

qualities, will be an old maid, for she is nearly five-and-twenty years old, and has never had a single lover in all her life, while I have had more than I can reckon; so I suppose men like silly people best."

Reasoning thus, Flora was not very likely to improve in wisdom, so she continued to bestow her whole time and attention on the adornment of her person, to coquet with the young farmers who brought their corn to her father's mill, and to play at bo-peep from among the garden flowers whenever she saw an angler take his stand on the banks of the neighbouring stream, till the village matronage began to shake their heads, and to prophecy that no sensible man would ever seek Flora Mayfield for a wife. Sensible men, however, are not always wise when beauty is in the case, and the little world of Shadingbrook knew not how to credit the report which soon after transpired, that Edwin Elmer, the curate of the village, was added to the list of Flora Mayfield's conquests. Yet such was the fact. Edwin Elmer, a gentleman's son, a man of learning and refinement too, was actually wooing the light-minded Flora for his wife. Had it been Lydia, the circumstance of his overlooking the differences of their station in society would have excited little surprise, because her character and pursuits were so congenial to his own, and he had evidently taken much pleasure in her conversation, and was accustomed to mention her in terms of the highest commendation. Was it possible that he could prefer her pretty silly sister to her? It was to no purpose that sage proverbs were quoted on the occasion, and the blind god's archery was arraigned by those who considered themselves better qualified to choose a helpmate for the accomplished curate of Shadingbrook than he was himself. Edwin Elmer was desperately in love with the fairest flower of his flock, and the very discrepancies of their characters appeared to strengthen his passion, which, to the additional wonder of the village worthies, was reciprocated.

The heart of the young beauty was, for the first time, touched, and the natural effect of her regard for Edwin Elmer was a conviction of her mental inferiority and unfitness to become the companion of an intellectual partner. She began to grow

serious and reflective. The nature of the things which she had heretofore despised and lightly regarded, impressed itself on her mind, and she voluntarily applied to her sister for that counsel and instruction which she had formerly rejected with scorn; while Lydia, rejoicing in the change in her sister's manners, and the prospect of the happy union that awaited her, redoubled all her efforts for her improvement.

Matters were in this auspicious position, the course of true love, as if on purpose to contradict the old adage, running smooth as a summer stream, when the lord of the manor died; and having no son, the hall and demense of Shadinbrook were inherited by a distant relation of his, a rich specimen of the old English squirearchy, to whose now exploded manners, customs, and dress, he adhered with a sturdy pertinacity, which had obtained for him the cognomen of Squire Western junior. Sound and sturdy as heart of oak, and as unbending too, he would not have concealed an opinion or sacrificed a prejudice, to have pleased the king, though king and constitution was a part of his theology.

Now, this rough diamond, instead of being, as some of my readers may have imagined, a queer-looking "Old Square-toes," on the shady side of fifty, was a handsome bachelor of six-and-thirty, a great admirer of beauty, and very much in want of a wife to hold his house in order; but, then, Cœlebs himself could not have been more particular in his choice of a helpmate than Squire Morewood. He cherished a most unqualified dislike to all the showy accomplishments which have been so perseveringly cultivated in modern education, "too often," as he observed, "to the exclusion of every useful acquirement." In short, notwithstanding his love of regularity, and dislike of the misrule and wasteful habits of a bachelor's household, he considered these evils preferable to the misfortune of having a fine lady at the head of his establishment. More than one fine lady, however, among the county belles, was ambitious of obtaining so rich a prize in the matrimonial lottery as Mr. Morewood, with all his oddities and antediluvian prejudices, was esteemed in that neighbourhood. Nor were there wanting, even among the young and fair, those who endeavoured to conciliate