

leave, and quickly retired to his room, where in a short time he was quietly ruminating upon his pillow, on the prospects of his future union with Emily.

CHAPTER XIII.

BEFORE nine o'clock on the following morning Lady Milton and her son were already on their road to the country. Herbert had determined to take this opportunity of entering fully into the subject nearest his heart, and at once to make a candid avowal of his attachment for Miss Manby. To commence a subject of this delicate nature was a matter of some difficulty; and although he had made up his mind to the fullest confession, yet he had not courage to begin the conversation unless an opportunity should occur of introducing it casually. This restraint rendered him for some time silent; and it was not until they had proceeded some distance, that Lady Milton, who perceived his depression, was enabled to draw him from his reverie.

"Here, my dear," said her Ladyship, "are a couple of letters which I have received within the last two days; they are both from friends of yours: the one, I think, will amuse you; the other is from my friend, Mrs. Bramble, the mother of those nice girls."

"You do not mean to say, she has written to you already?"

"Indeed she has; and as you will see, proposes—"

"For me, I dare say!"

"No, not exactly, but offers to make Milton Park on her way to South Wales."

"Exactly as Alfred prognosticated!" replied Herbert; "and have you consented to receive them?"

"Certainly, my dear; how could I refuse? besides, I understood they were most particular friends of yours;—correspondents," added her Ladyship significantly.

"She forced her letters upon me, and I now and then

replied to them as laconically as possible ; but I beg leave to say, they are no friends of mine, nor ever will be ; indeed, I shall not remain long at Milton if they are there. How long do they talk of staying ?”

“Only a day,” rejoined his mother.

“I am certain,” answered the son, “that as long as your cook or I remain at home, you will not get rid of them ; besides, if I must be hunted, if I am to be looked upon as a kind of butt for half a score of mothers to shoot at, for Heaven’s sake ! let it be for myself, and not for the fortune which they all imagine I must inherit at some future, God grant most distant, period !”

“Though you do yourself but mere justice, my dear child,” rejoined Lady Milton, “I think you are unjust to Mrs. Bramble : she is a very good natured woman, and appears to take the greatest interest in you.”

“Yes, the interest she takes, or rather would take, is in my father’s fortune ; I am not the first person, by many, whom she has speculated upon—but I can tell her that her case is hopeless.”

“The girls are extremely good-humoured, unaffected, and certainly,” continued Lady Milton, “Margaret is beautiful, and—”

“Would make an admirable helpmate to the Colossus of Rhodes.”

“You used,” said Lady Milton, archly, “to admire tall persons ;—I am glad your taste is altered.”

“I am not so changeable as you imagine,” answered Herbert, whose courage almost failed him at this hint from his mother ; “but since I have been in Spain, my dislike to thick ankles is greater than ever ; not to mention a foot as large as the marble model at Mr. Hope’s, without its proportions, and a shoe which might serve for a pontoon ;—I cannot bear the idea of a figure which owes its symmetry entirely to the exertions of the whaler’s, any more than I can a woman’s mind whose *naïveté* and ingenuousness has been studied and practised, like the address-speech in the House of Commons.”

“Well, I am extremely fond of Margaret,” replied Lady Milton ; “and as all people are not so fastidious, as

you are, I am surprised so handsome a creature has not yet been married!"

"Why," rejoined Herbert, "independent of the immense size of her ankles, and the diminutiveness of her fortune, no man likes to marry a whole family, which must inevitably be the case. For my part," continued he, "if I were obliged to choose one or the other, I should decidedly select the eldest sister, who is by far the most agreeable and well-informed. Moreover, she excites one's pity, since she is always treated as a kind of Cinderella. Bramble has fixed all his hopes of a rich son-in-law through the medium of Margaret, and he consequently shows his partiality in the most glaring manner. Indeed, both he and his wife evince so little delicacy in their preference for one daughter over the other, and say such sharp things to the poor girl, even before strangers, that I have frequently seen her burst into tears, and quit the room. Upon my word, mother, if I were a marketable article, and if Sophy Bramble weighed about five stone less, and was about sixteen years younger, I declare I would try to fall in love with her, providing always, I was not to have the rest of the family at my house more than six months out of the twelve. But, between ourselves, there would be a fatal objection in the wig and false teeth."

"I declare, my dear," rejoined Lady Milton, "you are become as scandalous as an old maiden of fifty;—so, to prevent your farther pulling them to pieces, read that letter."

Herbert took the epistle from his mother's hand, and read as follows:—

"Bramble Grove, November 18.

"MY DEAR LADY MILTON,—our delight at the gratifying intelligence conveyed to us this morning, of the safe return of Colonel Milton to England, must excuse my hastening to offer you our sincere and heartfelt congratulations at an event so interesting to all those who have the pleasure of being acquainted with your gallant son. The girls are so overjoyed at the return of the Achilles, for so Margaret calls him——"

"Phu!" exclaimed Herbert to his mother, "I will read no more of the vile balderdash."

"Then I will read it to you, my dear," answered Lady Milton; and taking the letter, she proceeded—"that they will not permit me to rest until I convey to you their compliments on this happy occasion. Indeed, I think the welcome intelligence has had the effect of diminishing Margaret's cough, and she has certainly been in better health the last two days than I have seen her for some time,—the best physician, after all, I believe is happiness, and the prospect of being with those we love!"

"I think that looks something like making a proposal!" exclaimed Herbert. "It's the most barefaced thing I ever heard. I wonder, my dear mother, that you have patience to read it!"

"My patience," rejoined Lady Milton, "can never be exhausted when your praise is the subject." And she then continued—"We are about to quit this place on a tour for a few weeks, having at length yielded to the pressing invitations of some of our friends. We intend therefore, tearing ourselves from home for a short time, as we are really afraid of offending so many people by our constant refusal to avail ourselves of their pressing invitations. Mr. Bramble is never so happy as when he is at his own fireside, and although he is always delighted to see his friends here, yet he dislikes visiting beyond measure; and Margaret is so attached to the lodge, so much occupied with improving herself in drawing, music, the Belles-Lettres, and languages, that it is a matter of great difficulty to persuade her to quit her household gods, even for a few weeks during the Almack's season, she is so domestic. The only thing which consoles her at the idea of leaving home, is the hope of meeting you and Colonel Milton on our tour. We are going to Glynn Castle——"

"Not while I am there," exclaimed Herbert, "I hope! or I shall renounce my visit. I do not wish to be rude to Mrs. Bramble; but it would be ridiculous coquetry in me, if I affected to misunderstand her views. But what does she say about going to Milton?"

"Do not interrupt me, and you will hear. Let me see—'Glynn Castle'—Oh! here it is.—'And although it

will be a slight *detour* through Devonshire, we will, if you can make it convenient to receive us for a night or two, diverge from our road; the idea of passing within twenty or thirty miles without seeing you all would make us quite unhappy. For this purpose we must, it is true, curtail our visit at the Kirby's, though I fear they will never forgive us for cheating them of a minute of the long visit which they have insisted upon our paying them—they are so fond of Margaret. We suppose Colonel Milton will be with you. Adieu, dear Lady Milton; accept once more the congratulations which we all unite in offering. Pray convey Margaret's kindest regards to the Hero of the Tagus, as she calls him. Ever your's sincerely,

“MARGARET BRAMBLE.

“P. S. There is no truth whatever in the report of Margaret's going to be married to Sir Peter Sluice—his being blind, and having lost the use of his right side, are insuperable objections; so pray contradict it, you have my authority. His fortune is, I believe, nominally large, but almost entirely swallowed up by mortgages: besides, as Margaret says, it would really be very shocking to perpetuate the sad defect of the Baronet. Mr. Bramble says he never will consent to his grand-children coming into the world like little puppies, whatever they may turn out afterwards. Apropos of dogs—do tell Colonel Milton to embrace his brave animal for us, Salvator Rosa, as Margaret calls him. I hear the hat you wore at the last Almack's was perfect, did you get it from Paris? *Rue Vivienne*, we conclude. Margaret thinks Spanish a beautiful language—*Maestosa*, as she calls it. She hopes Colonel Milton will give her a lesson or two,—his accent must be perfect.”

“I never heard such a tissue of humbug and impudence; and as for Miss Margaret's foresight in the postscript, it is exactly the species of *naïveté* I should have expected. Then again, their attachment to the Grove is mere nonsense. Why, old Bramble is too happy to seize any excuse to run away from it; and while Margaret is counting the hours which detain them there, her mother

is counting the eggs and bottles of hot port they devour during their stay: and as for Miss's music and drawing, why there is one eternal song which she always squeaks, and one never-ending drawing, (purchased, no doubt,) which she perpetually shows. In short, my dear mother, I will fly from them to a certainty, if they remain more than a couple of days."

"Well, my dear Herbert, think no more about them; but read this,—it is from your old friend, Claudia Babington."

"What, good old aunt Claudia!" exclaimed Herbert, with pleasure; "I loved the good old woman with all my heart, and, at all events, in her one can meet with no deceit, or underhand intentions."

"Why, to say the truth," rejoined Lady Milton, "aunt Claudia imagined you were once in love with her niece, Arabella; and if I were not aware that the good old soul is incapable of malice, and really thinks that you have suffered an irreparable loss in not marrying your old flirt, I should have imagined her letter had been written to pique you, as it announces Arabella's union with Mr. Scratchley."

"I marry her! Why she is at least ten years older than I am, and I should as soon have thought of marrying my aunt Claudia herself: though I believe I did behave ill to her, for when I grew too tall to swallow sugar-plums and sit on her knee, I did not pay her so much attention as I used to do when I ransacked her work-boxes for kisses; though, I declare, I should as soon have dreamed of beating her as of robbing her cheek of one. I never could bear her red nose; it always appeared to be blushing for the paleness of the face on which it was destined to flourish. But now for aunt Claudia—

Eglantine Lodge, Nov. 4. 18—.

"MY RESPECTED FRIEND—With an overflowing heart still palpitating with past pleasures—with a hand still trembling from the contact of the hymeneal touch—with a voice still quivering from the last adieu—with eyes still humid from the emotion of the solemn and awe-inspiring ceremony of yesterday—with cheeks still tingling from the

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effusions of the chaste embrace imprinted on either side by the dear duet—I take up my pen, and must, my dear and ever-valued Lady Milton, implore your charitable indulgence for any faults and confusion which may appear in this brief detail of the interesting event which we regretted, for ourselves only, that you were precluded from witnessing, by your particularly, like yourself, highly meritorious devotion to the delightful solitudes of maternal love.’—

“Ah!” said Herbert, drawing his breath, “I see the old lady’s sentences are not a jot shorter than usual; in full proportion to the length of her crossed and recrossed epistle: but let us proceed.”—

“I should strongly recommend your dear son (who once, my good friend, I had hoped, might have been the means of uniting us more closely, but this happiness was destined for another) to apply some of the embrocation No. 1, on the liniment No. 2, of which I enclosed receipts, if ever he find any irritation in his head, or any tingling arising from his wounds: I have tried both, with eminent success, on the forehead and arm of my dear brother’s ploughboy, who, generally well-conducted, has his share of faults, and who, in an unfortunate broil with that warm-spirited creature, Jane Batter the cook, received rather a violent chop on the left temple, from a blow with the pepper-box: Jane, who was serving in the kitchen, having actually caught him carrying off a slice of corned beef, under the pretext of lighting a stable lantern.’—

“I wonder if old Claudia be aware of her puns?” said Herbert.

“Certainly not, my dear: she would be as much surprised at the idea of having committed a joke, as the *bourgeois gentilhomme* was at the idea of having spoken prose all his life;—but go on.”—

“But to return to the interesting circumstance which has for ever sealed, with the assistance of Divine Providence, the happiness of our dearly-beloved Arabella. The morning of Thursday, the day fixed upon for this soul-inspiring ceremony, was ushered in by the ringing of the bells of the circumjacent parish churches, even as the preceding evening had been brought to a close by the same

delightful pastoral sounds : My dear brother, with his usual liberality, having directed twelve quarts of excellent mixed beer to be distributed among the eighteen ringers, all of them young men of most unexceptionable moral character, and one of whom, indeed, Elijah Groom, educated at our village-school, will, I have no doubt, in due time, if he goes on well, succeed the old clerk, Nathaniel Broach, in his most sacred and interesting functions ; in short, my good brother says, that if Elijah overcomes the slight hesitation in his speech, and the difficulty he finds in pronouncing the consonants, he has no doubt he will read full as well as our, at present, very highly to be respected Nathaniel, whose loss to the parish would indeed be most irreparable ; though I have the vanity to think, if he strictly follows my prescription, takes the powders in the morning, and the draughts at night, entirely abstaining from small-beer, and other inflammatory liquids, I have no doubt may, with the blessing of God, be yet spared for many years.

“ Well, my dear friend, ere the merry dingdong of the bells had announced the auspicious day, or awakened the villagers from their rustic slumbers, already every individual in this happy abode was on foot. My first impulse, after saying my prayers, and just looking again over the marriage ceremony, was to enter the chamber of our dear Arabella, whom I found trying on the bobbing-net highly-figured veil, which our excellent friend, my then about-to-be sister-in-law, presented to her for the holy purpose. She blushed exceedingly when I entered ; I kissed her, dear girl, and then looking out of the window, ascertained the state of the weather, which, for this brumal season, was indeed wonderfully serene and sunshiny. Indeed, it seemed as if summer had again made an effort to return to earth—in fact, it was so remarkably fine, as to attract the attention of our dear child’s future, who most wittily observed, as I poured out his Souchong and Bohea mixed (which is certainly more wholesome than Souchong alone), at breakfast, ‘ Aunt Claudia,’ said the dear fellow, ‘ I am not much inclined to believe in apparitions ; but, in troth, do you know, I think the ghost of last summer is come to honour our bridal day.’ You may conceive, my dear Lady

Milton, how beautifully our sweet girl blushed at this sally of her beloved intended ; the compliment was so neatly turned.'—

"The good old woman's innocence appears to be as great as ever," observed Herbert, "though I never read such an interminable chain of twaddle, yet one sees the goodness of the old lady's heart in every line."—

"The ingenuous confusion of our dear niece was also somewhat augmented by that droll man, our esteemed cousin, Sippets, who exclaimed, 'Nor I, indeed, did ne'er give credit to the re-appearance of the whole, or particularly parts, of departed bodies ; but there,' said he, 'there sits the ghost of Banquo.'"

"I declare, my estimable friend, that I am not superstitious. I started, not indeed understanding the wit of this repartee, till my dear, about to be nephew, Theodore Scratchley whispered in my ear, 'He means Mr. Cowsfoot, who is the only remaining partner in the late Islington Bank.'"

"I had no doubt that the rest of these gentlemen fell into a premature grave from wet feet, and neglecting the use of flannels ; but cousin Sippets assured me that they were carried off in consequence of great irregularities, and too long a run, which ended in a stoppage. For God's sake, my dear ! do recommend your worthy and about-to-return husband, to use worsted stockings and fleecy hosiery in general, and pray entreat your brave son not to take too much exercise, or it will end in indigestion, as was the case with poor Mr. Cowsfoot's partners.'—

"I am very much obliged to the good old woman for her solicitude about me," exclaimed Herbert ; "her mistake is excellent ;—but what comes next ?"—

"Well, my dear Lady Milton, as soon as our breakfast was brought to a conclusion—nothing, by-the-by, could exceed the vastly appropriate neatness of this repast, which was confined to immediate then, or afterwards-to-be relations, we retired to prepare ourselves. I shall not enumerate to you all the various things on the sideboard or table, which really creaked under the weight of rolls and cold viands ; the former of which that ingenious creature, Batter, had formed in every possible shape, out of com-

pliment to the day. Fingers, balls, hearts, arrows, hands-joined; indeed, under my direction, and from the receipt I got from your esteemed housekeeper, Mrs. Martin, to whom I beg you will give my remembrance, and tell her whenever she feels a return of the pain she mentioned, to use the cinnamon-water with ten drops of the extract of rosemary. Well, Jane made from this receipt a large true lover's knot, admirably natural, and which my dear brother's footman, Joseph—you must remember Joseph—with a degree of politeness and good-breeding beyond his station in life, but perfectly in unison with the general propriety of his behaviour,—he is an immense favourite with all the elderly maid-servants,—placed on the napkin of the darling soon about-to-be-bride. You may conceive how dreadfully the sweet girl was agitated as she unrolled her napkin, and how crimson red she blushed at this discovery—'this snake in the grass,' as that ludicrous creature, our cousin Sippets, called it. Indeed, she appeared so much agitated, that I regretted much having lent myself to this practical joke.

"I forgot to mention that we used the tea and breakfast necessities which my dear brother bought at Wedgwood's, and the urn (plated) which you, my kind friend, presented to my late never-to-be-forgotten and always-to-be-lamented sister-in-law. The dress of the bride was indeed a perfect *non sequitur*, as my cousin Sippets says. You well know, my dearest Lady Milton, I am not vain, and still less would I say any thing to shock your feelings,—but I think a certain person, had he seen, would have felt a pain."

"Where?" said Herbert, laughing; "and whom does she mean?"

"Why you, my dear! Read on," answered his mother.—

"Excuse the partiality of a fond aunt, but indeed a certain brave and, thank God! valiant person has had an immense loss. But Heaven's will be done!—'He who soweth, knoweth not when he may reap.' Arabella is now the interesting wife, the adored better-half of our beloved present. It is therefore wicked to think of him who might have been her former future: that is now irrevoca-

bly past, and, as Mr. Siddons says, 'buried in the tomb of all the Capulets!'

" 'Well, the darling child's head was dressed very simply, but precisely after the engraving of the '*Jeune Promise*,' in No. 45 of the Parisian *Almanach des Dames*,—her own sweet hazel ringlets, interspersed with a garland of orange flowers, lilies of the valley, white jasmine, and ditto immortals; there was something, it is true, foreign in this *coiffeur*, but the dear girl looked notwithstanding most essentially English, though from the top of her head hung in graceful folds the white veil above mentioned, which certainly was very Spanish. Her gown was a beautiful specimen of patent net over a white satin slip, trimmed with deep flounces of point and patent. Her sleeves were prodigiously wide at the top, and tapered away to the waists, in what that absurd creature, Sippets, called leg of veal fashion, though our dear girl blushed extremely at this innuendo, which indeed at such a moment was indelicate, as I hinted to our valued cousin, whose facetious disposition often carries him away. The lovely girl's body corresponded with her slip, being ornamented with a deep *ruche* of point and patent, while her taper waist was confined by a broad *moiré* ribbon, fastened by a mother-of-pearl buckle studded with heartsease, which her dear intended purchased in the Royal Palace at Paris. Well, my dear, her wrists were ornamented each with a bracelet, one composed of the light flaxen ringlets of her devoted present, and the other of beads with a large pink topaz, containing the miniature of the same dear person in his cap and gown, as he took his A. B. C. degree at the University of Aberdeen.

" 'To conclude. She had white *prunelle* shoes; gloves ornamented round the tops with a *ruche* of point; and a vastly natural imitation pearl necklace, the gift of her dear future's papa, whose troublesome asthma is certainly wonderfully diminished since I recommended his smoking the leaves of the *datura fastuosa*, which my once esteemed friend, Dr. Bleereye, at Bath, assured me was a *ne plus ultra* for that painful complaint. You may, however, judge, my kind friend, of our distress and agony on the preceding evening, the anxiously expected dress not having arrived

until about twenty-two minutes past five, by the evening coach. As our often congenial cousin, Sippets, observed, 'There is, indeed, much between the sowing and the baking,' for of course we were all as anxious as the dear girl herself to try on this miracle of Blondel's talent; when, lo and behold!—I even now tremble at the very retrospect—it was at least four inches too short at the bottom—indecorously short!—and much too tight and low across the bust.'—

"No wonder she says lo—and behold!" exclaimed Herbert.

"Pray, do not force a bad pun into my old friend's head against her inclination," replied Lady Milton.—

"What was to be done? I luckily had my smelling bottle of sal volatile, though, indeed, the darling Arabella conducted herself with wonderful firmness during this trying scene. Not a moment was to be lost. I hastened to my brother, obtained his permission to mount James, the gardener's boy, on the gray pony, though, indeed, he could ill be spared from assisting Joseph in the pantry.'—

"Which does she mean? the boy, or the horse?" asked Herbert.

"Do not interrupt, my dear; we shall soon be at the end."

"Thank God! for, with all my regard for Aunt Claudia, my patience is nearly exhausted."—

"The dress was immediately forwarded to Blondel to be altered, which she succeeded in doing, by adding a piece of patent at the bottom; covering the seam with a rouleau of satin; ditto at the top; and putting in a breadth in the body,—there being no time to make a new one. At twenty-three minutes past eight next morning, the apprehensions of our dear child were allayed by the return of little James with the gown, in excellent time for her to dress for breakfast at nine. So pleased was the liberal-minded future, that he forthwith recompensed little James's zeal with a shilling. We had taken the precaution, in the mean time, with the assistance of dear Lady Mezzleford's maid, who has been twice at Calais, to dress the darling Arabella's hair at half-past six A. M., and in short, to complete her toilette; so, in fact, when the gown arrived, she

had nothing to do but to slip it on,—and fervent were our thanksgivings to see that it fitted the dear innocent very comfortably, though still somewhat tight across the chest. The favoured youth of dearest Arabella's choice awaited our dearest at the foot of the staircase: he was dressed in a lightish blue coat, white Marcelles waistcoat, silk stockings, nicely pinked, which showed to admiration his manly figure, a crimson watch-ribbon, and white kersey inexpressibles,—presenting altogether a noble and dignified aspect. His adored Arabella blushed deeply when they met. He saluted her right hand, and we then entered the breakfast-room, where we were received by the four bridesmaids.

“These maids would indeed have looked more unique had they not been eclipsed by the superior elegance of the sweet about-to-be-bride. They were dressed in rose coloured satin slips, with ditto coloured shoes, and deep zig-zag trimmings of *blonde* and *bouquets* of forget-me-nots, roses, pansies, and love-lies-bleeding; their hair adorned with wreaths of ditto. They each wore a brooch of turquoise, in the shape of an anchor; a happy conceit of our comical cousin Luke Sippets, signifying, as he said, that ‘they hoped to ride out the storm of spinstership.’ I declare I blushed deeply at this explanation: though you well know, my dear Lady Milton, that I positively refused the great Irish Colonel O’Flaney, who so dreadfully distinguished himself at the battle of Lincelles, as well as Dr. Bleereye, who is so eminent in all nervous and hypochondriacal cases at Bath; and indeed it is highly conjecturable that I should now have been Mrs. Bleereye, had not my good brother been much shocked at the rather indelicate language of the M. D., when my poor maid died of the dropsy, when I went to drink the waters. Well, my dear Lady Milton, to each of these bridesmaids was added a ditto man, all of them friends of our sweetest Arabella's choice: they were dressed in blue coats, white waistcoats, nankeen shorts, gold buckles at their knees, and ditto in their shoes. With a grace which was indeed affecting, our dear child presented each of these youths with a posey, attached by a blue-eyed hope ribbon, which she herself pinned to their button-holes. The same was done by our

elegant, then future nephew, who, with the dignity and polish of a man-of-fashion, advanced, and chastely saluting the hand of each of his sweet intended's attendants, placed a fragrant nosegay within them. It was now nearly eleven; and as my dear brother determined, weather permitting, that we should proceed on foot to the sacred edifice, where the indissoluble knot was to be tied, in order to give our worthy neighbours a full sight of the interesting scene, Sippets being appointed master of the ceremonies, he marshalled us all in the drawing-room, and at the signal, ready—present—fire—we moved off. Luke jocosely observing, 'that the word fire was emblematic of the holy flame which burnt in the breasts of the interesting, about-to-be-united duet.' First went the gardener in his best clothes, followed by the coachman in his ditto livery, attended by as many of the household as could be spared from their interesting functions in-doors—though all crowded forward, as that ludicrous creature Luke said, 'to take a last look at Miss Arabella Babblingtree;' she, poor dear! blushed vastly at this *jeu-d'esprit*. Well, then went two and two,—each gentleman handing a lady,—the different dear friends who had accepted our invitation; then bridesmen, each with his ditto maid, two and two;—then went I; I had on my silver lustre dress, which was new trimmed for the occasion, and a new white *gros de Naples* bonnet,—my now dear nephew said it was vastly becoming. I was supported by that facetious personage, cousin Sippets, whose jovial disposition was eminently serviceable in keeping up my spirits during this trying juncture, though I had the precaution of putting a phial of æther and sal volatile into my reticule, which hung on my left arm; it was worked in beads, beautifully executed by our dear Lady Mizzleford, representing Love taking Time by the forelock. Next came the very-shortly-to-be-bride, blushing prodigiously, supported by her own doating parent on the one side, and highly respected, about-to-be-in-a-few-minutes, father-in-law. Immediately followed the amiable youth, the select object of our child's love, arm in arm with sister Gertrude and Lady Mizzleford. The cavalcade was closed by the beadle, constable, church wardens, and schoolmaster of our peaceful parish, at the head of our very thriving village

seminary, all dressed in their best Sunday clothes. I have no doubt that my admirable receipt for chilblains, if used opportunely, will relieve the poor little things this winter from those irritating companions.

“ “ In this order we arrived at church, where we were met by our worthy friend the Curate, who is looking much better from the use of the pills, which so completely succeeded in curing that very tidy woman, Mrs. Sacksheaf, our late esteemed tithesman's widow, who suffered martyrdom from cramps, somnambulism, and night-mares. The awful ceremony was at length concluded: the dear girl having supported herself throughout it with a degree of dignity, firmness, piety, modesty, and devotion, truly worthy of the days of the ancient martyrs; though, in plighting her troth, she turned very pale, but recovered herself with wonderful presence of mind, although the ring pinched her finger a little. It is true also, our darling Gertrude felt somewhat faint, and the dear present sister trembled very much; but we nevertheless dried up our tears—tears of holy joy, and returned to the Grove in the same manner in which we came, save that the blushing bride now leaned on the arm of her beloved present, while the bells of the church struck up an enlivening peal. In the mean time a splendid repast had been prepared;—covers were laid for forty, and consisted, (with the exception of hot mashed potatoes, mock turtle soup, and roast fowls,) of cold viands; such as, pies, hams, fruits, creams, and confectionaries. Joseph acquitted himself most admirably, and was assisted by six very picked youths, of excellent character, who were accustomed to wait at the assize dinners and corporation feasts: they were dressed in green coats, cord inexpressibles, white waistcoats, ditto stockings, and had each a large favour. The arrangement of the table was as, viz.: at the bottom, where sat my dear brother, was a beautiful tongue, carved so as to represent a sleeping Cupid; his head of carrot, his wing of turnips, and his quiver of parsnip, with a bleeding heart of beet-root in his hand: and you may judge of the confusion of the lovely bride, when she was asked by her fond parent, if he should send her a small slice of the sleeping god with her cold fowl, of which that absurd creature, Luke Sippets,

had sent her the merry-thought. In the centre, and immediately opposite the dear duet, Batter had placed a model of the Temple of Hymen, filled with hearts, cupids, chains, arrows, and other devices, emblematical of our sweet child's change of name; together with a number of sugar-plums, filled with appropriate mottos: and I saw the tear of pride and modesty glisten in her eye, when her attentive present, cracking a pistachio with his teeth, unfolded the motto, and placed it significantly before her. She rolled it up, and passed it to me, desiring I would return it safe; and no wonder, for it was very coincidental and affecting, being as follows:

'Oh, quel bonheur mon cœur éprouve,
Quand près de toi il se retrouve.'

At the top of the table, where I sat, surrounded by the bridesmen, was placed a dish of two cold Turkey polls, highly garnished with water-cress; which dear Gertrude had designed to represent two turtle-doves sitting in a nest of foliage: and indeed the imitation was so very natural as to affect our dear child, and attract the attention of her amiable present; indeed, I ventured to suggest to Gertrude, the previous evening, that there was something perhaps indelicate in the allusion. Well, down the flanks were placed a profusion of cold meats and sallads; among which, jellies kept nodding to *blanc mange's* exactly like partners in a country dance, as that funny man, Luke Sip-pets, whispered in my ear. Down the middle, from me to my brother, extended a line of six pine apples, four dishes of grapes, and six of golden pippins, and nonpareils, all from the gardens of our esteemed friend Sir Claudius Capon, who is a highly cultivated member of the R. H. S., and were, indeed, a rich compliment to our dear girl's merits. The grapes were, indeed, admirable: and imagine how our sweet Arabella blushed, when her darling Mr. Scratchley whispered in her ear, loud enough for every one to hear, 'Oh! Miss Babbingtree!' she coloured, and we all smiled at his innocent and respectful forgetfulness; but he recovered with great presence of mind, and said, 'Oh, dearest Mrs. Scratchley, how sour are the grapes

now, to you know who?" Arabella said nothing; but her eye looked a whole discourse, and I thought of the mixed sensations of your dear victorious hero, could he have been in our now darling nephew's proud situation.'—

"Oh, she meant me, did she!" exclaimed Herbert: "thank God! I have escaped that, at all events. Why aunt Claudia must have been crazy, to have even thought of me; but let us hasten to the end, for my patience is exhausted."—

"As soon as the health of the darling Duo had been drunk, which the lesser half of our child turned with a firm and dignified voice, in a neat and very appropriate extempore speech, the heads of which had been given to him by his respected parents a few days previous, it was determined that the carriage should draw up, which was destined to convey the dear couple to Margate, where they are now indulging in all the chaste joys of the honey-moon. It was our wish to spare my dear brother, as well as ourselves, the protracted thoughts of the irreparable temporary loss we were about to suffer; and as delays are dangerous, dear Mr. Scratchley, senior, winked to his now beloved daughter-in-law, who, rising, looked for a moment pale, very pale, as she heard the grating of the carriage-wheels on the gravel; but quickly recovering, she threw her arms round the neck of her parent, who blessed her, as did her amiable choice round that of his estimable mother, and then chastely saluted me on the left cheek. I was much agitated, but suppressed my emotion. In the mean time, Sippets had formed the rest of the party in two lines in the hall, through which our now noble-minded and handsome nephew at once led his blushing lamb, with an air of proud triumph, to the new yellow chariot which awaited them, (in the pocket of which I directed Batter to place a paper of chicken sandwiches, and half a pint of excellent home-made cowslip wine, an innocent and refreshing restorative;) and in a few seconds, amidst a thousand God bless you's! the dear duet were hastening towards Margate, as fast as four neat poststers could carry them; the amiable choice of our dear girl having, with his usual liberality, promised to each of the postilions, who were the steadiest drivers from the 'Hen and Chickens,' an extra sixpence each, if they

drove him a dashing pace. They were dressed in red jackets and blue collars, new for the event, white hats, and ditto inexpressibles, highly crimped shirts, and large favours. But I am sorry, my dear, dearest friend, to say, that I must reserve the minute details of this most imposing event to another day, as I am called upon to attend in the housekeeper's room, sister Gertrude's favourite pug having swallowed a fish-bone, and great fears are entertained for its, to my sister, very valuable life. All unite in kindest regards and remembrances to your brave boy. I will write again shortly, more at length; until then, God bless you! From your ever sincere and affectionate friend,

“CLAUDIA JACINTHA BABINGTON.

“P. S. I forgot to say, that the dear bride's travelling-dress was an elegant hat of rose-coloured plush, with a superb pelisse of canary-coloured *gros de Naples*, and a beautiful Scotch cachemire, copied from that worn by the Persian Ambassador. The darling lesser half wore a neat undress blue military frock, buff waistcoat, gray longs; and, with the most delicate attention to his dearest wife, fawn-coloured Wellington boots, in order not to soil her flounces,—a sample of highly-cultivated politeness, which he copied from our valuable friend Sir Claudius Capon, who did ditto on his own marriage.—I re-open my letter to say, that I have just heard from our sweet child, who felt no other ill effects from her journey to Margate, than a little sea-sickness as she approached the coast.”

“With all my heart do I wish the triumphant present joy of his interesting possession!” exclaimed Herbert, as he returned into his mother's hands this interminable detail, of what the good old lady called a brief account; “though my conscience does not accuse me of having contributed in the slightest degree to the glory of his conquest. For once in her life, Aunt Claudia has been betrayed into a joke as far as regards you; she has perhaps imbibed some of the jocular virus of that excessively tiresome man Mr. Sippets. I should much regret if she suspected me of having ever trifled with her niece's feelings. The nature of your sex may render a certain proportion of

coquetry excusable ; but in ours nothing can be more despicable or unmanly."

"You must confess, however," rejoined Lady Milton, smiling, "that you were considered a most dangerous person before you left England, exactly what your friend Sidney calls a *Matadonna* : I heard of endless flirtations."

"That is to say, of my having danced more than once in a week, and spoken more than twice during one night to the same person, which simple occurrence is quite sufficient to set all the London gossips on the *qui vive*. Why, I saw my name opposite to that of Lady Susan Bosville's in the Morning Post account of twelve successive Almack's, though at that very moment I was enjoying all the luxuries of a Spanish bivouac, or the equally agreeable partners one constantly encounters in a Portuguese cottage."

"Oh ! but there was a whole catalogue of Lady Janes, Agathas, and Theodosias, to whom you were given before your departure ; not to mention a Court Guide full of Misses ; indeed scarcely a day passed without my being seriously congratulated upon my speedy prospect of being connected with the Peerage."

"If your ambitious prospect of attaining that distinction depends on me, banish all thoughts of it from your calculation, and rather trust to the more solid talents and merit of my father, to render you eligible for a column in Mr. Debrett's pages, than to my collateral assistance."

"That is the last thing," replied Lady Milton, "which can ever influence my thoughts or feelings in the selection of a daughter-in-law ; though, were it otherwise, where is the extraordinary ambition of my desiring to see you united to some amiable young woman of rank ? Why should not you aspire to that distinction which so many others, with fewer pretensions than yourself, attain every day ?"

"Do you often hear of much happiness being the result of these ill-assorted unions ?"

"Certainly !" replied Lady Milton. "How many are there among the daughters of our nobility, whose dignified and graceful manners, cultivated education, superior talent,