

CHAPTER XI.

SIR LAWRENCE CATESBY had observed, with much alarm and anxiety, the extreme agitation of his wife on their return to Stanhope-street. Concluding that she was much more seriously indisposed than she had chosen to avow, and dreading the consequences of a nervous attack, he immediately despatched a note to the family physician, Sir Fergus Malcolm, requesting his attendance without a moment's delay. Many minutes, however, had not elapsed after the servant's departure ere the worthy Baronet was startled by a noise in the apartment of Lady Catesby, which was situated immediately above his own cabinet. Sir Lawrence rushed up-stairs, and found his lady in a senseless state; the cause of which was too plainly revealed by the empty phial which had fallen to the ground. Surgical assistance was immediately procured, and from the promptitude with which antidotes were administered, the greatest portion of the deleterious liquid was withdrawn, and before the arrival of the physician, Lady Catesby was declared out of danger from the effects of the laudanum, which her husband and female attendants naturally concluded she must have swallowed by mistake, and Sir Lawrence had soon the satisfaction to learn that a few days would suffice to restore her to perfect health.

The return of Herbert Milton to England had been retarded many weeks beyond the period so anxiously expected by his friends; the time, however, at length arrived, when the gallant young soldier was again destined to revisit his native land, and those only can picture to themselves the delight he felt at once more seeing the white cliffs of England rising from the bosom of the blue ocean, who have themselves been many years absent from their home, and who, after many hardships, dangers, and perhaps a perilous and stormy voyage, once more feel convinced of the certainty of pressing to their hearts all those who are dearest to them on earth.

Feelings of this nature are calculated to strike more forcibly upon the mind of an Englishman, than that of the natives of almost every other country (continental of course); not that the sensations of our countrymen are more acute—not that they can feel a greater attachment to the soil of their birth than the denizens of any other land, nor boast of greater patriotism or love for their kindred—yet there is something in the very position of our Island, which renders a return to her shores a thousand times more impressive than a mere transit from one continental state to another. With the exception of the Swiss, the natives of other nations, in returning from a foreign land to that of their birth, have nothing striking or remarkable to attract their attention, or to declare as they look from their carriage window, that they are now within the boundaries of their legitimate sovereign, save indeed the altered livery of the postilion, or the variegated colours of the sentry-boxes and barriers, or the loss he suffers by the difference of the coin. There is nothing extraordinary or sudden in the transition from one principedom to another: the change of language, generally speaking, is gradual; the trees, roads, hills,—in short, all the features of nature, bear more or less affinity one to the other; the costume and countenances of the people are not marked by any immediate alteration: in fact, if he can sleep well in a carriage, a Dane may travel from Copenhagen to Naples, or a Frenchman from Marseilles to Petersburg, without being aware of his having quitted his native country, though he may have passed through the dominions, and heard “God save the King” played, or rather squeaked, on the posthorns of a hundred different potentates. On the other hand, an Englishman can alone attain the soil of his forefathers by a complete transition and change of elements. The boisterous roaring of the gale, the angry lashing of the waves of the boundless ocean, is the music which accompanies him to the sea-girt shores of his fatherland. He must risk the dangers of the mighty deep, he must expose himself to the mercy of the storm, and the caprices of the winds, ere he can hope to fold within his arms the wife or child who tremblingly awaits his return.

Wafted by favourable winds and a smooth sea, the

gallant vessel which conveyed Herbert to England, had made the shores of Cornwall during the night ; and Herbert felt as though his heart would have bounded from his bosom, when upon rising in the morning, which was peculiarly serene and brilliant for the season of the year, and going upon deck, he found they were about to enter the noble harbour of Plymouth, and, in fact, that they were then passing the narrow channel between the angle of the Breakwater and the shelving banks of Mount Edgumbe. As the ship, urged forward by wind and tide, appeared to fly almost through the water towards the anchorage, Herbert gave a hasty but delighted look at the scene around him. On the right, far above a mile, extended the rough and broken points of that mighty barrier, which the genius of man has so successfully opposed to the fury of the ocean, over whose black and rugged points the furious billows continually reared their foaming summits, and appeared to clash and burst together as if in fits of maddening but impotent rage at the obstruction offered to their progress ; while the bosom of the bay within appeared as calm and unagitated as the surface of some inland lake. On the left, the crags and banks of Mount Edgumbe, feathered with forest timber, or clothed with evergreens, whose branches almost swept the surf from the ocean ; its green walks, its picturesque sites, temples, and the distant mansion embosomed in the woods, presented a striking contrast with the red and barren cliffs of the opposite strand, whence every now and then the loud explosions of the miners came pealing on the ear, as huge masses of granite were torn and blasted from their rocky beds, for the purpose of increasing the artificial rampart which the genius of Rennie was raising as a proud monument to the greatness of his country. As the vessel entered deeper in the bay, the neighbouring island appeared more distinctly to detach itself from the main land, and reared its castellated summit from the bosom of the calm basin in which it was embedded, masking the shores of Devonshire, and concealing hundreds of vessels which lay sheltered beneath its protection. Far to the right, the Sound stretched forth its noble bosom, in which several huge ships of war were seen in quiet and secure repose ; while

to the left, the towns of Plymouth and Devonport extended across the hills, intersected with churches, steeples, batteries, and public edifices, and disclosing, as if in its very bosom, a forest of masts which sprung from the vast arsenal at their feet, giving a noble picture of the gigantic power and naval grandeur of the nation. No sooner had Herbert passed through the hands of the custom-house officers, than he threw himself into a post-chaise, and in a few minutes was on his road to London at the moderate rate of ten miles an hour.

Lady Milton, who had remained in town, (long since deserted by the fashionable world,) to receive her son, continued, for several days prior to his arrival, in a state of feverish anxiety, dreading lest accident or misfortune should retard his return. At length the long-expected vehicle drew up before the house—hastily she rung the bell, sprung to the door, and bounded down the stairs with the agility of fifteen. In one instant Herbert, accompanied by his huge and faithful preserver, sprung from the chaise into the hall, and in another was locked in the embraces of his affectionate and doating parent. “My dearest mother!” “My dear, dear child!” was all that either of the parties could utter for some time; and such was the violence of Lady Milton’s emotion, at the certainty of once more folding to her bosom her only and dear loved son, that she was scarcely prevented from fainting by shedding a flood of tears, which relieved her overflowing heart, though she still clung to the bosom of the young and handsome soldier with all the tenderness of maternal love. In the mean time his noble dog, who was unaccustomed to witness such scenes, and was perhaps jealous of these marks of tenderness bestowed by his master on Lady Milton, now came up wagging his tail, and raising himself on his hind legs, placed his paw on Herbert’s shoulder, and half whining, half growling, licked his face, as if requesting to be introduced. “Ah!” exclaimed Herbert, as he shook his huge favourite from his shoulder, “dearest mother, I ought at once to have introduced my brave preserver to your notice;” and then turning to the dog, he added “*Chucho, essa es mi madre.*” The noble animal, as if he really understood the meaning of the

words, uttered a kind of pleasurable bark, and then scampered round the room as fast as his vast size would permit, to the imminent jeopardy of the china and furniture; after which, crouching at the feet of Lady Milton, he looked up in her face, and appeared to await some mark of recognition. Then, as her Ladyship, half-trembling, stooped to caress him, she exclaimed, "Noble animal! I shall ever love you as the saviour of my son," the good-natured and faithful beast crept closer to her feet, and laying his head upon her shoe, whined and licked the ground.

The pleasure which Herbert's return afforded not only to his mother, but to the whole household, who were now assembled in the hall, was marked in their smiling countenances. Every soul in the house, from the kitchen to the garret, had stolen into the passage; all made some excuse for being present. Many were the curious faces which, if they did not come forward, were seen peeping from behind the doors. All those servants who had been long in Lady Milton's service were devotedly attached to Herbert;—kind, condescending, and affable in his manners, liberal in his presents, he had won all their hearts, so that those who had been hired since his departure, were inclined to worship him, upon the reports which they heard of his generosity, kindness, and condescension, from their fellow-servants. The story of his adventure at Lisbon had lost nothing of its terrible accompaniments on its passage from the drawing-room, through that of the housekeeper, to the servants' hall, and, in fact, was looked upon by all as infinitely more miraculous than the defeat of the Philistines. The maids kept smirking and smiling at a distance, exclaiming, "Dear! what a beautiful young gentleman!" while the men, like true Englishmen, were examining from the corner of their eyes the small hand which they had heard killed a dozen men at a blow; and then the dog, which ate them up afterwards.

Among the first who claimed the notice of Herbert, was the old housekeeper, who had been his nurse; and had accompanied Lady Milton to and from India. Smoothing down her silk apron, half crying and half giggling with pleasure at the sight of Master Herbert, she no sooner saw

him released from the embraces of his mother, than she came up to him, and in a moment was fondly recognised.

"Lord, my dear Master Herbert," said the old woman, "how the sun has burned your sweet face! dear, we must wash it with milk of roses to take out the freckles! Bless me! there's the nasty cut the villains gave you. Lord love you, my darling, how you have changed!"

"Not for you, at least, Martin," exclaimed Herbert, as he again kindly embraced the faithful servant.

"No, God love your handsome face, I do not mean that," answered she; "only you're grown so brown, and so manly-like. I always told my Lady, when you was two years old, says I, my Lady, 'His hair will be as dark as your own when he grows up,' though it was as white as snow then; I have got a bit of it here my dear, in this locket; I cut it off the day you were two years and thirty days old, and that's now twenty-four years ago and five months, come next fourth of December."

There is no knowing how long Mrs. Martin might have continued her twaddle, had not the old butler, who had been footman to Lady Milton's father, now put in his claim for recognition.

"Ah, my old boy!" exclaimed Herbert, shaking the fat butler by the hand, "how d'ye do? how goes it with the gout and the brewing? I bring you letters from your sons. George was made sergeant-major of my regiment before I came away, and, if he goes on well, is sure of a commission."

"Thanks to your goodness, more than his own merit," answered the honest servant; "though it is indeed a great honour to be sergeant-major of a regiment of Guards; and I believe he's better there, and more respected, mayhap, than if he were to get a commission."

"I'll answer for his doing well wherever he is," answered Herbert; "no one will forget his brave conduct at the battle of ———"

"I did hear say," said the butler, with a tear of pride and satisfaction in his eye, "that he did conduct himself like a brave lad there."

"Brave!" exclaimed Herbert: "if he had been in the French service, he would have received a cross of honour

immediately, and have been made an officer on the spot : why man, when the regiment on our left was thrown into confusion, and overpowered by numbers, half their officers being killed or wounded, your son himself, at the head of their grenadiers, rallied them, made head against the cavalry, collected the remains of the battalion into a square, charged with them, took a gun, and then returned to us with the same coolness as if he had been merely marching off a guard."

This short account of the young man's gallantry filled the worthy father's eyes with tears, and he would have overpowered his young master with his thanks, had not one of the footmen requested Herbert would have the kindness to speak to his dog :—the fact was, the Corporal finding himself not only entirely forgotten, but among a number of strangers, who were all frightened at him, had quietly returned, and crept into the post-chaise, in which Herbert's cloak still remained, and there seated and maintained himself, in despite of the coaxing of the servants, and entreaties of the postilion, keeping them all at a distance by the mere vibration of his tail, and the irritation of the bristles on his back ; nor was it until Herbert ordered him to his side, that he would abandon the vehicle, which, as he had travelled in it for upwards of twenty-four hours, he now probably looked upon as his home.

Before Lady Milton and her son separated for the night, it was determined that they should remain in town for a few days, and that Herbert should then accompany his mother to Milton Park, which, with the estate and mansion, had formerly belonged to a branch of the family, but had been sold by its possessor, and again re-purchased by Sir Herbert's direction. From thence, Herbert intended to continue his tour to the houses of different friends, from whom he found pressing invitations awaiting his return. It may be well imagined, that the paramount thought in the mind of Herbert, on reaching London, was that of seeing Emily, and he was on the point of putting on his hat to proceed to Park-lane on the following morning, when he was met by his friend Sidney, who was hastening to congratulate him on his safe arrival, and who, after the first salutation, exclaimed, " Berty, I see by your eye

what you want to know ; she is not in town ; they are down at Merryford, with the Dropmores."

In spite of his attempts to conceal his chagrin, Herbert showed how much he was annoyed by this intelligence, which would perhaps render their meeting a case of uncertainty for some months, as he was not intimate with the Dropmore family, where Sidney informed him Emily intended passing the greater part of the winter.

"Write to Mrs. Walden, my dear fellow, and give a broad hint you wish to see them, and I'll bet you a *pony* they are in town in less than a week ; women can always find excuses. But seriously, Herbert, since there is no longer any secret between us on this subject, tell me, fairly, what are your intentions ; it is evident, there can be no doubt, Miss Manby is as much in love with you as you can desire, and I think it is but fair you should come to a conclusion one way or other, and the sooner the better."

"My intention is to await my father's arrival, who will certainly, I find, be at home in the spring ; and if he gives his consent, there can be no doubt as to what I shall do."

"But in the mean time, if you meet Miss Manby, do you intend going on sighing and ogling like a schoolboy passing a pastrycook's shop, or shall you bid at once ? I well know my advice is, never worth two-pence, but I should recommend your first confessing yourself to Miss Manby, and then waiting for absolution from the Padre afterwards. Egad, Berty ! one would think you were going to marry your father instead of the prettiest girl in London : but here comes your cousin Alfred ; I see his cabriolet at the door ; I take it he knows as much of the matter as I do ; but *entre nous*, Herbert, mind what you are at ; beware, I say, of the snake in the grass !"

Before Herbert could demand an explanation of his friend's hints, the door opened, and Alfred embraced his cousin with a degree of warmth and affection that appeared really to flow from his heart. The conversation between the young men turned entirely upon fashionable intelligence, the "what's what" of London life, the arrangements for winter, the marriages, divorces, and scandal of the past season ; and, in half an hour, Herbert had

received a tolerable account of all the remarkable events which had occurred since his departure. Alfred, however, made not the slightest allusion to the name of Emily, or indeed to any family matter; but proposed that he should send his cabriolet to wait for them at White's, and that they should all walk to look at a horse or two, which Sidney had recommended to his friend; as well as to sundry tailors, boot-makers, and hatters, who were in no small degree necessary to a man of fashion, after a three year's campaign in Spain. We must leave the young men to discuss the merits of splints, spavins, and wind-galls, while we return for a short time to Emily, who at this moment was in a state of great anxiety and nervousness at Merryford.

Having buoyed up her heart with the hope of seeing Herbert almost immediately after the fête at Beau Regard, her distress and vexation were proportionably great when she heard of his illness; nor was her agitation at all diminished by the certainty with which she flattered herself of being the object of Herbert's affections. This, certainly, she had not only heard from the mouth of Alfred, but her friend Madame de Geigenklang had not wasted much time in acting up to the wishes of Mr. Milton. In the course of four or five days subsequent to the *déjeûné*, the Baroness invited Emily to dine with her, and offered to *chaperone* her in the evening to Almack's. No sooner had the two ladies retired from the dining-room, than the Baroness commenced her attack.

"Well, my dear," said she, "so my *Tenor* and my music are coming over directly, in spite of the brigante; *Osmino trionferà*, he will throw himself at your feet, you blush, he kisses your hand—her will say, '*Rendite ben mio*'—you will make no reply—silence gives consent, and you are married—grand finale."

Emily did indeed blush deeply; and though she could scarcely avoid smiling at the Baroness's programme of what she considered likely to occur, yet she attempted to make a defensive answer.

"Lord! my dear," continued the Baroness, "I know all about it; you are *sospirando di notte di giorno* for this *amor vincitore*. Ah! the very thought of it kills me."

I used to sigh and groan so horridly about the Baron, indeed I was very nearly crying two or three times, and I could never see the Romeo, or hear that beautiful air of '*Ombra adorata aspetta*,' without thinking I saw the Baron dying for love, in a cellar, or a vault, or some shocking old place."

"My dear Baroness," rejoined Emily, "I hope that our history will not be quite so tragic; though I fear Sir Herbert Milton's animosity to my poor father will overcome his affection for his son?"

"Nonsense, my dear; you like Herbert, as you call it, very much; he loves you, as he calls it, '*à la mort*;' and he has authorized me to propose for him, that is to say, I am convinced he will be very much obliged to me for taking the trouble off his hands. Lord! my dear—by-the-by, what a nuisance it must be for a man to propose! it is quite bad enough to listen to a proposition; I declare I trembled like Leporello when the ghost nodded his head: but tell me, will you have this man for your wedded husband; come, say yes, and we will go at once to Carcons and order the *trousseau*."

"I fear, my dear Baroness, I must reject your proposal," answered Emily: "surely, since you will have me speak the truth, you, my kind friend, would not urge me to accept any man against the wishes of his parents—you, of all others, who set so good an example?"

"Oh! my dear," exclaimed the Baroness, interrupting her, "do not talk of my example; *qual fiero tormento*, the very idea of it quite *squarcia mio core*; besides, there was a great difference between my postponing the Baron to please my own poor father, whom I dearly loved, and your refusing Herbert, out of deference to his old, horrid bilious papa, whom you have every reason to hate; moreover, you are mistress of a very comfortable fortune, and I had not a sous."

"Fortune," rejoined Emily, "is the last thing I think of; but still, if I had millions, I never could be happy, if I thought I was the cause of dissensions between my husband and his family! I own," continued she, blushing deeply, "I confess I do love, have loved Colonel Milton, for many years."

"Well, my dear," said the Baroness, before the sentence was finished, "and if you love him, can you bear the idea of delivering him up, to be devoured by those Lady Bossvilles, who would have no scruples in running away with him, in spite of twenty fathers, if they were certain of his fortune?"

"I would rather perish; I would rather my heart should break; I would rather see him the happy husband of Lady Susan, than consent to become his wife, if our marriage were to entail disgrace and ruin upon him; at least, I should have the consolation of having done my duty; and though my death ensued, I should extract even from Sir Herbert himself, that approbation which he refused to me living."

"Oh! my dear Emily," rejoined the Baroness, really affected by the earnestness of her young friend's manner, "you are a dear good girl, and old Milton's a horrid cross old tyrant!—I hope he will die of bile directly; but even if he should not, I assure you, that you exaggerate greatly his objections. I know, from the most undeniable source, that, although he might perhaps refuse his assent before, and perhaps *boulder* a little after, he would forgive you both in less than a month:—really, my love, you carry your scruples too far."

"You cannot disapprove of my motives; you cannot, surely, condemn my resolution?"

"Yes, my dear, I do excessively," retorted the Baroness: "if you persist in this horrid determination, you'll drive my poor *Tenor* mad; he'll lose his voice, or starve himself to death. No, no; you must promise me you will accept him; I will answer for old papa Milton, and, you know, my dear Lady Milton thinks you are perfection."

"Nothing can be more flattering to me than the idea of being looked upon favourably by Lady Milton," replied Emily; "but I can plainly see by her constrained manner when we meet, that she participates in her husband's sentiments of animosity: and Mrs. Walden assures me I am the only person in all England who must not, dare not, think of Colonel Milton."

"Mrs. Walden is an old twaddle!" retorted the Baroness;

"she knows nothing about the matter ; but you may do as you please : but do, there 's a good girl, let me tell Herbert, the moment he arrives, that you consent."

"I will not consent," answered Emily mildly, "to take any steps before Sir Herbert's return ; it shall not be said that I took advantage of the influence I might possess over Colonel Milton's mind, to induce him to hurry into a marriage during his father's absence :—no, my dear Baroness, I am not ashamed to avow, I have long loved, and suffered in silence ; I have loved without the hope of a return ; and now that I have almost obtained the certainty of being dear to the only man I could ever love, this knowledge is enough to ensure my present happiness, and to give me courage to wait in patience for the return of Sir Herbert."

"Well, my dear," replied the other, "you may perhaps be satisfied with this phantom possession ;—but what does La Bruyere say about love and fire ?—'that it requires constant fanning or it will go out,' or something of that sort ; at all events, love requires feeding ;—apropos, how uncommonly good the *filets de soles* were to-day ;—and so, if you allow Herbert to starve or grow cold, he will probably take up 'mit some other yonk lady,' as Mrs. Dunsten says ; and then, my dear, there will be an end of the whole affair."

"Nothing, my dear friend, shall induce me to take any step before Sir Herbert's return," rejoined Emily.

"Perhaps, my love," answered the good-natured hostess—"perhaps you are right to wait till the old Rajah comes home ; but if then he refuse, take my advice, marry Herbert, *bon gré mal gré*, and I will guarantee the nabob's assent in a month afterwards. I should not urge you to this step, unless I was convinced of his ultimate forgiveness ; and I am certain, if you were to persist in your refusal, Herbert would die of a broken heart, or go out with the man who is so fond of ice, and be frozen up among the whales and the *montagnes Russes*, or marry an Esquimaux princess, or break his neck hunting seals upon sea-horses."

Emily could not help smiling at the *imbroglio* which her friend made of a North Pole expedition.

"My love, it's no laughing matter, I assure you; he may, perhaps, in despair, set off to Timbuctoo, and marry a hundred and fifty black sultanas, if he does not die of the black fever. How should you like to see him driving about in his carriage, with half-a-dozen great, fat, soot-coloured queens scratching each others' eyes out, to sit next him?—then, good God! the horror of their music, only two notes, no idea of thorough bass, or Logier's system; no other instruments but drums and flutes, made out of the skins and bones of dead men!"

They were now interrupted by the gentlemen, who came in from the dining-room; and as soon as coffee was over, the carriages were ordered, and the party started for Almack's.

After undergoing all the preliminary pleasures; waiting for nearly an hour in the "string" of vehicles, which commenced at the bottom of Albermarle-street;—after having been regaled with the charming accompaniments of the oaths of footmen, as the poles rattled among their unbooted legs, in despite of the precautions of bolts and barricadoes; the slashings, and execrations of coachmen, as they cut into the line, or were foiled in their attempts by the vigilance of those who formed a part of it; the remonstrances and threats of masters as they heard the horrid grating of a hind-wheel scarifying the pannels of their new equipage; and, to sum up the whole, the screams of the Baroness, who, being a dreadful coward, always gave vent to her terror, first by loud exclamations, and then by pinching her neighbour as green as calipash: after all these additional and common introductions to the pleasures of a London ball, the party at length landed under the awning in King-street; and having delivered their tickets to the watchful Cerberus on the right hand, they were proceeding up-stairs, when their attention was attracted, and they were in no small degree amused, by a dialogue between a young nobleman and the guardian of the entrance.

"My Lord," exclaimed Mr. Whiffler to the Peer, "I am sorry, but we cannot possibly allow you to go up-stairs."

"Not allow me to go up-stairs! Why, what do you

mean?" replied the nobleman; "is my ticket a forgery, or have I given you a wrong one?"

"Neither, my Lord, neither; your Lordship's ticket is perfectly in order, but it is the costume we allude to."

"Costume, Sir!" exclaimed the Peer; "why, how long have you been established as a judge of dress?"

"The Ladies Patronesses," rejoined Mr. Whiffler, "have given us most positive injunctions not to permit any gentlemen to enter the room in loose trowsers, unless they are Privy-counselors, or Knights of the Garter."

"What excessive nonsense!" rejoined Lord Taunton, looking at his dress, which he had flattered himself was the height of perfection, especially his cravat, which in despite of eleven failures, had at length succeeded, and presented one of those neat flat cross-bows, held together by a turquoise-headed pin, which it requires such long practice to attain with perfection, and in the arrangement of which not above six or seven men in London were ever looked upon as decided masters. "How ridiculous," continued his Lordship, "to subject one to these whims and caprices! why do not the Ladies print on the vouchers the kind of dress they wish one to wear? I shall certainly not return now, Sir."

"Of course, your Lordship must act as you think proper," rejoined the powdered guardian, "but we shall feel it our duty to report the circumstance to their Ladyships, who will use their own discretion in the matter."

"One would think one was coming to a Caledonian ball, instead of Almack's," rejoined Lord Taunton; "why what do the old cats mean?"

"Oh, it is all that delightful person, Princess Nasowitch," whispered the Baroness in Lord Taunton's ear; "she always chooses her friends and her footmen from the size of their legs;—she is a sort of Catherine in her way."

"In that case," rejoined the Peer, "I must forthwith order some *mollets postiches*, or I have no chance of entering into her good graces."

As soon as the ladies had mounted the stairs, and deposited the cloaks and shawls, Mr. Whiffler again made an attempt to arrest the ascent of Lord Taunton.

"If we may take the liberty to suggest," said the man, "we should strongly recommend your Lordship's not appearing before their Ladyships in your present costume; if your Lordship will have the kindness to return home and change it, we will take upon ourselves to admit you after the established hour; indeed, my Lord, we have been already obliged to send back several gentlemen for the same reason."

"More fools they for submitting to such nonsense! and I request, Mr. Whiffler, you will do me the favour another time to take my ticket, and be less prodigal of your remarks," answered Lord Taunton, as he followed the Baroness and Emily into the room.

The clock had in the mean time struck eleven, and the door of admission was immediately closed:—scarcely, however, was the bolt drawn, ere a knock was heard.

"Who is there?" exclaimed the guardian, peeping through the little grating; "who is it that comes at this unseasonable hour?"

"Mr. Stanwell," replied a voice from the other side.

"I am very sorry, Sir, but you are too late; the clock has struck eleven."

"But I am a member!" rejoined the appellant.

"Extremely sorry, Sir, but there has been no house this evening," was the reply of the guardian.

"But this is ridiculous!" exclaimed the other; "I could not get up before, from the length of the string."

"The last carriage has set down above half a minute!" repeated the sentinel coolly.

"Do you mean to say, Sir, that I am not to be let in, because I happen to arrive one moment too late; this is carrying your impudence, and the nonsense of the Patronesses too far: I shall certainly report your insolence to them to-morrow."

"Sorry, very sorry," rejoined Mr. Whiffler coolly, "to give offence;—regret, but cannot avoid; we have their Ladyships' orders to take down the names of all those gentlemen who come too late, and all those who appear in this list are to be excluded for one subscription. Their Ladyships are determined, since their husbands cannot produce a reform in Parliament, that they at least will intro-

duce a reform in the London hours!" and so saying, he quietly walked away from the door, leaving Mr. Stanwell no other resource but to retire quietly to one of the neighbouring clubs, to vent his anger at whist. Scarcely, however, had he removed from the spot, ere a loud knocking was again heard at the door: without, however, hurrying himself in proportion to the loudness of the appeal to his ears, Mr. Whiffler again approached the grating, and demanded what was wanted.

"Open the door for the Duke of——."

"I can't," replied Mr. Whiffler, "unless it is one of the Royal Family."

"It's I," now exclaimed a voice, "the Duke of Gloria!"

"My Lord, your Grace; I am extremely sorry, your Grace, but it is more than three minutes and fifteen seconds too late; it would be at my peril to admit any body after this hour."

"But I am just returned from a Cabinet Council," replied the Duke,—"it was impossible for me to arrive sooner."

"I will refer you to the by-laws, if your Grace desires me," rejoined the man of tickets; "but I can take upon myself to say, there is no exception made whatever for any but members of the houses of Peers and Commons when there is a debate: their Ladyships have come to the most positive determination, that their standing orders shall not be broken through under any pretext or excuse whatever. Your Grace will, I trust, see how utterly impossible it is for me to open the door without orders from above."

"Well then, go; zounds!" exclaimed the Duke in a rage, "go and tell them I come from the council, and do not keep me standing in the cold all night."

"I will attend to your Grace's instructions," replied Mr. Whiffler; "and if your Grace will step into the larger room down-stairs upon parole, your Grace—while I consult their Ladyships, I will open the door."

The Duke condescended to comply with the important guardian's proposition, and the latter slowly walked upstairs, and then addressed Lady Dossington, whom he found sitting on one of the elevated seats near the entrance.

"My Lady," said Mr. Whiffler, "there's his Grace the Duke of Gloria below; he wishes to know if your Ladyships will permit him to come up-stairs."

"Has he forgotten his ticket?" demanded her Ladyship, pursing up her mouth, and looking extremely solemn, while both her daughters whispered,

"Shut him out, mamma; he has no business to forget any thing;—besides, it will be such a good joke!"

"No, my Lady, replied Whiffler, "he has got his ticket, but the hour has struck."

"What is the clock?" demanded the Patroness.

"Five minutes, twenty-nine seconds past eleven, by your Ladyship's chronometer," rejoined the man.

"Was there any thing going on in the House of Peers?" inquired Lady Dossington.

"Nothing, my Lady," answered the other; "our messenger reported that their Lordships were not in sufficient number to constitute a house; and I understand, my Lady, that their Lordships have come to an agreement not to sit on your Ladyship's nights."

"A very proper decision!" exclaimed the lady: "you will inform his Grace, Mr. Whiffler, that the Ladies Patronesses, having taken his case into consideration, regret extremely that they are under the necessity of adhering to their rules."

"Oh! I forgot to inform your Ladyship," answered the man, "that his Grace desired me to say he was detained by the Council."

"I am very sorry, rejoined her Ladyship, with infinite solemnity, "but we cannot permit the Council to interfere with our regulations. Their Lordships must either sit earlier, or renounce meeting upon an Almack's night, if they wish to be admitted here."

"It's very absurd that they can't choose some other time, when they have all the week at their disposal!" added the daughters.

Mr. Whiffler was about to quit the awful Patroness, when he said, (certainly forgetting that the Duke was cooling his heels down-stairs, amidst the footmen,) "I had almost omitted to mention to your Ladyship, that Lord Taunton would force himself up-stairs, improperly dressed, in despite of your Ladyship's injunctions."

"How is he dressed?" demanded her Ladyship, frowning.

"In longs, my Lady," was the answer.

"In longs! how highly improper!" rejoined the Patroness: "what, tight?"

"No, my Lady; loose."

"Loose! how indecent!" exclaimed the Ladies Bosville; "dear mamma, do have him sent away."

"Did you communicate our orders?" demanded Lady Dossington.

"Yes, my Lady: I told him that your Ladyships had no decided objection to longs, if they were tights; but if they were loose, they must be shorts: but he treated me with indifference, and walked into the room."

"If any one again attempts to intrude themselves in such an improper dress, I request you will call in the civil power, Mr. Whiffler; and in the mean time, unless his Lordship makes an apology to the committee, he shall have no more tickets."

Mr. Whiffler now proceeded down-stairs to communicate his orders to the Duke, who very good-naturedly laughed at this most important message, and, ordering his carriage, left the house.

The ball of this evening passed off as all other balls at the same place, creating envy, jealousy, and hatred in the minds of many of those who have been unsuccessful in procuring tickets; affording real amusement to few, and disappointing a greater portion of those who, by dint of manœuvring, petitioning, parliamentary interests, or presents, have been enabled to obtain the desired vouchers; and as this was one of the last balls of the season, and a general election already talked of, the mixture of company and the number was much greater than usual; and, consequently, it was what the most correct persons called, "horrid bad Almack's!"