

ces and tiresome attentions with which the young lord Percival, distinguished a certain young lady, who I suspect from mere politeness, bore with what she could not but regard as a painful infliction. But the case to which I more particularly refer fell under my own immediate observation this morning! When I entered the breakfast-room, who found I but papa's youthful friend, Sir James Wilmot, and my chosen companion, Miss Oakley, and by the appearance of the parties when they found themselves interrupted, I cannot but infer that, if it pleases her, Miss Oakley may in due time become the Lady Wilmot."

"Harriet! Harriet!" exclaimed the Countess, "I cannot tolerate such rudeness!—Was it to insult and ridicule Miss Oakley that you wished to invite her hither?—I must say that, hereafter, I hope, if not on your own, at least the guests of your parents, may be exempt from your satire!"

"Lady Harriet might just refer to another case, which would assist to establish the validity of her very important discovery," said lord Percival. "She forgets, or perhaps neglects to mention, that our friend Lawton shows alarming symptoms of having been affected by the peculiar charms—not to refer to a certain young lady who might be quoted as another case, were it not in the privilege of the sex to escape from exposure."

"Do we walk or ride this morning?" exclaimed Sir Edgar Roscoe, rising from the table, as he saw that a severe retort was about to be made by the offended lady, which he with characteristic good nature wished to prevent. Come, lady Harriet, tell us what is the order of the day?

"To walk, certainly," she answered. That is if you abide by my decision! for, as some of our party are incompetent to manage a horse, notwithstanding the world would still retain its present share of intellect, I might feel some twinges of conscience if they were brought back with broken backs."

The whole party arose from their seats,—the earl and countess looked confused and displeased, yet each repressed the reproof they felt inclined to give. Sir Edgar saw that his little scheme had failed; while the ladies Julia and Ellen hastily left the room as if fearful that they might at the next moment become the victims of her satire. Florence was following, when the lady Harriet called her to assist in arranging a bouquet of flowers, which she had just taken from a vase, while the earl and countess followed by the elder members of the breakfast party, retired, as if unwilling to hear what they feared

might follow. But, lord Percival, too much irritated to reply, took refuge in a paper; and after arranging her flowers she left the room, saying as she did so, "Now for our walk, good people," and humming a merry air, she ran lightly to her chamber.

"How could you be so cruel, dear Lady Harriet, as to make reference to my being, merely by accident, alone with Sir James?" asked Florence.

"Come, now, don't mind it! I only meant to give Fred a bit of a start; for if he once begins to get to fear a rival, I think it might help him along vastly well, for I fear he is but a slow suitor."

"Do you know the lady Emily Percy?" asked Florence, anxious to turn the thoughts of lady Harriet into another channel.

"Certainly! she was in school the first year I was there, but being some three years older than myself, I had but little to do with her ladyship. Being the daughter of a duke, you could hardly expect she would distinguish particularly the daughter of an earl, who was likely to be still a school girl after she had secured a settlement in life; but thanks to the rapid course of 'father time,' I shall soon be free from the bondage of the schoolroom, and then I shall contest stoutly with my lady the title she has long usurped, that of reigning belle."

"Is she very beautiful?"

"Why, yes! and so were the dolls which amused our days of babyhood. She has a face in which each feature is perfect as if it was wrought in wax, with cheeks well tinged either by the roses of nature or the rouge of the druggist; large blue eyes, and a rich profusion of jetty ringlets. Our dolls had these; and this is all her ladyship can boast, for if the animation of the features be an index of the soul, she must be wholly destitute of that part of human existence. But why do you ask?"

"Sir James was telling me how very beautiful she is, when you made your appearance this morning," she answered evasively.

"Well, you may judge for yourself, for she will be here to-morrow; having spent a few weeks at the house of a relative near Dover, the duke, who escorts her home, now the visit has terminated, has written to inform us that he intends to do us the honor of inflicting himself and daughter upon us for a day or two. Now, this seems an evil not to be avoided, so we must endeavour to bear with them; but notwithstanding the lectures of mamma, if her ladyship does not demean herself to my taste, she must bear a part of the kindness I sometimes bestow on Percival. Stop! do not interrupt me! for I have a little lesson to give