

person, formal in his manners, and verging on the period of ancient bachelorhood, purchased an estate in the neighbourhood; and having seen Fanny Lee at the parish church, and hearing that she was the reputed heiress of the rich Mr. Buckley, he obtained an introduction to this formidable personage, whose good will he so successfully cultivated, that he was one day, without any previous preparation, presented to Mr. Buckley's niece as "his friend, and her future husband." Four years ago, the light-hearted, careless Fanny would have shuddered at such an intimation, and probably expressed unfeigned abhorrence, regardless of all consequences. Now, she only looked demure, and curtsied silently, as the thought, "So, I am to have a husband, after all," crossed her mind, putting all the rue-and-wormwood anticipations that had lately clouded her fancy to the flight. Yet it can scarcely be said that these sombre images were succeeded by visions of a more agreeable character, when she glanced at her spouse elect, and strove to picture to herself the charms of a conjugal life with Mr. Brownlow.

Something of a dissentient tone appeared rising to her lips, as a feeling of revulsion stole over her young heart; but then, the alternative of pining away the residue of her days in forlorn spinsterhood with her uncle, rose in gloomy perspective before her; and she decided, that, of the two evils, it would be more tolerable to become the wife of the one old bachelor, than to remain the domestic slave of the other, especially as Mr. Brownlow was a civil, quiet-tempered man, who professed himself very desirous of promoting her happiness. As for the sentiment of love, Fanny had indeed seen it occasionally mentioned in the few novels she had perused by stealth, but of its real meaning she had not formed the slightest idea; and Mr. Brownlow found her heart perfectly free from any pre-engaging interest, and remaining like a spare room, vacant for the reception of lumber.

Charmed with this very satisfactory observation, and delighted with the meekness and polite attention with which his affianced treated him, Mr. Brownlow became much attached to her, and strove in every way to render himself agreeable

to her. He made great improvements in his house and grounds, consulting her taste in every particular, which Fanny, who never before was aware that she had a taste, regarded as a flattering mark of his esteem. She felt proportionably grateful, and even began to contemplate the approaching change in her condition with some degree of complacency.

Things had now arrived in such a train of forwardness, that settlements were drawn, carriages and furniture purchased, and new bridal garments talked of, when Mr. Buckley and the bridegroom elect differed in opinion at a county meeting respecting the expediency of bringing a projected railway through that district; and the dispute became so warm, that Mr. Buckley assured his opponent "that he would sooner follow his niece to the grave, than see her his wife." In conclusion, he peremptorily forbade Fanny "ever to think of that empty-headed old coxcomb Brownlow as a husband again."

Obedience to this mandate cost a very trifling effort. Fanny was perfectly resigned, and her uncle, as a mark of his approval of her dutiful acquiescence in his determination, told her she was a good girl, and he would look out a better match for her. For a whole month after this affair, he treated her with such unwonted indulgence, that she regarded the change as almost miraculous. By degrees, however, he relapsed into his former splanetic humour, and before the year had expired, actually began once more to annoy her with insulting remarks on her maiden estate, no second suitor having been sufficiently venturesome to encounter the surly dragon by whom the hapless damsel was guarded, while the universal dislike which his manners and conduct excited, caused them to remain in a state of almost unbroken solitude.

At length a dissolution of parliament, followed by a general election, put the whole county into a state of excitement, which enlivened even the stagnating temperament of Fanny's narrow circle, and brought an unlooked-for change of feeling within her bosom. A young baronet, professing himself an ardent advocate for reform, offered himself as a candidate for the county, in opposition to Lord Martinvale's son, and the other Tory member