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## THE SQUIRE OF CRANBERRY HATCH.

AN ENGLISH STORY.

Some years ago there came to reside in the neighbourhood of the village of Cranberry Hatch, in Bedfordshire, one of those strange characters whose tempers, though perhaps originally good, have been spoiled in India, whither they had gone in search of fortune, and who return in middle life to England, apparently with the benevolent intention of venting their crotchety humours on poor relations, and generally all persons who have the misfortune to become acquainted with them.

Mr. Samuel Buckley, as the present returned Old Indian was named, resembled others of his class ; had a yellow leathery complexion, was immensely rich, very purse proud, and exceedingly desirous of rendering himself conspicuous in the society amidst which he took up his residence—in fact, he was anxious to take the lead in the district as a public man. In this object of his ambition, however, he found himself completely circumvented. Every little district in Britain already possesses its well-recognised object of worship, in the form of some wealthy landed proprietor, and Cranberry Hatch was not without its divinity. Lord Martinvale was its great man. He was looked up to as a leader and patron on all occasions, and it therefore defied all Squire Buckley's ingenuity, backed by his enormous wealth, to dislodge him from his place in the public estimation. But more of this anon.

The squire, finding himself a good deal nonplussed in his efforts at rendering himself the ruling power in the village and its neighbourhood, abandoned himself to the management of his own family, over whom he exercised an unchallenged sway. His family, to be sure, was not

very numerous, but its members made excellent subjects of an arbitrary government. They consisted of an elderly tamed-down housekeeper—one of those poor women who have endured a world of misfortunes, and are glad to put up with any kind of usage for the sake of house-room—two black servants, and a gentle young creature, to whom we may with propriety, give the title of a white slave, for such she really was, in consequence of the caprices of her uncle.

Fanny Lee was the only child of Squire Buckley's sister, a lady who had forfeited her brother's favour by marrying a half-pay subaltern in preference to accompanying him to India, ministering to his comforts, submitting to his whims and fancies, and receive the wages of incessant revilings, in return for her services. She did not long survive the birth of her daughter. Her husband married again, and becoming the father of a numerous offspring, did not consider himself justified in rejecting the proposal which his wealthy brother-in-law made, on returning to England, of taking Fanny into his own family.

Mr. Lee, it is true, did not greatly approve of the manner in which the brother of his deceased wife couched his request, if request it might be called, which amounted to a demand, of his child as a long dormant right of his own, which it had at length pleased him to reclaim. The feelings of the father, and the spirit of the gentleman, alike revolted at the offensive tone of superiority assumed on this occasion by the purse-proud man, who looked down on him and his with undisguised contempt ; and he felt, in the first instance, disposed to return a decided negative to his insolent brother-in-law ; but then he remembered that Buckley was a childless old bachelor,