

for his consideration, but she intended to retain the whole; she had no wish to purchase children, who she thought horrid bores." The last offer was from a Mr. Huggins, a London merchant, and a highly respectable man, but whose name proved an insuperable objection. "Huggins, how vulgar! Hug! how shocking! never should it be hers." In these prejudices, Miss Felicia Sykes continued to the present time, enjoying her single blessedness, and vowing to preserve it in spite of the unhappy swains who continued to sigh for her comfortable establishment, and to pore over her father's will at Doctor's Commons.

She did not possess many real friends, for people were afraid of her blunt remarks and severe censures; which to say the truth, were only levelled at those who richly deserved them. Her favourite expression of "La, my dear!" her volubility, and her various strange attitudes, betrayed vulgarity, yet with all these, there was a worth and honesty in her character that merited respect. Soon after her arrival in the neighbourhood of Canterbury, she had made the acquaintance of Lady Woodford at some charitable meeting, much to her gratification, as she knew that she was inaccessible and visited but a few select friends. Her society could not suit the refined and quiet tastes of the ladies at the Abbey, yet were they civil and polite, from kindness of heart and that genuine good breeding which ever accompanies high polish.

When Miss Sykes had told her second tale of woe, she turned her inquiring eyes on Katherine, who was quietly pursuing her work, wondering who she could be. "Some person of consequence or she would not be here," thought the maiden; "I must find out her name."

"There have been some late arrivals at Canterbury," she continued, aloud, to lady Woodford. "Has your ladyship seen any of them yet?"

"No, indeed," replied Lady Woodford, "nor have I even heard of them."

"La, my dear! not heard that the —— Regiment has replaced that slow, stupid set who were here last winter."

"I am aware of that," returned Lady Woodford, a little stiffly, while Katherine smiled.

Well, my dear, there are a few ladies; I called on a Mrs. Bruce the other day, and was so amused by the decorations in her sitting room; such military contrivances, I thought I should have died laughing; a splendid ottoman composed of an old packing case, cushioned with blankets and covered with chimiz, a large deal box turned into a book case, over which was thrown a shawl of some foreign description."

"And pray, Miss Sykes, how did you disco-

ver all this?" inquired Clara, while Katherine laughed.

"La, my dear! I lifted up the covers, to be sure, as the lady was not in the room; she nearly caught me doing so. Such a little quiet looking homely body."

"Mrs. Bruce is a friend of yours, Mrs. Warburton, is she not?" inquired Lady Woodford, still more stiffly.

"A very dear one," replied Katherine, warmly, while Miss Sykes repeated:

"Warburton! Warburton! Why that was the name of the handsome young man who was flirting at the ball last night with Lady Marley."

Katherine now looked distressed, when Lady Woodford, to prevent any further unpleasant remarks, said:

"Perhaps, Miss Sykes, I ought to have introduced Mrs. Warburton to you at first, the lady of Captain Warburton."

"La! and was he really a married man?" almost screamed Miss Sykes. "I don't think Lady Marley knew it, or she would not have sat so long with him in the corner, or have allowed him to squeeze her hand so tenderly; and with such a pretty wife of his own, too! what abominable creatures men are,—how thankful I am that I have nothing to do with them. I would not even keep a puppy dog, lest he should prove unfaithful. My dear, I shall have great pleasure in calling upon you; pray, where do you reside?" she continued, to Katherine, whose confusion and distress had increased even to tears.

"At present Mrs. Warburton is staying with us," replied Lady Woodford, much annoyed, and in her most formal manner. "And we do not intend to part with her so long as she will indulge us by remaining."

"Then I think her decidedly wrong," retorted the maiden, nothing daunted by the gathering coldness of her ladyship. "With a young, attractive and gay husband, she ought to remain at home to take care of him. Follow my advice, my dear," rising and nodding to Katherine; "if you knew men folk as I do, you would; believe me, not one is to be trusted, no not one. Good bye, I hope to see you soon again, and improve my acquaintance with you, for you look a very sweet creature. Good morning, Lady Woodford; that frown is not becoming, my dear, it will never awe me into silence when I feel it my duty to speak. Ah! I am glad to see you smile. If I meet your *caro* this evening, Mrs. Warburton, I shall tell him he is found out. Adieu!" And with these words she tripped out of the room, and ascending her carriage, desired her servant to drive to Lady Marley's.