

Miss Courtenay ; the associations connected with the name were certainly not pleasing, and she strove to check a feeling of prejudice which she knew to be improper and unchristian, and it was with this resolution she descended to the saloon that evening, when she was presented by the Countess to her guests, who had arrived about two hours previously. She gazed eagerly in the face of Miss Courtenay, who gave an involuntary start on first beholding her, but checked it instantly, as she coldly returned her salutation. Not so Sir Charles ; his eyes were rivetted on her lovely features, and as she floated before him with her swan-like neck and graceful form, they followed her in perfect admiration.

"Is she not a beautiful creature," said the Countess, in a low tone, on observing his fixed attention.

"She is an angel," he replied, "my dreams never even conceived such surpassing loveliness ; why Blondville never prepared me for any thing like this."

"That was scarcely fair," returned Lady Blondville, smiling, "you must place a double guard on your heart to repair his negligence."

"She would conquer them all by one look," cried Sir Charles, "see how entirely unconscious she appears. Lady Blondville, I must beg you to tell me her story, I never could obtain it from Harold, and I know there is some romance attached to it."

"You shall hear it certainly, but here comes my darling Arthur, is he not much grown since last you were here."

The noble boy bounded in as she spoke, first running up to greet Sir Charles and his sister, and then throwing himself on a low stool at Amy's feet, who had drawn towards the couch occupied by Lady Emily.

"Charming, divine, upon my soul," continued Sir Charles, gazing abstractedly towards the group.

Amy at that moment was bending over the boy, eagerly recounting something which appeared to amuse him, for he was laughing merrily, while with one arm round her neck, he had drawn her face close towards his own, to listen.

"Do tell me, Lady Blondville," continued Sir Charles, "she has a large fortune, has she not ?"

"I fear not, for your sake," replied Lady Blondville, laughing, "allow me to present you to my friend, Mrs. Somerville;" (who had just entered the room.)

Sir Charles bowed, and then walked towards Lady Emily, making most kind enquiries after her health, in a tone of tenderness, habitual to him, but which some believed a little assumed, and not really felt. He was rather handsome, with fine hair, and fine teeth, which he was fond of displaying. He had moved a great deal in society, and had travelled much, which gave an ease and a polish to his ad-

dress. His valet affirmed that he could occasionally be very cross indeed—had been seen several times in a violent passion, when one or two words had escaped him approaching to malediction—but then who would go to a valet for his master's character ?

His sister, Miss Courtenay, was a few years his junior, and a favourite in fashionable society, without being handsome ; her appearance was pleasing, she dressed beautifully, she waltzed beautifully, and had the neatest, smallest foot which was constantly put forth for admiration, while her manners were lively and agreeable. She played with grace and execution on the harp, and was an adept in all those little manoeuvres which could bring into notice her various attractions ; but why so minute in our description, are there not many Miss Courtenay's ? She was the great friend of Lady Matilda, and with her brother paid an annual visit of several weeks at the Falcon's Nest, in regard for the intimacy which had formerly subsisted between their mutual parents.

If Sir Charles had at first been attracted by the beauty of Amy, how was he charmed when a few days made him more acquainted ; and had it not been for the eternal enquiry whether she was not heiress to the Duke's splendid estates, his admiration might have been considered perfectly disinterested. He joined her with his sister and Lady Matilda in all their rides and walks, and was so assiduous in his attentions, that Miss Courtenay, after a time, rallied him upon them.

Amy received his regards very quiescently ; he did not interest her, neither was his conversation pleasing to her ; but her kind heart and guileless nature, frequently made her appear to listen with attention, when in truth, her thoughts were wandering far away. His sister she strove to like, but her advances were always met by coldness, and an assumption of superiority which chilled her—nor could she bear to hear Lord Blondville's name so constantly alluded to, as it was by Miss Courtenay, or his delightful visit at the Rook's Nest ; his gaiety while there, his waltzing with herself so frequently mentioned—why she scarcely knew, and would sometimes make the self enquiry, since it pained her ; but in truth Miss Courtenay had always indulged a latent hope of one day being more nearly allied to the Earl's noble family, till she beheld Amy, and heard her story, when she immediately viewed her as a powerful rival, and hated her in consequence, striving to mortify her in every possible way. Mrs. Somerville saw all that was passing, but very sensibly kept it to herself ; watching at the same time over her beloved charge with maternal solicitude.

The winter this year promised to be unusually severe ; already there had fallen much snow, which put a stop to the riding parties. The billiard room then became a favourite resort ; thither Amy would