

Annie on his arm, again drew towards us. Some invidious voice whispered as they approached: "here comes beauty and the best," but they heard it not. Annie looked very happy, when her partner placing her hand in that of her father's, said in a tone of much feeling—"I restore your treasure, Sir, and I envy the feelings of the parent who calls her his child—may God bless you," he added, pressing Annie's hand, which he had still retained. He then walked away and withdrew to a remote corner of the room.

And now another dance had formed. Mrs. Fludger, with the handsome officer, came forward—Lord Randolph requested to be introduced to Miss Bertram. Annie looked at him for the first time—and the colour tinged her cheek. He smiled, as he drew her arm within his, and continued standing near us for some minutes. The first words he addressed to her, were:

"I was pleased to see you had the good taste not to refuse dancing with Captain Selby, because he was not exactly the style of partner a young lady fancies."

I ventured to steal a look at the fashionable young lady, as he uttered these words—she was looking down, but a slight confusion was perceptible.

"I came home in the frigate he commanded, some months ago," continued Lord Randolph, "when I had an opportunity of beholding in him some of the most noble traits the human breast can boast. He saved the lives of the whole ship's crew, by his gallant, firm intrepid conduct, and that scar which so disfigures him, he received when a young man, in the defence of his commanding officer. He is particularly sensitive as to his appearance, which is the only weakness I have perceived in him, and he fancies it quite impossible that any lady could feel pleasure in his society. I marked both the painful and pleased impression he received this evening, and I was determined to become acquainted with you, that I might learn from yourself who had taught you to act with such graceful kindness."

"My dearest father has always taught me to respect the feelings of others," replied Annie, blushing; "why should the unfortunate appearance of any one call forth neglect or rudeness—particularly towards one such as you represent Captain Selby to be."

"Aye, you know him for a hero now, but you did not till I told you. May I request the honour of your hand, for this dance?"

"As my reward?" asked Annie, looking up archly in his face.

"Nay, fair lady, I am not so vain as that," replied Lord Randolph laughing, as he led her away; "but I want to hear a few more of your sentiments, which strike me as novel, and unlike what I usually hear from very young ladies."

"We must take care that young head does not

become turned by too much eulogium," said the gratified Mr. Bertram to me.

"There is little fear," I replied; "Annie feels what is due to the parental care of a good father, and knows too well the high source from whence all goodness emanates. I ventured once to say to her, 'what makes you, dearest Annie, so unlike the young people I usually see—so utterly devoid of selfish feelings—so alive to the wishes of others?'" "My dear, dear Mrs. Selwyn, do not praise me," was her reply; "I differ in nothing from others—I possess the immense advantage of an intestimable parent, who has led me to the fountain of living waters, where, when I am weak or weary, I can gain strength. Can there be MERIT in this! Oh no, no. To whom much is given, much will be required."

I folded the dear girl to my heart, but I did not dare say another word.

"Beloved child," said Mr. Bertram clasping his hands together, and bending over them, she has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her. And now," he continued, after a pause, "I will go and seek the acquaintance of Captain Selby; from what I have just heard, I have a desire to know more."

Presently I beheld the two gentlemen in earnest conversation, while I continued to observe, sometimes with pain, and again with amusement, all that was passing around me. I particularly noticed a very old lady, with palsied head, dressed in the garb of youth; she was much wrinkled, and pendant from the aged brow was a gold clasp, set with rubies. She was highly rouged, which did not conceal the deep furrows of time. Her head dress was a gay hat and plumes. "What can the thoughts of that old lady be when she is so attiring herself," said I mentally, "and whom does she think to please?" I turned from her, as she limped across the room, with feelings of pity. What a contrast to her was another old lady, who sat smiling and enjoying the happiness of the young people around her. Her venerable grey hair smoothly combed under the neat cap; the snow white handkerchief, and the simple grey silk dress—yes, age in her was graceful. I beheld Annie, with her handsome partner, approach her when the dance had concluded; and I remarked the look of affection and the cordial smile with which my dear girl was greeted. I enquired her name—it was Mrs. Blessington—and I hoped I might again meet her.

"I hope, indeed, you may," said Annie to me when I afterwards repeated this wish to her; "she occasionally favours us with an evening visit; and you will find her one of the dearest old ladies in the world."

And now the gay ball was over, and Annie was sitting calmly with me in the favourite room with her work, on the following morning. The flowers sent their sweet perfume through the open casement,