

## MATRIMONIAL SPECULATIONS.

"I do much wonder, that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool, when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love."—*Much Ado about Nothing*.

It was for nurturing these, and other similar sentiments, that we always felt a greater degree of affection for Benedict than any other of Shakspeare's characters: his opinions accorded exactly with our own. We only regret that he so lost himself towards the termination of the play, as to venture his happiness in the very bark he had sworn to mistrust. But he was deceived into taking this step, as well as Beatrice; and, if they had not crouched about in summer-houses, playing the eaves-droppers to intentional discourses, we wager a case of Houbigant's best gloves that they would both have died single.

It is no proof that Benedict became a firm convert to matrimony, because he danced on his wedding-day, and wrote a sonnet to the lady of his love. The comedy ends, where all other merriment does, with marriage; and leaves us to form our own opinions as to whether the various couples, in the words of the old nursery-tales, lived happily together all the rest of their lives, to a good old age. We only regret, for the sake of holding up a mirror to society in general, and match-makers in particular, that the great dramatist did not add a sequel, and lay the period of the action in the theatrical taste of the day, five years after his former production.

A high moral feeling has alone kept us, up to the present moment, from taking the fatal leap; and yet, with all our anti-matrimonial propensities, there is not a more fervent admirer of the *beau seze* on the face of the civilized earth. We never went to an evening party in our life, but we returned home madly, deeply, desperately in love,—not the calm, calculating attachment of a formal courtship, but that all-absorbing passion of four-and-twenty-hours' duration, which only the powerful auxiliaries of champagne, chandeliers, and *cornets-à-pistons* can produce.

Of course, everything must have a beginning, except rings, chaos, and Adelphi overtures, and, *par consequence*, everybody has a first love—a hobbledehoy kind of attachment, all letters and locks of hair. Foolish people, who speak a little French, will tell you, "*on revient toujours, à ses premiers amours!*" This we deny. We, ourselves, once had a first love, and a very pretty one too, but it was a long while ago. She made

us a watch-guard of her own hair, and in return we gave her a kiss and a carved ivory buckle which we bought at Boulogne for ten francs, and we supposed ourselves engaged, and wrote little notes all about nothing to each other every day. Gradually, however, the notes got shorter, and their transmission at longer intervals apart, and we finally "declared off" by a tacit agreement, and found out fresh flames. We did not see her for eight or ten years, and then we heard that she was married. We met a short time since, with as reserved a greeting as if nothing had ever passed between us, and we began to ask ourselves what we could have found so bewitching in her. Indeed we were almost sorry for the rencontre; for when we have not seen any object we once felt an interest in, for a long period, we only picture them as we knew them at the time of parting; and in this case we thought the visionary recollections we retained of the smiling sylph-like girl of nineteen, far preferable to the substantial reality of the matron approaching woman of thirty.

As for clothing a first-love with all that halo of undying recollection, and occasional yearning returns of old feelings, which is common in album poetry, it is all nonsense. From eighteen to twenty-two, the usual period of a first-love, our ideas of future prospects and compatibility of disposition are rather vague and indefinite. We fall in love, and form plans of marriage under the conviction that our whole life is to be a succession of Kensington promenades, Zoological Sundays, and Hanover-Square-Room balls. We are moreover at this period, intensely susceptible, our rough nature is the sand-paper upon which the match readily takes light, and it endures in a similar manner to the combustion of a congreve, being very fierce, and of short existence. If extinguished suddenly, by throwing cold water upon it, of course there is a hiss and a sputter; but, if allowed to wear itself out—an admirable plan in all first loves—it declines as gradually and silently as a fumigating pastille.

If a bachelor escapes being hooked until he is five or six years after age, the chances are that he will remain single some time longer. He looks upon marriage with a more serious regard, and begins to think the same face *might* tire, however lovely its aspect, if he had nothing else to gaze at "from morn till dewy eve." He sees friends of his own age, who have married for love, or were too impatient to wait for an income, beginning to grumble at each other, and their increasing expenditure. This rather frightens him, and induces him to think it is best to be free, after all.