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 plaster 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 show 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.'

'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 plaster?— I have not a word to say for the bit of old pencil, but the court plaster 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