

approbation; but upon one condition, on which he left them all his property—that his son-in-law should assume the name of Strickland.

Years and years rolled on. Long after Sir Richard had been gathered to his fathers, and their only children, a son and a daughter, were grown up to maturity, it became the natural and anxious wish of their parents to see them united with fitting mates, from among their own rank in life; and they therefore contemplated with secret pleasure and satisfaction an increasing intimacy between them and their near neighbours, of *Newby Hall, the Morelands, in the hope that it might eventually lead to even a double matrimonial alliance betwixt the two families, the more especially now that the only obstacle in the way of so desirable a consummation had been removed; for by the death of old Mr. Moreland and that of Philip Netherby, who did not long survive him, the arrangements and settlements they had both so resolutely determined upon, were left to be carried out and accomplished or set aside, as the parties most interested in the matter should themselves think proper. And there is no doubt, from the intimacy between our hero and the brother of the bride intended and set apart for him, that they were mutually aware of the state of each other's feelings and affections, and consequently it may easily be supposed that, on the kind interposition of Mr. Moreland, this matrimonial scheme was formally annulled without prejudice to his sister's claims for her dower, contingent though it was upon her consent to this union; and without interfering in the slightest degree with that friendly intimacy existing between the families.*

As *Newby Hall, the residence of the Morelands,* was only two short miles from Strickland Hall, a constant and more frequent intercourse, as might naturally be inferred from the circumstances I have mentioned, was kept up between the families, which soon led to a formal proposal on the part of young Mr. Strickland for Margery Moreland's hand; and while her brother was closeted with his father, to arrange about the settlements, he had also proposed, as it afterwards appeared, for the hand of Mr. Strickland's daughter, and the next day he started off for Appleby—for there was then no attorney nearer—to get Mr. Hudson to make out the necessary documents and see them properly executed. He could of course easily have sent a messenger, but he preferred going himself, in order to take Hellbeck in his way, for the purpose of informing his friend of his own good fortune, as well as of that of his sister, in whose welfare and happiness he well knew he felt a warm and brotherly interest. Besides, he thought he might otherwise rouse and cheer him out of that morbid state of melancholy into which

he had fallen since the death of his father; but why he could not conjecture, as, for aught he knew to the contrary, the only obstacle to his happiness—to the consummation of all his wishes, (he knew nothing of the fatal will), was removed by that event, and therefore, however mournful it might otherwise be considered, it was certainly attended with results in some measure consolatory. "But this cannot be the reason," he said to himself, as he cantered across the common at the foot of his native village, "there is—there must be something else at the bottom of all this, and I'll lay my life upon it, now that the thought occurs to me, that this fellow Hudson has something to do with it; it is some dark and dirty scheme of his, I'm sure; for I saw by the sneering curl on Harry's lip, when I took him there, that he had hard work of it to be even coldly civil to him; or perhaps its something about his unfortunate grandfather's room again, with which some of these cunning old gipsies have been poisoning his mind, and he's just in the right mood to listen to them."

This last reflection was superinduced by his perceiving the old hag, the well-known mother of a gang of these same gypsies that had been prowling about the neighbourhood for some time, coming out of a thick and interminable copsewood on the banks of Little Yemmer, a small, but when swollen, a deep and rapid river; and having its rise in the mountains, this was often the case, as the slightest rains affected it. On her issuing from the cavern-looking pathway, so darkened with the thick foliage overhead that his eye could not penetrate beyond a few yards, and not knowing how many of her tall and stalwart sons might be behind her, and the whole place so lonely too, his first impulse was to lay his hand upon his pistols, for at that period no gentleman undertook a journey without them:

"Nay, nay!" she said, waving her hand as if to give emphasis to her words; "keep your pop-guns out o' see't, or the lads may not like the lunks o' them; besides, what's the use o' them against a bullet frae that brake, an' five wad be sent an' I lifted my finger, an' ye see the roaring torrent's hard by."

"Well, what do you want with me?" asked Mr. Moreland, somewhat reassured, for, notwithstanding the ambiguity of her overture, he could not help considering it rather of a pacific tendency.

"I should hae wanted to tell yer fortune for ye, had I not been in ower mickle trouble myself," she replied, as she approached a step or two nearer to him, and continued in a lower tone: "the constables are efter my puir auld man, and that's the reason we're here, where they'll have hard war."