

father with a glowing cheek, and delight sparkling in her eye. He received it with a quiet smile, and a slight shake of the head.

"Now, before you say one word after that ominous shake," said Annie, "let us refer it to Mrs. Selwyn. Dear Mrs. Selwyn, do you approve that I should go, or rather what is your opinion in general of private dances?"

"My dear Annie, the reasoning of forty and of seventeen is so widely different, that you have proposed to me a difficult question," I replied. "In general I do not approve of them, but I think there may be exceptions—is Mrs. Fludyer a favourite of yours?"

"She is a most amiable woman, who delights in rendering young people happy," said Annie warmly; "she has two nice daughters, who I think would please you. They mentioned this party to me many days ago, and I was so glad to think you would be here in time for it."

"Because I am so fond of dancing, Annie?"

"No, dear Mrs. Selwyn, but I thought——"

"You thought I would like to see you dance. Mr. Bertram, may we for this time be indulged?"

It was impossible for the father to resist the appeal of Annie's expressive face, which seconded my request, and the consent was given with an affectionate pressure of his beautiful child to his heart, and Annie's happiness was complete. I was pleased to see that the prospect of this party did not in the slightest degree lessen the interest she took in her usual avocations.

Every thing went on quietly, and indeed it was scarcely mentioned until the morning of the day arrived, and even then, there was no flutter, no studying the most becoming costume, no time wasted in preparing finery—a simple white muslin robe and a wreath of natural flowers, were all the ornaments of my favourite Annie.

Annie, accompanied by her father and myself, entered the drawing room of Mrs. Fludyer at the hour mentioned in her note. That lady instantly came forward with her daughters, two elegant looking girls, to welcome us, and it was easy to discover in what estimation Annie was held, by the cordiality of her reception.

The dancing room was tastefully arranged, and ornamented by a profusion of fine plants. A band of music was stationed in one of the windows, and the gaiety of the scene was heightened considerably by the uniforms of two or three officers, who had kindly come in from the neighbouring town to grace the ball.

"How beautiful," exclaimed Annie, gazing delightedly around her, "how very happy I am."

"It takes little to make that young heart happy," replied her father affectionately.

Presently the band commenced a lively air, and then followed the usual form of introduction. We

had noticed a gentleman standing alone, who was by no means young, neither was he handsome—a scar on the forehead told of the battle's din, and much disfigured a countenance, not otherwise forbidding. From his uniform he seemed a naval officer, and he certainly contrasted most unfavourably with the gay scarlet coats.

Mrs. Fludyer approached him, and after a few words and some hesitation on his part, she led him up to a young lady of particularly fashionable appearance. I noticed an expression rather contemptuous in her countenance as she slightly bowed and turned away, saying she was engaged. Mrs. Fludyer looked distressed, and an air of mortification stole over the features of the stranger.

"Oh, that was not kind," said dear Annie in a whisper to me. I think Mrs. Fludyer heard her, for she smiled as she led her companion towards our party, who the moment he beheld Annie, drew back.

"I assure you Miss Bertram is very fond of dancing, and I am certain will be happy to accept you as her partner," said Mrs. Fludyer; "Annie, allow me to introduce a very particular friend of mine—Captain Selby."

Dear Annie instantly curtsied, and placed her hand in that of the stranger's, with a look of such bland and pleasing courtesy, that it seemed to find its way instantly to his heart, for his whole countenance became at once animated and surprised, as he led her away to join the dance.

"You have every reason to be proud of your daughter, Mr. Bertram," said Mrs. Fludyer, as she noticed the father's eye following his beautiful child. He did not speak, but a slight pressure of her hand thanked her more warmly.

I now looked around me, and observed an officer standing a few paces from us, leaning against the wall. He was remarkably handsome and striking in his appearance—his eyes were also following the movements of Annie, with an expression of pleasure; while near him drew the fashionable young lady, and her mamma. She evidently strove in a thousand ways to attract his attention—first by seeming to be looking for a seat, and then letting her finely worked handkerchief, trimmed with lace, fall nearly at his feet—but he was too much engaged. I asked Mrs. Fludyer his name.

"Oh, that is Lord Randolph, our *beau idéal*—it is a great favour to have him here I assure you—but I fear he will disappoint some of our young ladies, for I do not think he dances."

She now approached him, and a few words were spoken—I saw him direct her attention towards Annie, and when she had answered him she left him still standing, while the young lady at length sat down in a flutter of disappointment, and pulled a beautiful bouquet she held in her hand to pieces.

The dance at length ended. Captain Selby, with