

For The Amaranth.

THE WIFE UNMASKED.

A TALE.

SIR JAMES FREEMORE, a lively young Baronet with a large estate, and considerable expectations, happening to be thrown from his hæton, one summer evening, between London and Windsor, by his inattention to a pair of nettlesome horses, while he was staring at a girl sitting in a bow window at some distance from the road, was severely stunned by the fall; but his fall was not attended with any fractures or dislocations.

When he recovered his senses, he was agreeably surprized to find himself attended by the lady whom he had so much admired. He started partly from astonishment, partly from joy, and on her making the most humane enquiries about him, assured her, with many grateful acknowledgements, that he felt no inconvenience from the awkward accident he had met with. He also assured her that her solitude concerning him, gave him a satisfaction, which was not in the power of words to describe.

Just when he had finished his additional assurance, the father of his unknown angel—for he appeared to his eyes angelically handsome, entered the room. On her informing him what he had done, with the assistance of her servant, he commended her highly for her benevolent behaviour; he then addressed himself to his unexpected guest, and told him that he was sincerely glad to find he had received so little injury from the overturning of his carriage.

Sir James, not less satisfied with Mr. Wilmot's deportment than he had been with his daughter's, invited them both, after having, though unnecessarily, mentioned his name, to Freemore farm, to which place he was going, when he was so unseasonably interrupted.—He then prepared to take his leave, but as it was late, Mr. Wilmot entreated him to remain for the night at his house.

Sir James wanted no pressing; he accepted the invitation with a great deal of pleasure, and Charlotte was not at all displeased with her father's proceedings. Sir James, during the course of the evening, made his company extremely acceptable both to Mr. Wilmot and his daughter; when he retired to his chamber, the following dialogue passed between the father and daughter—

"This is a fortunate adventure. I think my dear girl, Sir James has, I am sure, taken a

violent fancy to you, and it will be worth your while to improve his striking prepossession in your favour."

"I am afraid to believe, Sir," replied Charlotte, blushing, "that Sir James is as much prepossessed in my favour, as I partially imagine he is;—I will freely confess, that his behaviour to me is very flattering, and that I never received civilities from any gentleman so agreeable to me."

"Well, my dear, time will shew whether I am mistaken or not, if my conjectures are confirmed, you will, I hope, give him encouragement."

"All the encouragement which propriety will admit of, father."

Charlotte, when she uttered these words, wished her father good night, and retired to her own apartment. She longed indeed to be alone, but she wanted not to pay a visit to her pillow. Her mind was in such an agitated state that she felt no desire to close her eyes. She went to bed, however, and in the midst of her reflections on the adventure of the evening, fell asleep.

Sir James took leave of his hospitable entertainer and his amiable daughter the next morning. At his departure, he begged the former to permit him to wait on the latter at his return from his farm. Mr. Wilmot readily granted his request, and Charlotte modestly looked as if his coming again would fill her tender heart with the most pleasant emotions.

Sir James having remounted the hæton, proceeded to his farm, having some business of importance to transact there; but he earnestly wished at the same time, that no business of any kind required his departure from Mr. Wilmot's house, at which he gladly could have stayed, in consequence of repeated invitations, had not his domestic engagements demanded his attention. As soon as he had finished his business at Freemore farm, Sir James returned to Mr. Wilmot's house, and was received in the kindest manner by Miss Wilmot,—which was particularly gratifying to Sir James. His passion for her increased every day. He was quite a disinterested lover, for her fortune was not sufficient to render him envious of her money. He loved her for herself alone, and married her in a few weeks after his proposals had been offered and accepted.

Charlotte, when she became Lady Freemore, was an unexceptionable character! her goodness was equal to her beauty; but having been educated in a private way, and seen nothing of the world, she was not thoroughly qualified to