrassed; it was for him. Her own attachment had really subsided into a mere nothing; it was not worth thinking of;—but if he, who had undoubtedly been always so much the most in love of the two, were to be returning with the same warmth of sentiment which he had taken away, it would be very distressing. If a separation of two months should not have cooled him, there were dangers and evils before her:—caution for him and for herself would be necessary. She did not mean to have her own affections entangled again, and it would be incumbent on her to avoid any encouragement of his.

She wished she might be able to keep him from an absolute declaration. That would be so very painful a conclusion of their present acquaintance! and yet, she could not help rather anticipating something decisive. She felt as if the spring would not pass without bringing a crisis, an event, a something to alter her present composed and tranquil state.

It was not very long, though rather longer than Mr Weston had foreseen, before she had the power of forming some opinion of Frank Churchill's feelings. The Enscombe family were not in town quite so soon as had been imagined, but he was at Highbury very soon afterwards. He rode down for a couple of hours; he could not yet do more; but as he came from Randalls immediately to Hartfield, she could then exercise all her quick observation, and speedily determine how he was influenced, and how she must act. They met with the utmost friendliness. There could be no doubt of his great pleasure in seeing her. But she had an almost instant doubt of his caring for her as he had done,

of his feeling the same tenderness in the same degree. She watched him well. It was a clear thing he was less in love than he had been. Absence, with the conviction probably of her indifference, had produced this very natural and very desirable effect.

He was in high spirits; as ready to talk and laugh as ever, and seemed delighted to speak of his former visit, and recur to old stories: and he was not without agitation. It was not in his calmness that she read his comparative indifference. He was not calm; his spirits were evidently fluttered; there was restlessness about him. Lively as he was, it seemed a liveliness that did not satisfy himself; but what decided her belief on the subject, was his staying only a quarter of an hour, and hurrying away to make other calls in Highbury. 'He had seen a group of old acquaintance in the street as he passed—he had not stopped, he would not stop for more than a word—but he had the vanity to think they would be disappointed if he did not call, and much as he wished to stay longer at Hartfield, he must hurry off.' She had no doubt as to his being less in love—but neither his agitated spirits, nor his hurrying away, seemed like a perfect cure; and she was rather inclined to think it implied a dread of her returning power, and a discreet resolution of not trusting himself with her long.

This was the only visit from Frank Churchill in the course of ten days. He was often hoping, intending to come—but was always prevented. His aunt could not bear to have him leave her. Such was his own account at Randall's. If he were quite sincere, if he really tried to come, it was to be inferred that Mrs Churchill's removal to London had been of no service to the wilful or nervous part of her disorder. That she was really ill was very certain; he had declared himself convinced of it, at Randalls. Though much might be fancy, he could not doubt, when he looked back, that she was in a weaker state of health than she had been half a year ago. He did not believe it to proceed from any thing that care and medicine might not remove, or at least that she might not have many years of existence before her; but he could not be prevailed on, by all his father's doubts, to say that her complaints were merely imaginary, or that she was as strong as ever.

It soon appeared that London was not the place for her. She could not endure its noise. Her nerves were under continual irritation and suffering; and by the ten days' end, her nephew's letter to Randalls communicated a

'How my brother, Mr Suckling, sometimes flies about'

'Yes, they are about one hundred and ninety miles from London, a considerable journey.'

'Yes, upon my word, very considerable. Sixty-five miles farther than from Maple Grove to London. But what is distance, Mr Weston, to people of large fortune?—You would be amazed to hear how my brother, Mr Suckling, sometimes flies about. You will hardly believe me—but twice in one week he and Mr Bragge went to London and back again with four horses.'

'The evil of the distance from Enscombe,' said Mr Weston, 'is, that Mrs Churchill, as we understand, has not been able to leave the sofa for a week together. In Frank's last letter she complained, he said, of being too weak to get into her conservatory without having both his arm and his uncle's! This, you know, speaks a great degree of weakness—but now she is so impatient to be in town, that she means to sleep only two nights on the road.—So Frank writes word. Certainly, delicate ladies have very extraordinary constitutions, Mrs Elton. You must grant me that.'

'No, indeed, I shall grant you nothing. I always take the part of my own sex. I do indeed. I give you notice—You will find me a formidable antagonist on that point. I always stand up for women—and I assure you, if you knew how Selina feels with respect to sleeping at an inn, you would not wonder at Mrs Churchill's making incredible exertions to avoid it. Selina says it is quite horror to her—and I believe I have caught a little of her nicety. She always travels with her own sheets; an excellent precaution. Does Mrs Churchill do the same?'

'Depend upon it, Mrs Churchill does every thing that any other fine lady ever did. Mrs Churchill will not be second to any lady in the land for'—

Mrs Elton eagerly interposed with,

'Oh! Mr Weston, do not mistake me. Selina is no fine lady, I assure you. Do not run away with such an idea.'

'Is not she? Then she is no rule for Mrs Churchill, who is as thorough a fine lady as any body ever beheld.'

Mrs Elton began to think she had been wrong in disclaiming so warmly. It was by no means her object to have it believed that her sister was not a fine lady; perhaps there was want of spirit in the pretence of it;—and she was considering in what way she had best retract, when Mr Weston went on.

change of plan. They were going to remove immediately to Richmond. Mrs Churchill had been recommended to the medical skill of an eminent person there, and had otherwise a fancy for the place. A ready-furnished house in a favourite spot was engaged, and much benefit expected from the change.

Emma heard that Frank wrote in the highest spirits of this arrangement, and seemed most fully to appreciate the blessing of having two months before him of such near neighbourhood to many dear friends—for the house was taken for May and June. She was told that now he wrote with the greatest confidence of being often with them, almost as often as he could even wish.

Emma saw how Mr Weston understood these joyous prospects. He was considering her as the source of all the happiness they offered. She hoped it was not so. Two months must bring it to the proof.

Mr Weston's own happiness was indisputable. He was quite delighted. It was the very circumstance he could have wished for. Now, it would be really having Frank in their neighbourhood. What were nine miles to a young man?—An hour's ride. He would be always coming over. The difference in that respect of Richmond and London was enough to make the whole difference of seeing him always and seeing him never. Sixteen miles—nay, eighteen—it must be full eighteen to Manchester-street—was a serious obstacle. Were he ever able to get away, the day would be spent in coming and returning. There was no comfort in having him in London; he might as well be at Enscombe; but Richmond was the very distance for easy intercourse. Better than nearer!

One good thing was immediately brought to a certainty by this removal,—the ball at the Crown. It had not been forgotten before, but it had been soon acknowledged vain to attempt to fix a day. Now, however, it was absolutely to be; every preparation was resumed, and very soon after the Churchills had removed to Richmond, a few lines from Frank, to say that his aunt felt already much better for the change, and that he had no doubt of being able to join them for twenty-four hours at any given time, induced them to name as early a day as possible.

Mr Weston's ball was to be a real thing. A very few to-morrows stood between the young people of Highbury and happiness.

Mr Woodhouse was resigned. The time of year lightened the evil to him. May was better for every thing than February. Mrs Bates was engaged to spend the evening at Hartfield, James had due notice, and he sanguinely hoped that

neither dear little Henry nor dear little John would have any thing the matter with them, while dear Emma were gone.

Chapter XXXVI

'I hope I shall soon have the pleasure of introducing my son to you,' said Mr Weston.

Mrs Elton, very willing to suppose a particular compliment intended her by such a hope, smiled most graciously.

'You have heard of a certain Frank Churchill, I presume,' he continued—'and know him to be my son, though he does not bear my name.'

'Oh! yes, and I shall be very happy in his acquaintance. I am sure Mr Elton will lose no time in calling on him; and we shall both have great pleasure in seeing him at the Vicarage.'

'You are very obliging.—Frank will be extremely happy, I am sure.— He is to be in town next week, if not sooner. We have notice of it in a letter to-day. I met the letters in my way this morning, and seeing my son's hand, presumed to open it—though it was not directed to me—it was to Mrs Weston. She is his principal correspondent, I assure you. I hardly ever get a letter.'

'And so you absolutely opened what was directed to her! Oh! Mr Weston—(laughing affectedly) I must protest against that.—A most dangerous precedent indeed!—I beg you will not let your neighbours follow your example.—Upon my word, if this is what I am to expect, we married women must begin to exert ourselves!—Oh! Mr Weston, I could not have believed it of you!'

'Aye, we men are sad fellows. You must take care of yourself, Mrs Elton.—This letter tells us—it is a short letter—written in a hurry, merely to give us notice—it tells us that they are all coming up to town directly, on Mrs Churchill's account—she has not been well the whole winter, and thinks Enscombe too cold for her—so they are all to move southward without loss of time.'

'Indeed!—from Yorkshire, I think. Enscombe is in Yorkshire?'

were the first entitled, after Mrs Weston and Emma, to be made happy;—from them he would have proceeded to Miss Fairfax, but she was so deep in conversation with John Knightley, that it would have been too positive an interruption; and finding himself close to Mrs Elton, and her attention disengaged, he necessarily began on the subject with her.

Chapter XXXVIII

No misfortune occurred, again to prevent the ball. The day approached, the day arrived; and after a morning of some anxious watching, Frank Churchill, in all the certainty of his own self, reached Randalls before dinner, and every thing was safe.

No second meeting had there yet been between him and Emma. The room at the Crown was to witness it;—but it would be better than a common meeting in a crowd. Mr Weston had been so very earnest in his entreaties for her arriving there as soon as possible after themselves, for the purpose of taking her opinion as to the propriety and comfort of the rooms before any other persons came, that she could not refuse him, and must therefore spend some quiet interval in the young man's company. She was to convey Harriet, and they drove to the Crown in good time, the Randalls party just sufficiently before them.

Frank Churchill seemed to have been on the watch; and though he did not say much, his eyes declared that he meant to have a delightful evening. They all walked about together, to see that every thing was as it should be; and within a few minutes were joined by the contents of another carriage, which Emma could not hear the sound of at first, without great surprize. 'So unreasonably early!' she was going to exclaim; but she presently found that it was a family of old friends, who were coming, like herself, by particular desire, to help Mr Weston's judgment; and they were so very closely followed by another carriage of cousins, who had been entreated to come early with the same distinguishing earnestness, on the same errand, that it seemed as if half the company might soon be collected together for the purpose of preparatory inspection.

Emma perceived that her taste was not the only taste on which Mr Weston depended, and felt, that to be the favourite and intimate of a man who had so

many intimates and confidantes, was not the very first distinction in the scale of vanity. She liked his open manners, but a little less of open-heartedness would have made him a higher character.—General benevolence, but not general friendship, made a man what he ought to be.—She could fancy such a man. The whole party walked about, and looked, and praised again; and then, having nothing else to do, formed a sort of half-circle round the fire, to observe in their various modes, till other subjects were started, that, though May, a fire in the evening was still very pleasant.

Emma found that it was not Mr Weston's fault that the number of privy councillors was not yet larger. They had stopped at Mrs Bates's door to offer the use of their carriage, but the aunt and niece were to be brought by the Eltons.

Frank was standing by her, but not steadily; there was a restlessness, which shewed a mind not at ease. He was looking about, he was going to the door, he was watching for the sound of other carriages,—impatient to begin, or afraid of being always near her.

Mrs Elton was spoken of. 'I think she must be here soon,' said he. 'I have a great curiosity to see Mrs Elton, I have heard so much of her. It cannot be long, I think, before she comes.'

A carriage was heard. He was on the move immediately; but coming back, said,

'I am forgetting that I am not acquainted with her. I have never seen either Mr or Mrs Elton. I have no business to put myself forward.'

Mr and Mrs Elton appeared; and all the smiles and the proprieties passed.

'But Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax!' said Mr Weston, looking about. 'We thought you were to bring them.'

The mistake had been slight. The carriage was sent for them now. Emma longed to know what Frank's first opinion of Mrs Elton might be; how he was affected by the studied elegance of her dress, and her smiles of graciousness. He was immediately qualifying himself to form an opinion, by giving her very proper attention, after the introduction had passed.

In a few minutes the carriage returned.—Somebody talked of rain.—'I will see that there are umbrellas, sir,' said Frank to his father: 'Miss Bates must not be forgotten:' and away he went. Mr Weston was following; but Mrs Elton detained him, to gratify him by her opinion of his son; and so briskly did she

dinner, convincing her that none of all her careful directions to the servants had been forgotten, and spread abroad what public news he had heard, was proceeding to a family communication, which, though principally addressed to Mrs Weston, he had not the smallest doubt of being highly interesting to every body in the room. He gave her a letter, it was from Frank, and to herself; he had met with it in his way, and had taken the liberty of opening it.

'Read it, read it,' said he, 'it will give you pleasure; only a few lines—will not take you long; read it to Emma.'

The two ladies looked over it together; and he sat smiling and talking to them the whole time, in a voice a little subdued, but very audible to every body.

'Well, he is coming, you see; good news, I think. Well, what do you say to it?—I always told you he would be here again soon, did not I?—Anne, my dear, did not I always tell you so, and you would not believe me?—In town next week, you see—at the latest, I dare say; for she is as impatient as the black gentleman when any thing is to be done; most likely they will be there to-morrow or Saturday. As to her illness, all nothing of course. But it is an excellent thing to have Frank among us again, so near as town. They will stay a good while when they do come, and he will be half his time with us. This is precisely what I wanted. Well, pretty good news, is not it? Have you finished it? Has Emma read it all? Put it up, put it up; we will have a good talk about it some other time, but it will not do now. I shall only just mention the circumstance to the others in a common way.'

Mrs Weston was most comfortably pleased on the occasion. Her looks and words had nothing to restrain them. She was happy, she knew she was happy, and knew she ought to be happy. Her congratulations were warm and open; but Emma could not speak so fluently. She was a little occupied in weighing her own feelings, and trying to understand the degree of her agitation, which she rather thought was considerable.

Mr Weston, however, too eager to be very observant, too communicative to want others to talk, was very well satisfied with what she did say, and soon moved away to make the rest of his friends happy by a partial communication of what the whole room must have overheard already.

It was well that he took every body's joy for granted, or he might not have thought either Mr Woodhouse or Mr Knightley particularly delighted. They

disgusts me. But this good old Mr Woodhouse, I wish you had heard his gallant speeches to me at dinner. Oh! I assure you I began to think my caro sposo would be absolutely jealous. I fancy I am rather a favourite; he took notice of my gown. How do you like it?—Selina's choice—handsome, I think, but I do not know whether it is not over-trimmed; I have the greatest dislike to the idea of being over-trimmed—quite a horror of finery. I must put on a few ornaments now, because it is expected of me. A bride, you know, must appear like a bride, but my natural taste is all for simplicity; a simple style of dress is so infinitely preferable to finery. But I am quite in the minority, I believe; few people seem to value simplicity of dress,—show and finery are every thing. I have some notion of putting such a trimming as this to my white and silver poplin. Do you think it will look well?'

The whole party were but just reassembled in the drawing-room when Mr Weston made his appearance among them. He had returned to a late dinner, and walked to Hartfield as soon as it was over. He had been too much expected by the best judges, for surprize—but there was great joy. Mr Woodhouse was almost as glad to see him now, as he would have been sorry to see him before. John Knightley only was in mute astonishment.—That a man who might have spent his evening quietly at home after a day of business in London, should set off again, and walk half a mile to another man's house, for the sake of being in mixed company till bed-time, of finishing his day in the efforts of civility and the noise of numbers, was a circumstance to strike him deeply. A man who had been in motion since eight o'clock in the morning, and might now have been still, who had been long talking, and might have been silent, who had been in more than one crowd, and might have been alone!—Such a man, to quit the tranquillity and independence of his own fireside, and on the evening of a cold sleety April day rush out again into the world!—Could he by a touch of his finger have instantly taken back his wife, there would have been a motive; but his coming would probably prolong rather than break up the party. John Knightley looked at him with amazement, then shrugged his shoulders, and said, 'I could not have believed it even of him.'

Mr Weston meanwhile, perfectly unsuspicious of the indignation he was exciting, happy and cheerful as usual, and with all the right of being principal talker, which a day spent anywhere from home confers, was making himself agreeable among the rest; and having satisfied the inquiries of his wife as to his

begin, that the young man himself, though by no means moving slowly, could hardly be out of hearing.

'A very fine young man indeed, Mr Weston. You know I candidly told you I should form my own opinion; and I am happy to say that I am extremely pleased with him.—You may believe me. I never compliment. I think him a very handsome young man, and his manners are precisely what I like and approve—so truly the gentleman, without the least conceit or puppyism. You must know I have a vast dislike to puppies—quite a horror of them. They were never tolerated at Maple Grove. Neither Mr Suckling nor me had ever any patience with them; and we used sometimes to say very cutting things! Selina, who is mild almost to a fault, bore with them much better.'

While she talked of his son, Mr Weston's attention was chained; but when she got to Maple Grove, he could recollect that there were ladies just arriving to be attended to, and with happy smiles must hurry away.

Mrs Elton turned to Mrs Weston. 'I have no doubt of its being our carriage with Miss Bates and Jane. Our coachman and horses are so extremely expeditious!—I believe we drive faster than any body.—What a pleasure it is to send one's carriage for a friend!—I understand you were so kind as to offer, but another time it will be quite unnecessary. You may be very sure I shall always take care of them.'

Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax, escorted by the two gentlemen, walked into the room; and Mrs Elton seemed to think it as much her duty as Mrs Weston's to receive them. Her gestures and movements might be understood by any one who looked on like Emma; but her words, every body's words, were soon lost under the incessant flow of Miss Bates, who came in talking, and had not finished her speech under many minutes after her being admitted into the circle at the fire. As the door opened she was heard,

'So very obliging of you!—No rain at all. Nothing to signify. I do not care for myself. Quite thick shoes. And Jane declares—Well!—(as soon as she was within the door) Well! This is brilliant indeed!—This is admirable!—Excellently contrived, upon my word. Nothing wanting. Could not have imagined it.—So well lighted up!—Jane, Jane, look!—did you ever see any thing? Oh! Mr Weston, you must really have had Aladdin's lamp. Good Mrs Stokes would not know her own room again. I saw her as I came in; she was standing in the entrance. "Oh! Mrs Stokes," said I—but I had not time for

'Oh! This is brilliant, indeed!'

'Something that would do!' repeated Mrs Elton. 'Aye, that may suit your humble ideas of yourself;—I know what a modest creature you are; but it will not satisfy your friends to have you taking up with any thing that may offer, any inferior, commonplace situation, in a family not moving in a certain circle, or able to command the elegancies of life.'

'You are very obliging; but as to all that, I am very indifferent; it would be no object to me to be with the rich; my mortifications, I think, would only be the greater; I should suffer more from comparison. A gentleman's family is all that I should condition for.'

'I know you, I know you; you would take up with any thing; but I shall be a little more nice, and I am sure the good Campbells will be quite on my side; with your superior talents, you have a right to move in the first circle. Your musical knowledge alone would entitle you to name your own terms, have as many rooms as you like, and mix in the family as much as you chose;—that is—I do not know—if you knew the harp, you might do all that, I am very sure; but you sing as well as play;—yes, I really believe you might, even without the harp, stipulate for what you chose;—and you must and shall be delightfully, honourably and comfortably settled before the Campbells or I have any rest.'

'You may well class the delight, the honour, and the comfort of such a situation together,' said Jane, 'they are pretty sure to be equal; however, I am very serious in not wishing any thing to be attempted at present for me. I am exceedingly obliged to you, Mrs Elton, I am obliged to any body who feels for me, but I am quite serious in wishing nothing to be done till the summer. For two or three months longer I shall remain where I am, and as I am.'

'And I am quite serious too, I assure you,' replied Mrs Elton gaily, 'in resolving to be always on the watch, and employing my friends to watch also, that nothing really unexceptionable may pass us.'

In this style she ran on; never thoroughly stopped by any thing till Mr Woodhouse came into the room; her vanity had then a change of object, and Emma heard her saying in the same half-whisper to Jane,

'Here comes this dear old beau of mine, I protest!—Only think of his gallantry in coming away before the other men!—what a dear creature he is;—I assure you I like him excessively. I admire all that quaint, old-fashioned politeness; it is much more to my taste than modern ease; modern ease often