

not rest, until you'd told Dick about your jumping match. You must tell him about yond saucy braggart that interfered when everything was settled."

"I was just telling them Sir, when you came into the court."

"Ah! well, go in and get some refreshment and you can talk over matters there."

As soon as the Squire had left the Village Green, the villagers began to disperse, most of them, as they sauntered away, "taking stock" of the stranger who formed the chief subject of conversation. Many and various were the surmises respecting him. What or who could he be? The prevailing notion, and the favoured one, was that he was some great man travelling in disguise, and so he would not care about offending the Squire.

"Happen," suggested one village sage, "he's a Duke or a Lord, and so yo' seen he does n't care for *nobody*. I should n't be no ways surprised if he were followed by a lot of his men on horseback in grand style: depend on't he's no common fellow."

"Ai," said another, "I'm pretty *weel* satisfied on that point, for did yo' no' notice what a watch he had, my! *but it wor a topper* an' no mistake: it were solid! *gowd*."

"It *wer* a good job anyhow," said another that th' young Squire did not strike him, for if he had there *wer* no telling what might have been the consequences."

"I think," said one original, "I can tell you one consequence that would have been pretty sure to have followed.—the Squire would have been pulled off his horse before he'd used his whip twice and as to the rest we'll say nothing about it."

The subject of these conjectures stood watching the various groups as they stood gesticulating or walking away to their respective homes.

The round red moon was just showing her full disk over the hills and the balmy zephyrs scarcely rustled the leaves of the tall white poplars, which skirted the common. It was one of those calm lovely evenings, which invites and inclines the lover of beautiful nature to linger like the twilight, apparently unwilling to resign those beauties to darkness and concealment.

While the stranger stood gazing around him, Ronald, who had been talking to some of his companions, advanced up to him and said,—

"Are you going to stop in the village all night Sir."

As the stranger made no answer he laid his hand on his arm. The man visibly started but politely enquired what Ronald was wanting.

"I was enquiring," said Ronald "whether you intended staying in the village to night or are thinking of going further."

"Oh," said the stranger, "I am just deliberating about the matter, and I think I will take some little refreshment at the inn yonder, and then resume my journey; the night is so remarkably fine that it will be pleasant walking."

"If you have no objection, Sir," said Ronald, "I would like you to come with me, I don't live very far off. In what direction are you travelling?"

"I want to go as far as Chester, to-night," said the stranger.

"Oh, it won't be any out of your way, then," said Ronald, "and