

who had represented the county in the last parliament; and Mr. Buckley, who exulted in the opportunity of making his noble neighbour feel that his animosity, backed as it was by the influence of a full purse, *was* something in the scale of a contested election, formed an alliance, offensive and defensive, with Sir Frederick Marden. The young baronet opened the commencement ball with Miss Lee, and the next day made proposals of marriage to her, with the entire approbation of her rich uncle, who pledged himself to give her a portion sufficient to cover a black escutcheon with golden blazonry.

As for Fanny, her poor head was well nigh turned at the intoxicating prospect thus unexpectedly opened before her, of becoming the wife of the handsomest and most elegant young man she had ever seen, a man of rank withal, who was moreover the most passionate of lovers. He assured her he could brook no delays, but must insist on the superlative felicity of calling her his own as soon as the election should be decided in his favour.

Fanny, of course, offered no very serious objections to such an arrangement, which had already received the important sanction of Mr. Buckley's unqualified approbation. He was, indeed, the person who appeared to derive the greatest pleasure of all from the approaching alliance. His satisfaction even betrayed him into various unwonted levities, very contrary to his usual sour solemnity. He winked at Fanny whenever Sir Frederick's name was mentioned, proposed their united healths at his own table, called them "the lovers," and sometimes even departed so far from his wonted pompous formality of deportment, as to slap her on the back, and salute her by the title of "My Lady Marden."

Sir Frederick's name stood at the head of the poll at the close of the first day's contest, and there were no bounds to the exultation of the squire. On the second, the heir of Lord Martinvale had obtained the precedence of his rival candidates, but Sir Frederick stood next in order. On the third and fourth days he was at the bottom of the poll, on the fifth he was three in advance of Sir George Burbage, on the sixth they were precisely equal, on the seventh there was a rupture between the Tory candidates on the subject

of the Catholic emancipation, on which an immediate coalition took place between the heir of Martinvale and Sir Frederick Marden, who thus obtained so considerable a majority over Sir George, that the latter considered it useless to keep the poll open any longer. By this arrangement, Sir Frederick Marden gained his election, but lost his wife. Mr. Buckley, whose engrossing desire it had been to throw Mr. Martinvale from the representation of his native county, was so exasperated at his *protégé* having consented to the amicable arrangement which secured their mutual return as knights of the shire, that he forbade his niece ever to think of Sir Frederick Marden again, and forthwith penned a letter to that gentleman, rejecting his alliance in a manner every way insulting to his feelings as a man of rank and honour. Sir Frederick replied to this impertinence by laying his cane across the shoulders of Squire Buckley the next time he encountered him in public, thus rendering the breach between them irreparable. Mr. Buckley entered an action of battery and assault against Sir Frederick, and obtained a verdict in his favour, with the award of one farthing damages. Fanny, meanwhile, remained in a manner stunned and stupified by the unexpected explosion which had overthrown all her brilliant matrimonial anticipations. It was some days, indeed, before she appeared fully convinced that she was not under the influence of a frightful dream. The news of Sir Frederick's approaching marriage to a niece of Lady Martinvale, followed by a more than ordinary access of ill humour on the part of her uncle, sufficiently awakened her to the direful reality of all that had happened, and certainly the six months that succeeded these events might be reckoned the most dreary of her cheerless existence. Not that Fanny could have been said to love Sir Frederick Marden, her acquaintance with him had been of too brief and general a nature for that; but she had greatly admired and been deeply interested in him. He was the most accomplished young man she had ever seen, and the only one who had treated her with the gallantry of a youthful lover, and she had contemplated the prospect of becoming his wife with feelings of proud delight; but as Sir Frederick was