

A DISAPPOINTED MANŒUVRE:
OR FASHIONABLE TACTICS IN HIGH LIFE.

In the recently published Tale of "the Parson's Daughter," by Mr Theodore Hook, there is an amusing scene where Lord Weybridge, whom as a younger brother, Lady Gorgon, had treated with the neglect and slights, which a fear that he might be a suitor to one of her daughters dictated, after he has acquired the wealth and rank of a Peer is sedulously courted. He accepts an invitation to dinner. "Nobody could imagine, who did not know, the state of effervescence into which this brief answer of Lord Weybridge threw the whole family. More like fates than graces, the three daughters of Lady Gorgon had been, first, one, then the second, and lastly, the third, dragged about to every possible place—balls, concerts, parties, dinners, fetes, *dejeuners a la fourchette* and *dinatoires*. They had acted in private theatricals—stood and sat in *tableaux*—been all over the continent—at all the best watering places, in the best seasons. Two of them had been down in the diving-bell at Plymouth—the third had volunteered an excursion in a balloon—Maria Jane had given the Loyal Horsemonger Troop of Yeomanry, a standard worked with her own fair hands. The heads of all the three had been examined by Deville—they had climbed poles, and swung on sticks under Captain Clia—they all painted and lithographed—all spoke six living languages, and understood three dead ones—they all sang—and all played—and all danced—and all did every sort of curious work—and they all of them stuck prints on boxes with varnish—and all understood conchology, and ichthyology, and erpetology, and botany, and chymistry—and all had alburnis!—and all collected autographs, and they all admired Pasta, and they all delighted in Switzerland, and adored Paris, they all loved yatching, and they all idolized the lake—they were all enthusiasts, and all sympathetic in their tastes. But with all this, they remained, at the period of Lord Weybridge's arrival in London, precisely what they had been in the beginning, the three Miss Gorgons. The provoking part of the affair was, for what pleasure is there without a drawback?—that there was no opportunity for display, not one trunk, except those containing the ordinary run of drapery, was unpacked: and the graces had to appear before their visitor in all the disadvantages of a *des-habelle*—a trial to which the goddesses, who confidently anticipated the fall of their Paris, with great difficulty submitted; but, as Lady Gorgon said, he had seen them often enough before; and they might rely upon it, with a man of his lordship's turn of character, mental attractions were those which would most decidedly ensure success. "And now said Lady Gorgon, 'before we go to make ourselves ready for dinner—dressed certainly cannot call it—let me entreat you to recollect what is, I believe, within the reach of one of you. You are charmingly cordial with each other; and it is delightful to see such unanimity. Indeed, I must say, there is not a mother in the world happier in her children than I am. But you ought to remember, that, however much you may all admire Lord Weybridge, only one of you can possibly marry him. And therefore, if, in the course of the evening, he should evince any thing like a preference, I am quite sure the good sense and good feeling for which you are all remarkable, will teach you so to arrange yourselves, as not to thwart or break up any conversation or little party he may make. I have so far broken my word with him about strangers, that I expect Count Alonette and young Doldrum. I thought it would be better to have somebody on whom you might fall back, in case of emergency.' "Oh," said Maria-Jane, I assure you, mamma, I have no disposition to interfere with Ann or Louisa; only certainly he was very attentive last year; and if you had given him any encouragement, instead of actually prohibiting him the house—"My dear child," said Lady Gorgon, 'how could I foresee? he was not within three lives of the peerage—two of them certainly better than his own; and he had literally nothing to live upon. Your fortunes, very respectable for gentlewomen, I admit—are, in the world, nothing. And it is not in the world as it is in grammar, where two negatives makes an affirmative two nothings never make any thing.' "Oh no," replied Maria-Jane, who seemed rather inclined to stickle for precedence, agreeably to her seniority; 'of course one could not know—only—all that I meant was, that it was a pity; because he really is a very charming person—so very agreeable.' "that day at Lady Mallerton's breakfast." "Well" said Lady Gorgon, 'in conclusion, all I mean is, that with the extraordinary friendship that has so long existed between me and dear Lady Frances, I should consider myself extremely fortunate indeed to have him for a son-in-law; but I never will force any thing of the sort; I am sure it never answers—it must all come naturally, and so I shall let things take their chance; only what I intend to say, (and I shall never touch upon the subject again,) is, that I believe he is timid and shy, and extremely delicate in his opinion about women, and if he should find us agreeable and pleasant, and suitable to him, I should not like him to be driven away by any little *tracasserie*, or idleness, on the part of any one of you which might unsettle or disturb him. So now come, let us get ready for dinner; for we have not a minute to lose.' Thus saying, her ladyship led the way from the drawing-room; and the graces proceeded to their several apartments to prepare for the meeting, which they fully believed to be fraught with consequences of the greatest importance to their future hopes and prospects. The silvery bell of the clock on the chimney piece had scarcely sounded seven, when the ladies re-appeared in the drawing-room.—"Do come here, Ann," said Lady Gorgon; 'what has your maid been doing with that head of yours? Why, I never saw—here, let me just turn that curl—there, so—why, my dear child, what a horrid pimple you have got on your cheek! And, Maria-Jane, now do let me beg of you not to sit directly under the lamp; with light hair it won't do—it won't upon my word. Louisa, my dear girl, you are not looking well; I don't know what it is; I suppose it is the travelling, or the sea, or something, but—"The drawing-room door opened; Mr Doldrum was announced. 'How d'ye do Henry?' said Lady Gorgon: 'how's Lady Doldrum this evening?' 'Better, I thank you,' replied Doldrum, who, of shy young men, was the shyest. He bowed to the girls, and blushed. Maria-Jane held out her hand to shake hands with him; take it he did, but shake it he did not. 'This is very good-natured of you, Henry,' said Lady Gorgon, 'to come under such short notice. Maria-Jane said she was sure you would not mind.' "Oh, no," said Doldrum; and again he blushed. 'There is nobody in town, I suppose,' said her Ladyship. 'No, nobody,' echoed the young gentleman. 'We came through the city last night from the country,' said Ann, 'and there were a great many nobodies there; for we could hardly get along.'—'Yes, a great many,' observed Mr Doldrum. 'You know Count Alonette, don't you?' said Maria-Jane. 'Yes, very well,' said Doldrum; that is I never was introduced to him; but I have met him about a good deal. 'He is every where,' said Lady Gorgon, 'and a charming person his. He is coming to us to-day. He—' Count Alonette was at the moment announced; and, to be sure, as a contrast to the visitor who had recently preceded him, nothing could be more remarkable. The one, red-cheeked, round-faced, heavy, dull, and awkward; the other, fair, pale, light, gay, and airy; his eyes sparkling with animation, and his countenance beaming with good-sense and good-nature. 'My dear Lady Gorgon,' said the Count, whose accent gave *naivete* and piquancy to the merest common-place, 'I am so shocked to be so late. Dis comes of having a servant which loves to drive in de afternoon; my man shall have been to drive some ladi to whom he is fond in his cabb, and not to come back till so late as give me just ten minutes to dress?' How do you do Miss Gorgon?—ah, Miss Ann, to be sure; always well—always pretty—always pretty well.—Dat is good English, eh?' 'How is your beautiful horse, Count?' said Louisa. 'Oh, my war horse, as the Duke calls him; he is as well as can be expected; I rode him dis morning. You were not out to day, my Lady?' 'No,' said Lady Gorgon, 'we are merely passing through town.' 'Ah!' said the Count, 'dat is just the way this time of the year; every body you meet in de street has just come to town last night, and is going away to-morrow morning.' 'That is precisely our case,' said Jane; 'how long have you been in London?' 'Oh,' said the Count, 'I came last night—go away to-morrow morning. I have been in Scotland to shoot grose, but I could not stay some time so long as I wish for I have to make a visit at Rochdale next Tuesday, when the Duke shall be back.' [They wait till eight, but no Lord comes. They send to his hotel and hear he has gone out to their house. At last they must submit to the disappointment, and sit down to dinner without the only wished-for guest.] "They proceeded down stairs, Lady Gorgon distressed beyond measure at what appeared the result either of some unforeseen accident or premeditated affront; and having reached the dinner-room the party seated