

Black, a widow lady verging on the age of forty, but who still retained the youthful manners of twenty. She was one of those persons who we find described, in Scripture as "idle and wandering from house to house, and not only idle but talkers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not." Her house was constantly filled by the youngest men of the garrison, who to kill the time they valued not, met there to lounge away their mornings in talking folly.

Mrs. Black had a pretty mincing manner, and an affected soft voice, which she thought very charming. Poor soul! she was not the only self-deceived, for while the young laughed at her those of her own age pitied her. Still in happy ignorance, she continued to give her tea parties, and to smile and simper, and act the girl, to the amusement of her guests, who, I am ashamed to add, in her absence would call her "Old Mother Black." *Horrid!*

This lady conceived, or rather pretended to conceive, a violent regard for Katherine, who she treated as her protégé. At first the artless girl was won by her blandishments, although she thought her manners rather free towards gentlemen; but when Mrs. Bruce gently warned her not to form too great an intimacy with her, she withdrew from her society so far as to decline going to her house, or inviting her to her own. This did not however discourage the gay widow, who, waiving the marked coldness of her reception, constantly intruded herself, for the pleasure of sitting at Katherine's windows to listen to the band. Captain Warburton, light though he was, had very strict notions of propriety; but like many young men he encouraged, and laughed and talked folly with those very persons who in his heart he despised; leading them to suppose that he admired them, when, in reality, he felt nothing but contempt. A woman to be really admired must respect herself; if she fails in doing this, she may rest assured that, however she may be sought for the amusement of an idle hour, she will never be the chosen one of any but a fool. Katherine once checked him for his want of sincerity; when he laughed and replied,

"Four things! if a few empty compliments make them happy, why not offer them? Nothing can require less effort."

"Except the truth, dear Neville! which has no need to blush and hide its face."

"As you did, love! when you ran away with me," retorted her husband with a smile.

"Ah! do not reproach me for my fault," returned Katherine, a little sadly; "it haunts me night and day—in my dreams—in my walks—every hour of my life. My dear mamma and brothers! what would I not give to behold them?"

how long it appears since I received sweet Ernest's letter! I had hoped he would have written again, but I suppose papa would not suffer him;" and she sighed.

"I don't care one farthing—their silence or their letters are equally indifferent to me," replied Captain Warburton, buckling on his sword to attend a parade; "your father is a sordid, unforgiving, heartless man, and he and his money-bags may go to the bottom of the sea for me."

"Nay! nay! do not forget that he is my father, Neville! I must not hear him thus spoken of, cruelly as he may have acted towards us."

At this moment Mrs. Black and her friend Miss Selina Dashwood were announced, perhaps fortunately, as their presence prevented a discussion, which, from the angry frown on the brow of Captain Warburton, might have proved a painful one.

"Ah! my dear Mrs. Warburton! how delighted I am to find you at home," exclaimed the widow, running up to Katherine; "I came early on purpose, as I have so often been disappointed."

Katherine could not conceal a look of vexation, even while she forced a polite reply. Little as she admired and liked Mrs. Black, she felt still less disposed towards her companion, for whom we can find no appellation better suited than that of a "bold flirt."

Miss Selina Dashwood was an only child, whose education had been totally neglected by her sinfully indulgent parents, on the plea of not injuring her health by confinement. Consequently she owned no law but her own will, which had frequently led her far beyond the verge of decorum. In person she was rather tall, with a face that might have been pleasing, had it not expressed, by the wandering eye and the affected movement of every feature, an eagerness for admiration, which failed by this means in its object. Her style of dress was smart and showy, rather than tasteful. A profusion of feathers nodded from the little bonnet, that she kept in constant motion by the attitudes into which she threw herself while speaking. In every thing she pretended to be an enthusiast, clasping her hands in a pretty childish manner, as she expressed her delight—her anger—her horror—all as false as herself. She had always been an avowed admirer of Captain Warburton, who she had known long before his marriage. Nor did the change in his position prevent her still displaying a preference the most offensive to Katherine, especially as she saw that he gave her every encouragement by his attention and flatteries, and the liberties she provoked him to take.

The ladies came to-day for the purpose of