

were now come home, and were, I may say, women grown, for they were eighteen. And although I say it, that, perhaps, ought not to say it, remarkably fine-looking young women they were. People said that Elizabeth was a perfect picture, though, so far as I could judge, Rachel was the bonniest of the two; but they were remarkably like each other.—There, however, was this difference between them—Rachel was of a sedate and serious disposition, and very plain in her dress, even plainer sometimes than I wished to see her; but she was always so neat, that she set whatever she put on. Elizabeth, on the other hand, though a kind-hearted lassie, was more thoughtless, and more given to the vanities of this world. When her sister was at her books, she was at her looking-glass. She was as fond of dress as Rachel was the reverse.—I have often said to her—

‘O Bessy! Bessy!—dress will turn your head some day or other. Ye will frighten any man from having ye.’

‘Don’t be afraid of that, father,’ she replied, laughing, for there was no putting her out of temper, (she was like her mother in that;) ‘there is no danger, and it is time enough yet.’

She was also excessively fond of amusements, such as balls, concerts, plays, and parties. Much fonder, indeed, than it was agreeable for me or her mother to observe, and we frequently expostulated with her; for though we did not wish to debar her entirely from such amusements, yet there is a medium to be observed in all things, and we did not like to see her going beyond the medium.

Well, Sir, she had been at a party one night in Mosley Street, and a young gentleman, who, I afterwards understood, had shewn her a great deal of attention throughout the evening, saw her home. There was no harm in this; but he called again the next day, and, I shortly after learned, every day. So, when I heard this, I thought it was right and proper that I should see him, and learn who and what he was. I accordingly stopped at home a forenoon for the express purpose, but not much, as I easily observed, to the satisfaction of Elizabeth. About eleven o’clock, the gentleman came as usual. I easily saw that he was rather taken aback on perceiving me; but he recovered his self-possession as quick as the eyelid can twinkle,

and perfectly confused me with his superabundance of bows and scrapes. I did not like his appearance. He was dressed like a perfect fop. He wore silk stockings, and his feet were wedged into bits of French-soled pumps, which, to my eye, made it perfectly painful to look on them. He had on a light green, very fine and very fashionable coat and trousers, with a pure white waistcoat and a ribbon about his neck. He also carried a cane with an image on the head of it, and he had a great bunch of black curls on each side of his head, which, I verily believe, were pomatumed, brushed, and curled.

‘I must put an end to your visits, Billy,’ thinks I, before ever he opened his lips.

He was what some ladies would call—‘most agreeable young man.’ In fact I hear one (not my daughter) pronounce him to be ‘a prodigious fine gentleman!’ ‘Prodigious,’ thought I, when I heard it. He had a great flow of speech and spirits, and could run off all the scandal of the town with a flippancy that disgusted me, but delighted many. He could also talk like a critic about dancers, singers, actors, and race-horses, and discuss the fashions like a milliner. All this I ascertained during the half hour I was in his company. He also gabbled French and Italian, and played upon a thing, like a sort of bass fiddle without a bow, that they call guitar. I at once set him down in my own mind for a mere fortune-hunter. He was a shallow puppy; he carried all on the outside of his head, and nothing within it. I felt he knew no more about business than the man in the moon. But he pretended to be the son of an Honourable, and carried cards with the words, ‘Charles Austin, Esq.,’ engraved upon them. He was above belonging to any profession—he was a gentleman at large.

Disgusted as I was with him, I had no the face to rise and say to him—‘Sir, I thank you to go out of my house, and not enter it again.’ And from the manner in which I had been brought up, I had not the manner of what is called—bowing a person to the door. But what vexed me most while he remained, was to observe that even Pricilla sometimes laughed at the silly things he said, which, as I afterwards told her, was just encouraging him. When he left the house, I turned to Elizabeth, and—