

was. Now I think of it! I overheard some whispering about him and the Scotch pedler, that they say is missing. And then that hateful Swindale! Let me see! What *did* he say about the only obstacle to our union, save the mark! being now removed.—Oh! my poor head!" and she pressed her aching forehead with her hand. "I fear me, there was more meaning in his folly than I thought."

Utterly bewildered, she threw herself upon her pillow, and, with a prayer on her lips for Edward's safety, and a tear on her cheek, she sunk, in a state of utter exhaustion, into a fitful and disturbed slumber.

The next morning, as she entered the great hall, an apartment taking up half the house, which the family used as an eating room, some earnest conversation, in which her brother and her father were engaged, was abruptly broken off, and an awkward silence succeeded. But she thought she caught, on the instant she opened the door, the name of Edward Arkland. She was not sure of this at first, but when she saw that her presence had interrupted the conversation; her fears were excited, and she felt that she could not have been mistaken. This appearance of mystery so terrified her, that she threw off all restraint, and wildly exclaimed:

"Where is he! what has become of him?" and would have fallen fainting on the floor, had not her brother caught her in his arms.

This scene, as may well be imagined, surprised Margery's parents a good deal, and produced something approaching to recrimination between them. At first each turned an inquiring look at the other, as much as to say: "How's this? This affair could hardly have proceeded as far as it appears to have gone, without some encouragement from one of us." But they were both mistaken—it had.

We said Margery was a good girl, and so she was. And yet she plighted her hand to a young man, not only without consulting her parents, but against their wishes. Appearances are certainly against my assertion; but we will explain how things came to this pass, and then see.

Edward Arkland's father was the next door neighbour, if I may so speak of a house nearly three miles off, to Wastel Head. His house, at any rate, was nearer to it than any other, and consequently Edward and young Mounsey, lads nearly of the same age, and with similar tastes, habits and pursuits, and not very dissimilar in their circumstances and prospects in life, were generally, if not always together, and thus an intimacy sprang up between them, which warmed into the most affectionate regard as they grew up to manhood.

There was, perhaps, on the part of Edward's parents, a little more encouragement given to it, than by those of William. The former might be considered somewhat benefited even by such a connection with a family that they could hardly help looking up to as rather above them, without the idea of any closer union ever entering their heads. Not but that such a bright vision might have flitted athwart their imaginations, now and then, and I dare say it did. It was very natural to suppose so. But they were very prudent people, and kept their own counsel, and said nothing about it. So that old Wastel Head Mounsey was wrong and very much to blame when he rudely charged Edward's mother with being privy to, and secretly encouraging, what appeared to him a clandestine connexion between the young people.

There were other reasons also, which threw these young people more together than those I have mentioned. Dame Mounsey was, for those times, in such a locality, a well-educated woman. That is to say, besides being acquainted with all the mysteries of housewifery, she could read and write and keep accounts, and there being no schools in the neighbourhood, it was indeed too thinly peopled to have any, (the march of intellect has hardly reached it yet,) she was determined to teach her two children herself, and she did. One more, it was thought, would make very little difference in her little school; nay, it might tend to create and excite emulation in the others, and little Edward Arkland thus became almost one of the family. He was to go there every morning, and return home again at night, and a little pony was provided for him to enable him to do so. But the evenings were frequently wet and cold, or there was a mist upon the Fells, or there was some fun to be carried on at Wastel Head after supper, or there was to be a fishing excursion in the morning too early for him to get there in time for it, or little Margery wanted him to stay, or something else occurred to keep him, there all night three or four times a week, so that he spent more of his time at Wastel Head than at home.

Thus Margery and he grew up together, and loved each other like brother and sister. Their affections were allowed their full free natural scope without control or restraint, till they came to years of maturity, when the Mounseys discovered their mistake, and endeavoured, when it was too late, to correct it.

It was indeed too late. Their two young hearts were already united by ties that no power on earth could break. Aye, and their hands were plighted too. Yet not without the proviso that their parents should consent to the union—