

sympathy, I suppose, it happened that they always chose the same hour for their walks.

He commenced instructing her in botany; and she, in return, laboured to imbue his mind with the elevated and heroic sentiments, in which his deficiency was but too apparent, even in her partial eyes. Albert Orlando, who was a mere matter-of-fact sort of person, did not comprehend much of Selina's refinement, but, lover-like, he listened with great admiration to all she said, and told every one who asked any questions respecting his fair Selina, that she was the prettiest girl for ten miles round, and was clever enough to puzzle an Oxford scholar, which speech gave rise to the report that Miss Stanfield understood Greek and Latin better than the parson, a gentleman whom we have now occasion to introduce to our readers.

The reverend preacher was precisely of that perilous age when single gentlemen, arrived at the verge of decided old bachelorism, evince much painful anxiety to form a matrimonial connection of a nature sufficiently advantageous to satisfy their own self-esteem; and, abandoning all caution, contract such marriages as cannot fail to amuse the lovers of the marvellous. He possessed an eye for beauty, and began to regard the fair Selina with no common interest, in consequence of the attention which his egotistical pedantry had induced him to pay to her; and falling into an error, by no means unusual among vain people, of attributing his own sentiments to her, he at length persuaded himself into the belief that the young beauty would esteem herself the most fortunate of her sex in becoming his wife. He had no sooner arrived at this flattering conclusion, than he commenced a course of diurnal annoyances, in the shape of morning calls and friendly tea-visits at Blackmere Hall; to the infinite satisfaction of Mrs. Bridget Stanfield, who, no less egotistical than good Parson Bell, placed all these civilities to her own account, and invariably sent her pretty niece out of the way whenever she spied the portly divine, with his umbrella under his arm, ambling up the old avenue of chesnut trees leading to the house. This was vastly agreeable to Selina, who was thus enabled to enjoy many opportunities of unreserved intercourse with young

Fisher. Parson Bell, however, was too cunning to be thus easily out-witted; nor had he lived so long in single blessedness to be caught at last by a spinster of fifty years' standing. He soon discovered the drift of aunt Bridget, and was at length awake to the mortifying fact, that Selina had bestowed her youthful affections on a young and handsome lover; but one, withal, whose poverty, even more than his want of refinement, would present an insuperable barrier against his union with Selina Stanfield. Still he was a formidable rival. He was the only young man in the village whose station in society would entitle him to make pretensions to the daughter of proud Squire Stanfield. As for the squire, the overweening ideas of his own importance, and the claims of his ancient family, appeared to increase as the means necessary to substantiate those claims decreased. Field after field of the family estate had been alienated from the patrimony by his predecessors, to portion off their daughters, or to provide for the numerous train of younger sons which had blessed their union with dowerless beauties, till Reginald Stanfield and his sister Bridget found themselves in possession of little more of the goods of fortune than sufficed to supply them with the bare necessaries of life.

Reginald Stanfield felt these things severely, but his indolent disposition would have prevented him from making any exertions towards improving his situation, even had he possessed the capabilities of so doing. His education had been neglected, and his natural abilities by no means furnished him with those resources which might have assisted him in a struggle to recover the bygone prosperity of his race. His keen perception of the disadvantages under which his straitened circumstances would oblige him to appear if he mingled in society, induced him to lead the life of an anchorite in the very prime of his days; and so long had he persevered in this self-imposed seclusion, that any infringement on his solitary habits would have been most irksome to him. He saw his lovely and only child—the last of that line of whose name and reminiscences he was so proud—stepping fast into womanhood, without the most remote prospect of enjoying any of those advantages so requisite for a young