

THE BARON.

A TALE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY—NOT OF FICTION.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "THE BACKWOODS OF CANADA."

Love is not love
Which altereth when it alteration findeth,
Or bends with the remover to remove,
Oh, no! it is an ever fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken.

SHAKESPEARE.

"AND is it possible, my dear Catherine, that you have never had the good fortune to be introduced to my friend, the 'Baron?' You must become acquainted. I never saw two people more calculated to be pleased with each other. 'It will be a match; yes, I see it all. You and the Baron were meant for each other, and I shall be the Bridesmaid. *The Bridesmaid, par excellence*, and hold the bouquet and gloves. I am delighted with the very idea of the thing."

Thus rattled on one of the giddiest girls of my acquaintance, as seated at my feet on an ottoman, she vainly puffed away at an obstinate coal fire, which the housemaid had provokingly left to light itself in my friend Harriette's dressing-room, a little sanctum which she termed her boudoir. But though she blew away most indefatigably at the dull coals, with one of the most delicate pairs of Chinese bellows that had ever adorned the fire-place of an East India captain's cabin, not one spark could she elicit.

"And do you really expect the Baron to visit you?" I asked with some natural degree of curiosity.

"Expect him! my dear child; he is here—in this very house—in the adjoining room, at his toilette."

"Speak lower then, or he will hear every word we are saying—that is, if he understands English well."

Harriette laughed in ecstasy.

"Never fear, he will not hear us. You will, however, be astonished at the Baron's fluency of speech. Do you know, he is all impatience to see you. I am sure he is desperately smitten."

"Why, he never saw me—nor I him."

"You are mistaken; he saw you at church both morning and evening, last Sunday. The Baron never misses both services,—he is a devout man; he has raved about you ever since."

I laughed outright.

"Well! it's a fact—and I have actually given him leave to come in and see you here, lest he should astonish mamma, by his rapture before all the big-wigs below."

"It is a pity you are engaged, Harriette."

"Me! Yes! Ah! well, it can't be helped. I might have been Baroness Joliffe. It sounds well. But, after all, Catherine, I am not dignified enough for a title, and then the Baron would not have suited me—he is too refined, too sentimental, too elegant. In short, I shall be only too happy if I see you united to this charming Adonis."

"And his probable age?" asked I, beginning, in spite of myself, to take an indescribable interest in the mysterious Baron.

"Something older than yourself, my dear! at least I judge so by the gravity of his demeanor. But really one cannot take such liberties as to ask a Baron his actual age. The thing is impossible,—besides I do not think he would like it. He is very particular."

"Well, then, describe his appearance. His eyes?"

"Blue eyes, large and languishing."

"I hate languishing blue eyes in a man."

"But you have not seen the Baron's eyes. Item. A straight nose, white ivory teeth—and then his hair, hyacinthine locks—a perfect wig of curls."

"A wig of curls! What do you mean, Miss Harriette, by making game of my head of hair—a wig of curls, forsooth! Fie, fie, upon you—you ill-mannered little pug."

The exclamation above was uttered in the open door way, in a half serious, half comic voice.

I raised my head, and the Baron stood before me.

Harriette hid her head in my lap, in convulsions of laughter, and I—for my part, I was dumb from astonishment, and sat gazing on the apparition before me, in speechless confusion, as