

I had better relate the circumstance for him ; which I am enabled to do from having witnessed, in a measure, its commencement and end."

"A glass of champagne, before you begin," said the host.

"Not with *fondue*, my good Sir," replied Alfred, "bring me the Volnay."

After drinking a part of the glass, with which he did not appear half so *extasié* as his host expected, who had accompanied the demand by saying, "Ah ! do try the Volnay, it is capital ; it cost me eight guineas a dozen !" Alfred narrated Mr. Nettley's adventure nearly as follows :—

"As I was dressing one day in the summer, to dine with one of my constituents, who lived in the fields near Bloomsbury Square, and to whom I was obliged to sacrifice myself once during the season, Charles Nettley, who would receive no denial from the *valet-de-chambre*, walked into my dressing-room, declaring his intention of dining with me. 'I am sorry, Charles,' said I, 'but I dine out; my carriage is at the door.' Then order me a cutlet, a few truffles, an apricot tart, and a bottle of the light Bourdeaux ; and I will amuse myself until you return. We will then go down to Brook's together.' 'It's rather unfortunate, my good fellow, but Mariné is gone to Cramwell's, to assist his cook in making preparations for the *déjeuner* on Friday, and I have given permission to all the servants to go Astley's.'—'Hem ! where then are you going yourself.'—'Into the city.'—'Take me with you : your soap-boiler, or sugar-refiner, or whatever he may be, will be enchanted to see me. Some marriage speculation, eh, Alfred ?'—'*Nicht möglich mein Lieber !* In the first place, there is nothing hymeneal in my plans ; and in the next, they are people with whom I neither choose to take any liberty myself, or permit them any pretext of familiarity with me.'—'Well, then,' rejoined Nettley, after a little consideration, 'I will drive with you. I do not feel hungry ; and as I have not seen the new farce of the *Gastronome sans Argent*, your carriage can set me down at the play, and I will sup with you at Watier's afterwards.' To this I assented, and in a few minutes we

were rattling down Oxford-street, as fast as my high-stepping roans could convey us. As we approached the vicinity of the plebeian squares, Nettley pulled the check-string and requested the coachman to slacken his pace, during which time he carefully examined the windows on either side the street. As the vehicle entered Russel Square, or 'Parchment Park,' as Nettley had baptised this handsome portion of the metropolis, he exclaimed, 'There, there! that will do. Pull up, coachman, at the house which is lighted : ' where, in fact, a large party were seen, through the Venetian blinds, assembling in the dining-room. 'The drive has given me an appetite,' said he; 'there I shall dine; so, John, rap very loud, and announce me as Lord Nettley.'—'Do you know the people?' said I. 'Que Dieu m'en preserve!' was the reply. 'Well, then, you cannot be serious in your intention of going in? Why, this is carrying your *sang froid* too far: they will kick you out of the door, or throw you out of the window! You must be mad!'—'Never was more in my senses, or in better order to attack that turbot; look at the rogue how he blushes at the idea of our being acquainted! However, there is no time to lose, the door opens; so adieu! call for me as you return; and if you wish to see how jollily these good people live, come in—I will introduce you!' In spite of my remonstrances, he jumped from the carriage, and in another second the door of the house closed upon him. I naturally concluded that Nettley would quickly be turned out of the house, and directed my coachman to wait at the angle of the square; but there being no symptom of his appearance, I drove on, dined, and at eleven o'clock returned to ask if my friend was still there. The windows were open, and I saw the whole party, men and women, still in the drawing-room, and, to my astonishment, Charles Nettley at the top of the table doing the honours, while shouts of laughter echoed even into the street. In fact, when I sent in to say I was waiting, the whole party positively insisted not only upon his remaining, but upon my entering! Being disposed to witness the feats of Master Nettley, in I went, and found him in the act of finishing one of his extempore songs, which had been received with great applause. The

individual, who was a candidate for the shrievalty, appeared as much delighted as a king on his birth-day with the panegyric of a Poet Laureate. In short, it was with some difficulty that, in the course of two hours, we were able to tear ourselves from the good people,—men, women, and children accompanying us to the carriage, and insisting upon the Honourable Mr. Nettley's considering all their houses in future as his own; for this purpose his pockets were filled with their respective cards, while the exclamations of 'Wonderful Genius! a second Matthews! quite an Omer!'—

"Odysee, of course!" said Nettley, interrupting him. "Yes, indeed, I flatter myself I never shall want a dinner east of Tottenham-court-road: next to the Bonassus, I am in higher estimation than any foreign production which those secluded people ever saw. Egad! I believe that they would have lent me a few hundreds on personal security, if I had sung them another round of compliments."

"But how did you contrive to establish yourself at first?" demanded one of the gentlemen; "you must have looked like Daniel in the lion's den."

"Why, there was a good deal of gnashing of teeth and clattering of trenchers," replied Nettley; "but in I walked after the footman, who announced me as Lord Nettley; took possession, bowing, of a vacant place; unfolded a napkin; turned round to the she at the top of the table, and commenced by saying, 'I fear, Mrs. Crumpford, I am very late?' then starting from my seat—'Good God! I do not see Mrs. Crumpford!—where am I? what have I done? Lady Nettley's coachman has made a mistake, what shall I do?'—'Crumpford,' replied the man at the bottom of the table: 'God bless you, my Lord! he lives in Finsbury-square.' 'Heavens!' said I, 'what shall I do? The carriage is gone—I am so shocked—it must appear so strange!'—'Not a bit, not a bit, my Lord: if your Lordship will do us the honour of remaining here, and partaking of our potluck,' rejoined the same monster, whose name, Jorrocks, I had read on a huge brass plate on the door, 'we shall be much flattered.' 'Do, my Lord, pray!' exclaimed his wife. 'Mr. Joller,' continued the husband, 'make room there by Mrs. Jorrocks for

my Lord. My Lord, pray do Mrs. Jorrocks the honour to sit by her? My dear, squeeze in a little into Mr. Hopkins!' In short, in five minutes more I had become extremely well at home with half the party, had devoured a plate of turtle, swallowed some ice punch, saw a turbot, smelt a haunch, and heard the pop of a bottle of champagne. In fact, by dint of old jokes, stale stories, a few songs, some imitations of actors, and a few other dinner-hunter's tricks, I succeeded in winning the hearts of the whole party; nor was their admiration diminished by their discovering that I was not a real lord, but only next in tail. In short, when Alfred arrived, I believe they would rather have given a few hundreds than have parted with me."

"I never heard of such a *coup de main* in my life!" observed Lord Ernest.

"Rather say a *coup de bouche*; for I hate dining at my own expense as much as you do hunting at yours," Nettley answered.

Silverton, who had more than once expressed great impatience during the narration of this adventure, now hinted that it was nearly eleven. Coffee and its usual attendant of *chasse*, or *pousse*, as Lord Ernest persisted in calling it, quoting the Academy, Boiste, Cattel, and half-a-dozen more authorities, was now brought in, and the carriages being ordered, the whole party adjourned to St. James's-street, where Silverton was requested to wait a few minutes in his carriage until the ballot was over; and then some one would go down and introduce him in due form.

Ascending the stairs, and entering the large room immediately over that renowned bay window, so terrible to the minor beaux and pseudo fine men of London, (and in passing which, many a Guardsman, who had confronted without trembling the deadly breach, or awful charge, even felt his nerves somewhat agitated,) the party found the implements for balloting already prepared.

On the large table, amidst Court Guides, Red Books, Peerages, and new publications, stood the two probationary boxes, their respective apertures wide opening their spacious jaws, (as dark and dismal as the mouth of Acheron itself,) appeared yawning to devour the balls, which

were destined in a few minutes to determine the fate of the two candidates. Immediately over each of these awe-inspiring caverns, on either side of which, "No" and "Yes" appeared smiling and frowning at each other, like the gates of Elysium and the portal of Pandemonium, was affixed a card, on which were inscribed the names of the aspirant, his proposer, and seconder, and to which, in most cases, the last line of Dante's inscription over the entrance of Hell might not irrelevantly have been added. Most of the gentlemen immediately seated themselves to whist—three or four only remaining with their backs to the fire, and their arms under the skirts of their coats, (that truly British attitude,) waiting until the moment for fixing the destiny of their late host should arrive. No sooner had the clock announced the prescribed hour for balloting than the steward entered the apartment, attended by the principal waiter bearing a salver, on which was placed a glass vase containing sundry cork balls, of which one was presented to each of the individuals present. The steward having announced the names of the candidates to those who were too idle to examine the cards themselves, the balloting proceeded. The first gentleman, a young nobleman of high Tory politics, from having only one ball on the *nay* side, was permitted to enjoy another immediate trial; but upon the repetition of the scrutiny, this inimical ball not making its re-appearance, he was declared elected.

"Elected!" exclaimed Lord Ernest, grumbling; "that is very singular! hem!"

"Singular, indeed!" shouted two or three voices, laughing; "so you did not know your right hand from your left? Caught doing a good natured thing in spite of your teeth!" All the party joined in the laugh against his Lordship, who retired into a corner of the room, inwardly vowing to revenge himself on the next victim.

It was now Mr. Silvertown's turn to pass the ordeal; and upon his name being announced, together with that of Herbert as his seconder, and Lord Ernest as his proposer, the latter very coolly observed, "I felt it my duty to acquiesce in presenting this individual's name; but I beg leave to observe, that I do not at all concur in the prayer

of the petitioner ;—so, gentlemen, pray do not permit any feelings of delicacy towards me prevent your pelting him until he becomes as spotted as Lady Camarel's Holy Alliance horses !”

“ I would as soon trust to the mercy of King Ferdinand, if I were a Spanish exile, as have my name proposed by you at any club in London,” said Sidney very quietly to Lord Ernest ; “ more men have been black-balled from having your name attached to them, than would constitute a battalion.”

“ My good Sir ! I cannot help people asking me to propose them, but it is certainly in my power to act as I please at the ballot. It is extraordinary that men should delude themselves into an idea of my being bound to say *yea*, to every tiger who wishes to be admitted. It is their own affair if they solicit me to propose ; it is mine, however, if I choose to punish them for their presumption : besides—”

“ You wish to give them a trial, eh ?” added Sidney, interrupting him.

“ I wish I had been aware of the good-nature of your Lordship's disposition,” said Herbert, “ and I should have advised Silverton to choose not only some more popular proposer, but some one more candid and fair than yourself.”

“ Do you mean to say,” rejoined Lord Ernest, becoming extremely pale, and biting his lip, “ that you cast any reflection on my honour, Sir ?”

“ Your Lordship,” replied Herbert calmly, “ must feel conscious of having deserved some reflection on your behaviour to the gentleman you have proposed, or you would not thus attempt to misinterpret my words or vote. Your Lordship is quite at leisure to attach whatever meaning you please to my expression :—I am not in the habit of retracting my remarks when once uttered, or of uttering them unguardedly.”

“ This must be settled elsewhere,” said his Lordship, retiring to another part of the room, and calling to his side Colonel Molewurf, a man who, in disposition, character, and selfishness, was the very prototype of his friend, Lord Ernest ; and, if possible, as much disliked in society

as he was hated and detested by the officers of his regiment; in which corps, his extreme unpopularity was felt even amid the lowest ranks of the soldiers. In the mean time, the ballot was completed; and upon the drawers being opened, the steward declared "Mr. Silverton not elected;—eleven balls!"

"How many white?" demanded Herbert.

"Two, Sir," replied the steward.

"We are but twelve here," said Herbert aloud, "and there are thirteen balls. I desire this may be looked to: here has been some foul play. I do not feel inclined to make any quixotic interference," continued he, looking towards the corner where Lord Ernest and his friend had retired, "but I shall hold the person who has played this trick responsible to me, as I have seconded Mr. Silverton. After dining with a man for the express purpose of balloting for him, you, gentlemen, may settle it with your own consciences, if you think it fair to black-ball him:—but two black balls at a time is really carrying the joke too far!"

"We surrender, but do not fight; and as a very small share of your rebuke comes to me, Berty, when divided among so many, I beg you will consider me as a non-belligerent. *Au reste*," added the speaker, Lord Pironel, "I assure you, I did not black-ball him."

"Nor I," added Sidney.

The remaining gentlemen, excepting Lord Ernest and his friend, now avowed that they had certainly black-balled Silverton; but at once declared their indignation at the trick which had been played, which required an immediate explanation.

"But, Herbert," exclaimed one of the gentlemen from the whist-table, "you really do not mean to say that your friend Sam was in earnest? Surely he could not have had the assurance to imagine that he could get in? If I had known that, I certainly should have advised you to withdraw his name."

"If I could have divined what has occurred this evening," replied Herbert, "you may depend upon it, I should have recommended him to have chosen a better proposer, and to have spared himself the trouble of a select dinner party; which appears to have had the effect of

merely making you all more unanimous in black-balling him."

"Oh! but he can easily get into one of the houses in Pall Mall, either the Grand Junction Penitentiary or the Society for Foreigners in Distress!"

"For the first," exclaimed one of the beaux, "he is fully qualified, being a very vulgar fellow; but for the second, I do not believe that he is eligible, as I take it his travels never extended beyond Petty France."

During this time, the steward approached Colonel Milton, and to the astonishment of the latter, very quietly avowed, that the head-waiter, having heard that a party was to dine at Mr. Silverton's, for the purpose of bringing in that gentleman, and having likewise generally understood that the said Mr. Silverton was an excessive tiger, whose admission would probably prove injurious to the club, he (the waiter) fearing lest he should be elected, had himself slipped a black ball into the drawer!

This avowal, which naturally excited Herbert's indignation, had, however, the effect of merely calling forth shouts of laughter from the rest of the party; and he therefore contented himself with informing the steward that the matter must be reported to the committee; and then calling Alfred to him, he said, "Will you have the kindness, my dear Alfred, to inform Lord Ernest that I leave town early to-morrow morning; and that if he has any thing to communicate, it had better be done forthwith?"

Scarcely had he uttered these words ere Colonel Molewurf approached him, and said, "I beg a word with you, Colonel Milton, before you leave the room."

"As many as you please," rejoined Herbert, following Lord Ernest's friend into another apartment, and requesting Alfred to accompany him.

"This is really a most unpleasant affair," said Colonel Molewurf, as they entered the room, "and I fear—"

"Then your nerves are more easily affected than mine," rejoined Herbert; "but as I wish to relieve my friend Silverton as soon as possible from the anxiety which he must be in; and to spare his feelings as much as possible from hearing the manner in which he has been treated by—"

his *friends*, I am anxious to be the first to communicate the intelligence to him :—therefore, pray be brief.”

“My friend, Lord Ernest,” replied the Colonel, “having placed his honour in my hands, I should prefer, Colonel Milton, if you would appoint a second person on your side, to discuss the subject with me, as I feel myself called upon to demand—”

“Demand nothing, in the first place, I beg,” answered Herbert, interrupting him, “lest I should be under the necessity of refusing. In the next, it is quite superfluous for me to appoint a second person ; I am the best judge of what is due to myself ; and if any explanation is necessary, I am the individual best qualified to explain my own expressions, or defend my own conduct.”

“But, my dear Herbert,” observed his cousin, “you know, in all matters of this serious nature, it is the custom to employ the mediation of a second, and surely you may safely trust your honour in my hands ?”

“I doubt not your discretion in the least, Alfred,” rejoined Colonel Milton, “but you must excuse me if I reject your mediation, and merely request you to bear witness to what may take place. If the matter is as serious as you imagine, it is the more urgent that I should decide for myself. Pray do not shut the door,” continued Herbert, addressing Lord Ernest’s envoy ; “the words which appear to have given rise to the explanation you seek, were uttered publicly, and I therefore wish what may now pass between us to be no secret ; so pray proceed !”

“Well then,” rejoined Colonel Molewurf, “I feel myself called upon to request you will state whether you made use of the term ‘dishonourable,’ as applicable to my friend Lord Ernest ; secondly, that you will retract that offensive expression ; and thirdly, that you will make such apology to Lord Ernest, as I may consider satisfactory to his Lordship’s honour :—if not, I do not see any means of avoiding the most unpleasant consequences ; and I beg you will believe, Colonel Milton, that my object in requesting this explanation, which my friend’s character absolutely calls for, is with the view only of saving the effusion of blood.”

“I highly appreciate your humane motives,” half smiling, rejoined Herbert, “and can have no hesitation in replying at once to your questions.”

"I was convinced," answered Colonel Molewurf, "that you would see the necessity of apologizing."

"Pray, allow me to reply," said Herbert, "before you draw any conclusions."

"Certainly! nothing can be more just!" answered the other.

"To your first question then," rejoined Herbert, "I shall reply by repeating my previous observation—had I been aware of the treatment Mr. Silverton has met with from Lord Ernest, I should certainly have recommended him to select a more candid and more fair proposer than his Lordship; and if Lord Ernest, or any other individual here present, considers his Lordship's conduct in this business has been either just or fair to the gentleman he proposed, I will then confess that my ideas of justice and honour are erroneous. What, Sir!" continued Herbert, "propose a man, and then not only be the first to black-ball him, but actually put himself forward to excite others to the same act of ill-nature! If this be considered fair or generous, it is an entirely new interpretation of the code of honour; So much, Sir, for the first question."

"Then," rejoined the envoy, "I am to understand that you did not make use of the term, 'dishonourable,' as applied to my friend, but merely expressed your dissatisfaction generally, relative to the system of proposers black-balling their candidate?"

"You have heard my answer as clearly as it was possible for me to communicate it to you," answered Herbert, "and I shall neither retract nor repeat a syllable. Secondly, I feel it due to myself to declare, once for all, that I will make no apology whatever; but that I must peremptorily demand one from his Lordship for having thus compromised me in this affair:" Herbert calmly added, "I am the last man in the world, Colonel Molewurf, to desire any thing unreasonable, or to refuse myself to any proper accommodation; but, in this matter, I feel that Lord Ernest has behaved with as little regard to my feelings as to those of my friend."

"But, my dear Herbert," exclaimed Alfred, "you cannot suppose Lord Ernest intended to offer you any offence. Egad!" added he, laughing, "I take it you are the last

man in the world he would feel inclined to draw his virgin sword upon !”

“Then,” answered Herbert, “let his Lordship learn that his rank and position in life ought to make him more cautious how he commits himself with those who do not consider their honour, or that of their friends, as a mere plaything. However, Colonel Molewurf, you have heard my ultimatum. I must have his Lordship’s apology before I leave this room, or you and Alfred will settle the hour of our meeting early to-morrow morning ;—*early* it must be, as I have engaged to leave town at nine.”

Herbert’s coolness, the firmness of his replies, and above all, the unexpected demand which he made of an apology, so completely surprised Colonel Molewurf, that he was unable, for a minute or two, to make any reply. After a short pause, however, he said, “I will communicate your answer to my friend, and will use my endeavours to arrange this matter to your mutual satisfaction ;—at the same time, I can have no hesitation in saying that Lord Ernest never contemplated the idea of offering you the slightest offence ; he cannot, therefore, apologize for what he must feel unconscious of having perpetrated, more especially as the whole thing on his side appears to have originated in a joke. I trust, therefore, Colonel Milton, that you will be content with his Lordship’s avowal of his innocence of any offensive intentions, and that you will permit me to state to Lord Ernest that you did not make use of the word ‘dishonourable :’—the matter will then be amicably arranged, and you will, I trust, meet as good friends as ever.”

“Remember,” said Herbert, as the Colonel was about to leave the room, “that I retract nothing ! Construe my words in what sense you please, I will not screen myself under any subterfuge ; and above all, Sir, that I shall expect an unequivocal answer to my demand.”

After the lapse of a few minutes, passed in consultation with his principal, Colonel Molewurf again returned, and stated that he was authorized by Lord Ernest to declare that he had no intention whatever to offer the slightest offence to Herbert ; that had he been aware Colonel Milton had been so anxious for his friend’s admittance, he (Lord Ernest) would have lent him all the assistance in his

power, "Which, by the by," added the Colonel, "would have been of little service, as there would have still remained eight black balls; and between ourselves, though Ernest is my most intimate friend, yet I confess he has not sufficient popularity to influence the vote of any member." Colonel Molewurf concluded by stating that Lord Ernest, on his part, felt satisfied.

"Easily enough, too," whispered Sidney to Alfred.

"*L'Honneur ou Diâble est il allé se nicher*," answered Alfred, "if he is content with such an explanation."

"He is a sneaking fellow," replied Sidney, "and I am delighted Herbert has given him this lesson;—it will bring him down a little. Here he comes, like Adam being walked out of Paradise."

"He looks more like an insolvent receiving his *liccat migrare*."

By this time Lord Ernest, attended by his friend, approached the group of gentlemen who had assembled round Herbert. Holding out his hand, and affecting an air of ease and indifference, he said "I regret that you should have felt any annoyance at my adding my black ball to the collection prepared for your friend, and I assure you I had not the most distant idea of offending you; therefore, think no more of it, I pray!"

"And I," replied Herbert, "merely touching the extremity of the proffered hand, with an air of contempt, rather than coolness, "equally regret that your Lordship, who is not usually wont to be facetious, should have chosen such a singular time as the month of November, for playing a joke much more appropriate to the month of April."

Lord Ernest and his friend then retired, amidst the smiles and shrugs of the other gentlemen; and Herbert having quickly bade adieu to Sidney and Alfred, and arranged their speedy meeting at Milton Park, hurried down stairs to join Mr. Silverton, who had been waiting the whole of the time in his carriage, anxiously expecting every moment to be sent for to take his place in the club.

"Bad news, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Herbert, as he seated himself by his friend's side; "you may order the carriage to drive me home."

"What! black-balled?" said Sam with a look of incredulity; "impossible after such a dinner—it cannot be—all intimate friends, and all promising me their support."

"Heaven preserve you from such friends!" said Herbert—"that's all!"

"How many balls?" demanded Sam.

"Only three," replied his companion, permitting himself this little subterfuge, with the kind motive of sparing Silverton's *amour propre*.

"Only three! come, that is some consolation. Many members present?"

"I have seen more."

"Some ill-natured fellows, I dare say, whom I did not ask to dinner; egad! it's very unfortunate! Such a disgrace!"

"Disgrace, my good friend! calm your apprehensions; it is a matter of every day occurrence, and as much thought of in the world as a man having a fall at Leicestershire—oftener the fault of the horse than the rider, as it is here that of the proposer rather than that of the candidate."

"But your name was attached to mine as second?"

"And that was one of the very probable reasons of your rejection."

"But all my friends will look upon it as a public mark of disapprobation?"

"Your friends would be very wrong to judge so unfashionably. I tell you, it is a mere trifle, a thing that occurs to the most respectable, the most popular men in London every night during the sitting of Parliament, at one or other of the Clubs."

"We look upon these matters very differently at the other end of the town, I assure you," rejoined Silverton; "there a circumstance of this kind would be considered as an indellible disgrace."

"I thought you had lived long enough among men of fashion," rejoined Herbert, "to know that they are, in general, the most heartless, selfish, unfeeling set of beings in the world, without a grain of kindness or consideration for any human creature but themselves. They care as little one for the other as a *croupier* at a gambling-

house for the wretch whose last shilling he is scraping towards him with the fatal rake!"

"But I always imagined nothing could be more fair than the system of balloting?"

"So it ought to be; but, as matters are arranged now-a-days, nothing can be more unfair than the general mode of balloting. This being the case, men are utterly indifferent as far as their reputation is concerned, at their want of success."

"But surely I thought that no man was ever black-balled unless there was some serious objection to his character, his manners, or behaviour?"

"Why so it should be, one might imagine, but many are rejected because, not being known, they may perhaps turn out to be tigers or bores; others, because there is something vulgar and cacophonous in their names; others again, and the most, out of compliment to their proposer. Some are black-balled in order to make room for the friends of members who are lower down on the list of candidates, a few are discarded for their politics, and many for their dress; besides, there are a set of men at most clubs, who make it a regular practice of black-balling every individual who is proposed, and for this good-natured purpose they will put themselves to any inconvenience rather than that a man shall escape their malice; thus, it often occurs that candidates are rejected in one month, without any earthly motive but the caprice of one of these black-balling *bourreaux*."

"Well," rejoined Silverton, "I am happy to hear you say there is no disgrace attached to the rejection, or I should have felt much hurt. I own, at the same time, I do feel excessively annoyed."

"Why, I confess, I should participate in your feelings," rejoined Herbert, "were I not aware of the nature of these matters; as it is, do as hundreds of others have done—have your name put down again and again, and in the end I have no doubt you will succeed. But, take my advice, choose a more popular proposer than either Lord Ernest or myself."

The carriage had now arrived; after bidding Silverton good-night, and inviting him to Milton, Herbert took his

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