

pleased, "behave yourself before Lady Amanda. This way, my lady, if you please."

Amy was then conducted down a long corridor, at the end of which appeared folding doors of massive carved oak—to these Mrs. Bennet applied her keys, and on their being thrown open, a large handsome room, whose walls were completely lined with fine paintings, met her view.

"Now I beg you to attend to the descriptions and movements of our worthy conductress," whispered the Earl to Amy, who leaned on his arm, "they will be the same I remember to have heard, when I was younger than Arthur."

Mrs. Bennet walked up to the portraits of the late Earl and his Countess, before which she made two low curtsies—then turning to Amy, she said :

"This is my dear late lord, one of the noblest, one of the best of men, and his amiable countess ; those pictures were taken before the birth of my lord there, and very like they were—I remember when they were finished, the dear Earl saying to me, 'Bennet, do you think they have made me handsome enough ?' and my replying, 'the painter may, indeed, trace your Lordship's features, but none save the divine hand could express the soul which beams in benevolence from them.' He was pleased with my answer and patting me on the shoulder said : 'very good, very good, my worthy friend, and quite poetical.' "

And there is my Lady, the present Countess, as beautiful this day as she was when that was painted."

Amy looked with interest on both portraits, the Earl's represented a fine rather than a handsome man, in the prime of life, attired in a court dress—but her attention was most given to the Countess in whose commanding, dignified countenance, cast in the Siddons mould, or in that of the Roman matron (to us the perfection of woman) she discovered the strongest resemblance of the present Earl, her son ; there were the same chiselled features, the same dark intelligent eye, and rather pale complexion, the noble forehead, and the open brow—she could not forbear turning to Lord Blondville to compare the two, he perceived it, and smiled, while the loquacious Mrs. Bennet continued : "I see your Ladyship discovers the likeness ; the Earl has always been reckoned the image of the Countess. Ah, well do I remember when he was but a babe, and the rejoicing on the day of his christening—you would not suppose to see him now, that as a child he could be very wilful, and full of mischief, many a trick has he played on me, bless his young heart, frightening me with squibs, or starting out upon me from some dark corner—and making hideous noises."

"He is just the same now," cried Arthur, "and quite as full of mischief, only he pretends to be so well behaved before Amy."

"You see what a character I have got," said the

Earl laughing, "but let us proceed—who have we next Mrs. Bennet ?"

"Your Lordship's sisters, Lady Matilda and Lady Emily Clarendon," she replied, "painted to the life."

They were not handsome, as Amy expected, and were evidently some years older than their brother, but they were represented as elegant looking young women, and in Lady Emily's she traced a very sweet amiable expression. She turned from these to the Earl's portrait, taken as a boy endeavouring to rein in a fiery charger.

"There he is himself," said Mrs. Bennet, "and a hard matter it was to get him to be still for the painter whose patience was wonderful—many a preserved tart did it cost me to tempt him into the room ; he liked it well enough, when his favourite Sultan was brought out to be taken with him."

Long and delightedly did Amy gaze upon this beautiful speaking picture, until her attention was called away to Arthur's, which had been finished only two years back,—he appeared sitting on a bank, with a large Newfoundland dog by his side, who was looking all eagerness in his young master's face.

"Is not that a lovely piece ?" asked Mrs. Bennet, "oh, how I have seen my dear lady sitting for hours before it, and kissing the lifeless canvass—she doats upon that dear boy, as I have often told her, too fondly. And yet who could help it, sent to her as he was in such an hour to console her like a little angel. Lord Arthur is a posthumous child," she added in a low tone to her deeply interested auditress, who gazed in silence, while tears filled her eyes, until Arthur's gay laugh turned her thoughts on himself.

"Come here, Amy, and look at this," he said, drawing her away to an old Dutch painting, representing a humorous scene, and which had caught his fancy, "did you ever see such faces ?" but good Mrs. Bennet had not half finished,—there were all the ancestors of the present family to be seen,—grim old warriors in armour, and dames in rich brocade,—she paused before one particularly grave matron, and curtsied to the ground.

"That is my Lord's venerable grandmother," said she, "the dowager Countess of Blondville. Heaven rest her soul,—I was but a siip of a girl when I first went to live with her ladyship. She was rather severe and peculiar in her ways, to be sure ; yet, I have no doubt I owe much to her vigilant care and watchfulness."

"Ah, Mrs. Bennet, you were a gay young lady in those days, I have no doubt," returned the Earl smiling archly.

"Nay, now my Lord, you are too bad," replied the worthy housekeeper, endeavouring to prim her mouth, and look demure, although there was a slight twinkling in her eyes, which beheld its expression. "But it was my lady's custom to look much