

or when the entail was broken I never heard. Houses, indeed, like empires, rise and fall, flourish and decay, and their end is mingled with the same unheeded mass from which they took their meteor flight, beaming brightly for a space; but oh! how short! upon their circumscribed horizon, and then—*—*—*

But this was not a day to look so far into futurity; and no one looked beyond it; or if they did, the whole length of the narrowing vista would have brightened till it closed into a point beyond the reach of mortal eye.

A wedding in the days of yore, was not solemnized in secret, and as it were, by stealth, as it is now. Neither was the service mutilated and cut short, and hurried through, as is the modern fashion; but commenced, as the married state should always do, with "dearly beloved," and ended with "amazement," too figurative, alas! of what its end will sometimes be.

Of all the sad realities—*—*—*

But here, I know not why, my pen will turn again into this mournful strain, and moralize upon it. Perhaps it is because it sympathizes with the feelings of the gentle reader, if it has not failed to excite a warm and kindly interest in the fate of those, our favourites who were not, and who could not be made happy in each other's love, on this eventful day. It does indeed seem like a desecration, that Harry Netherby should brood alone, within the mazy labyrinths of his ancient hall, upon his sad and mournful fate, and Alice Musgrave in her forest home should pine away in sorrow; while other hearts, which could not have more fondly loved, were then united. Perhaps it was this thought, although no tinge of envy stained it, which kept them both away, from joining in this glad and joyous scene. Whatever it was, they were not there. They could not come. The bar to their own union did seem more cruel on that day. But we must try again to leave them in their hopelessness awhile, to enter into all the sports and pastimes of that festal day, sad emblem though it be of this our changing state of being, alternating in cloud and sunshine, too like an April day. And here, without a mighty effort, they are off again.

Well, the Stricklands in their old lumbering family carriage—only turned out on state occasions, with the postillions, whip in hand, mounted on their goodly greys—soon after that early sun was seen above the Fells, came thundering over the pavement of the outer court of Strickland Hall. It was duly escorted by a goodly following of tenants and retainers, as well as uninvited guests: a goodly company, who had no business there, nor would have joined that blithesome

throng, had they not known that all, and more, if possible, were welcome.

On, on, the grand procession moved, along the village green, until its noiseless course turned, for a brief space, upon the velvet turf of Newby Common. Then again it wound its way through Bedlam Gate, and filed in lengthened columns along the narrow lane which led to Newby Hall. This mansion they soon reached, where a breakfast was prepared for all those hungry guests. After staying a couple of hours or more, that joyful throng, increased by Charles Moreland's family and his followers, commenced their further journey to the parish church; gathering fresh accessions to their numbers, every step they took.

The blessing is pronounced; and these two Northern Halls are now united by a double tie. All instantly start off again as fast as they can ride for Strickland Hall. Here all well knew they were to dine; and they knew as well, that he who reached it first, be he lord, or boor, or villain, according to a well known custom, the bride must kiss.* George Strickland was the happy man that won the prize, despite a swifter horse, rode by his gallant friend of Themby Hall. Stumbling on a mole-hill, he broke down on Strickland-Head, just with the guerdon all but in his grasp.

The large and splendid hall;—I mean that spacious room within the mansion, from which all others opened. Hence, in modern houses, those narrow entrances, or *Hacks*, as they were called of old, have, in this age of aping something greater than could be accomplished, assumed this high and dignified appellation. This large and splendid hall was none of your lane-like and suburban thoroughfares, where two ladies in full dress, for hoops were all the fashion then, could hardly pass without deranging it; but a lordly aristocratic square, in this particular instance, of some forty feet dimensions. Here, and the reader now will better understand how this was done, covers were laid for full two hundred guests. Tenants and followers, and retainers; wandering parpers, gipsies, fortune-tellers, hungry elves of every sex and grade, who came but for their dinner, were welcome there that day. A portion of the table, below the *salut*, was duly set apart for their especial use; while all the Northern Halls, for all save two, within the circuit of some twenty miles, were there, sat down to dinner in the banquetting room, in high and lordly state.

It was this high noon slow past that day, an

* This extraordinary custom is still kept up in the north by the lower orders, and occasions many a well-entertained race.