

THE

Black Velvet Pelisse ;

A TALE.

“ On the pillow of anguish, bewilder'd and weak,
“ What balm is so welcome to woe,
“ As the full gush of feeling that moistens the cheek
“ Of mercy's fair agent below.”

BY MRS. OPIE.

BOSTON :

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT 47, MARLBORO'-STREET,
CORNER OF FRANKLIN-STREET.

John Cotton, jr. agent.

THE BLACK VELVET PELISSE.

MR. BERESFORD was a merchant, engaged in a very extensive business, and possessed of considerable property, a great part of which was vested in a large estate in the country, on which he chiefly resided.

Beresford was what is commonly denominated *purse-proud*; and so eager to be honoured upon account of his wealth, that he shunned rather than courted the society of men of rank, as he was fond of power and precedence, and did not like to associate with those who had an indisputable claim to that deference of which he himself was desirous. But he earnestly wished that his only child and heiress should marry a man of rank; and being informed that a young baronet of large estates in his neighbourhood, and who was also heir to a barony, was just returned from his travels, and intended to settle at his paternal seat, Mr. Beresford was resolved that Julia should have every possible opportunity of shewing off to the best advantage before so desirable a neighbour; and he determined that his

daughter, his house, and his table, should not want any charm which money could procure.

Beresford had gained his fortune by degrees; and having been educated by frugal and retired parents, his habits were almost parsimonious; and when he launched out into unwonted expenses on becoming wealthy, it was only in a partial manner. His house and his furniture had a sort of pye-bald appearance; his style of living was not consistent, like that of a man used to live like a gentleman; but opulence, with a timid grasp, seemed to squeeze out its indulgences from the griping fingers of habitual economy. True, he could, on occasion, be splendid, both in his public and private gifts; but such bounties were efforts, and he seemed to wonder at himself whenever the exertion was over.

Julia Beresford, his daughter, accustomed from her birth to affluence, if not to luxury,—and having in every thing what is called the spirit of a gentlewoman, was often distressed and mortified at the want of consistency in her father's mode of living; but she was particularly distressed to find that, though he was always telling her what a fortune he would give her when she was married, and at his death, he allowed her but a trifling sum, comparatively, for pocket money, and required from her, with teasing minuteness,

an account of the manner in which her allowance was spent; reprobating very severely her propensity to spend her money on plausible beggars and pretended invalids.

But on this point he talked in vain; used by a benevolent and pious mother, whose loss she tenderly deplored, to impart comfort to the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, Julia endeavoured to make her residence in the country a blessing to the neighbourhood; but, too often, kind words, soothing visits, and generous promises, were all that she had to bestow; and many a time did she purchase the means of relieving a distressed fellow creature by a personal sacrifice: for though ever ready to contribute to a subscription either public or private, Beresford could not be prevailed upon to indulge his daughter by giving way to that habitual benevolence, which, when once practised, can never be left off.

But though the sums were trifling which Julia had to bestow, she had so many cheap charities in her power, such as sending broth to the neighbouring cottages, and making linen of various sorts for poor women and children, that she was deservedly popular in the neighbourhood; and though her father was reckoned as proud as he was rich, the daughter was pronounced to be

a pattern of good nature, and as affable as he was the contrary.

But wherever Beresford could have an opportunity of displaying his wealth to advantage, he regarded not expense : and to outvie the neighbouring gentlemen in endeavours to attract the rich young baronet, whom all the young ladies would, he supposed, be aiming to captivate, he purchased magnificent furniture and carriages, and promised Julia a great addition to her wardrobe, whenever Sir Frederick Mortimer should take up his abode at his seat.

Julia heard that the baronet was expected, with a beating heart. She had been several times in his company at a watering place, immediately on his return from abroad, and had wished to appear as charming in his eyes as he appeared in hers ; but she had been disappointed. Modest and retiring in her manner, and not showy in her person, though her features were regularly beautiful, Sir Frederick Mortimer, who had only seen her in large companies, and with very striking and attractive women, had regarded her merely as an amiable girl, and had rarely thought of her again.

Julia Beresford was formed to steal upon the affections by slow degrees ; to interest on acquaintance, not to strike at first sight. But the

man who had opportunities of listening to the sweet tones of her voice, and of gazing on her varied countenance when emotion crimsoned her pale cheek, and lighted up the expression of her eyes, could never behold her without a degree of interest which beauty alone often fails to excite. Like most women, too, Julia derived great advantages from dress; of this she was sensible, though very often did she appear shabbily attired from having expended on others sums destined to ornament herself; but, when she had done so, a physiognomist would have discovered in her countenance, probably, an expression of self-satisfaction, more ornamental than any dress could be. But, generally, as Julia knew the value of external decoration, she wisely wished to indulge it.

One day, Julia, accompanied by her father, went to the shop of a milliner, in a large town, near which they lived; and, as winter was coming on, and her pelisse, a dark and now faded purple, was nearly worn out, she was very desirous of purchasing a black velvet one, which was on sale; but her father hearing that the price of it was twelve guineas, positively forbade her to wish for so expensive a piece of finery; though he owned that it was very handsome, and very becoming.

“To be sure,” said Julia smiling, but casting a longing look at the pelisse, “twelve guineas might be better bestowed:” and they left the shop.

The next day Mr. Beresford went to town on business, and in a short time after, he wrote to his daughter to say that he had met Sir Frederic Mortimer, in London, and that he would soon be down at his seat, to attend some poney races, which Mr. Hanmer, who had a mind to show off his dowdy daughter to the young baronet, intended to have on a piece of land belonging to him; and that he had heard all the ladies in the neighbourhood were to be there.

“I have received an invitation for you and myself,” continued Mr. Beresford; “and therefore, as I am resolved the Miss Traceys, and the other girls, shall not be better or more expensively dressed than my daughter, I enclose you bills to the amount of thirteen pounds; and I desire you to go and purchase the velvet pelisse which we so much admired; and I have sent you a hat, the most elegant which money could procure, in order that my heiress may appear as an heiress should do.”

Julia's young heart beat with pleasure at this permission; for she was to adorn herself to appear before the only man whom she ever *wished*

to please : and the next morning she determined to set off to make the desired purchase.

That evening, being alone, she set out to take her usual walk ; and having, lost in no unpleasing reverie, strayed very near to a village about three miles from home, she recollected to have heard an affecting account of the distress of a very virtuous and industrious family in that village, owing to the poor man's being drawn for the militia, and not rich enough to procure a substitute. She therefore resolved to go on and enquire how the matter had terminated. Julia proceeded to the village, and reached it just as the very objects of her solicitude were come to the height of their distresses.

The father of the family, not being able to raise more than half the money wanted, was obliged to serve ; and Julia, on seeing a crowd assembled, approached to ask what was going and found she was arrived to witness a very affecting scene : for the poor man was taking his last farewell of his wife and family, who, on his departure to join the regiment, would be forced to go to the work-house, where, as they were in delicate health, it was most probable they would soon fall victims to bad food and bad air.

The poor man was universally beloved in his village ; and the neighbours, seeing that a young

lady inquired concerning his misfortunes with an air of interest, were all eager to give her every possible information on the subject of his distress. "And only think miss," said one of them, "for the want of nine pounds only, as honest and hard working a lad as ever lived, and as good a husband and father, must be forced to leave his family, and be a militia man, and they, poor things, go to the work house!"

"Nine pounds!" said Julia, "would that be sufficient to keep him at home?"

"La! yes, miss; for that young fellow yonder would gladly go for him for eighteen pounds!"

On hearing this, how many thoughts rapidly succeeded each other in Julia's mind! If she paid the nine pounds, the man would be restored to his family, and they preserved perhaps from an untimely death in a work house! But then she had no money but what her father had sent to purchase the pelisse, nor was she to see him till she met him on the race ground! and he would be so disappointed if she was not well dressed! True she might take the pelisse on trust; but then she was sure her father would be highly incensed at her extravagance, if she spent twelve guineas, and gave away nine pounds at the same time: therefore she knew she must either give up doing a generous action, or give

up the pelisse ; that is, give up the gratification of her father's pride, and her own vanity.

“ No, I dare not, I cannot do it,” thought Julia ; “ my own vanity I would willingly mortify, but not my father's. No—the poor man must go !”

During this mental struggle, the by-standers had eagerly watched her countenance ; and thinking she was disposed to pay the sum required, they communicated their hopes to the poor people themselves ; and as Julia turned her eyes towards them, the wretched couple looked at her with such an imploring look ! but she was resolved : “ I am sorry, I am very sorry,” said she, “ that I can do nothing for you : however, take this.” So saying, she gave them all the loose money she had in her pocket, amounting to a few shillings, and then with an aching heart walked rapidly away ; but as she did so, the sobs of the poor woman, as she leaned on her husband's shoulder, and the cries of the little boy, when his father, struggling with his grief, bade him a last farewell, reached her, and penetrated to her heart.

“ Poor creatures !” she inwardly exclaimed ; “ and nine pounds would change these tears into gladness, and yet I withhold it ! And is it for this that heaven has blessed me with opu-

lence ? for this—to be restrained by the fear of being reproved for spending a paltry sum such as this is, from doing an action acceptable in the eyes of my Creator ! No ; I will pay the money ! I will give myself the delight of serving afflicted worth, and spare myself from, perhaps eternal self reproach !”

She then, without waiting for further consideration, turned back again, paid the money into the poor man’s hand ; and giving the remaining four pounds to the woman, who, though clean, was miserably clad, desired her to lay part of it out in clothes for herself and children.

I will not attempt to describe the surprise and gratitude of the relieved sufferers, nor the overwhelming feelings which Julia experienced ; who, withdrawing herself with the rapidity of lightning from their thanks, and wishing to remain unknown, ran hastily along her road home, not daring to stop, lest her joy at having done a generous deed should be checked by other considerations.

But at length exhausted, and panting for breath, she was obliged to relax in her speed ; and then the image of her angry and disappointed parent appeared to her in all its terrors.

“ What can I do ?” she exclaimed. “ Shall I order the pelisse, though I can’t pay for it, or

go without it? No; I ought not to incur so great an expense without my father's leave, though I know him to be able to afford it; and to run in debt he would consider as even a greater fault than the other. Well then, I must submit to mortify his pride; and though I rejoice in what I have done, the joy is amply counterbalanced by the idea of giving pain to my father."

Poor Julia! her own wounded vanity came in for its share in causing her uneasiness; and the rest of that day, and the next, Julia spent in reflections and fears, which did not tend to improve her looks, and make a becoming dress unnecessary.

The next morning was the morning for the races. The sun shone bright, and every thing looked cheerful but Julia. She had scarcely spirits to dress herself. It was very cold; therefore she was forced to wear her faded purple pelisse, and now it looked shabbier than usual; and still shabbier from the contrast of a very smart new black velvet bonnet.

At length Julia had finished her toilette, saying to herself, "My father talked of Mr. Hanmer's daughter. I am sure Mr. Hanmer may return the compliment;" and then, with a heavy heart, she got into the carriage, and drove to the house of rendezvous.

Mr. Beresford was there before her ; and while he contemplated with fearful admiration the elegant cloaks and fine showy figures and faces of the Miss Traceys, between whose father and himself there had long been a rivalry of wealth, he was consoled for their elegance by reflecting how much more expensive and elegant Jullia's dress would be, and how well she would look, flushed as he expected to see her, with the blush of emotion on entering a full room, and the consciousness of more than usual attraction in her appearance.

Julia at length appeared ; but pale, dejected, and in her old purple pelisse !

What a mortification ! His daughter, the great heiress, the worst dressed and most dowdy looking girl in the company ! Insupportable ! scarcely could he welcome her, though he had not seen her for some days ; and he seized the very first opportunity of asking her if she had received the notes.

“ Yes, I thank ye, sir ; ” replied Julia.

“ Then why did you not buy what I bade you ? It could not be gone ; for, if you did not buy it, nobody else could, I am sure.”

“ I—I—I thought I could do without it—and—”

“There now, there is perverseness. When I wished you not to have it, then you wanted it; and now I protest if I don’t believe you did it on purpose to mortify me; and there are those proud minxes, whose father is not worth half what I am, dressed out as fine as princesses. I vow, girl, you look so shabby and ugly, I can’t bear to look at you!”

What a trial for Julia; her eyes filled with tears; and at this moment Sir Frederic Mortimer approached her, and hoped she had not been ill; but he thought she was paler than usual:—

“Paler!” cried her father: “why I should not have known her, she has made such a fright of herself.”

“You may say so, sir,” replied the baronet politely, though he almost agreed with him; “but no other man can be of that opinion.”

Julia was rather gratified by this speech; but without waiting for an answer, Sir Frederic had gone to join the Miss Traceys; and as he entered into an animated conversation with them, Julia was allowed, unattended, to walk to a window in the next room, and enjoy her own melancholy reflections.

At length, to Julia’s great relief, they were summoned to the race ground; the baronet taking Miss Hanmer under one arm, and the elder

Miss Tracey under the other. "So," cried Beresford, seizing Julia roughly by the hand, I must lead you, I see; for who will take any notice of such a dowdy? Well girl, I was too proud of you, and you have contrived to humble me enough."

There was a mixture of tenderness and resentment in this speech, which quite overcame Julia, and she burst into tears. "There, now she is going to make herself worse by spoiling her eyes. But come, tell me what you did with the money; I insist upon knowing."

"I—I—gave it away," sobbed out Julia.

"Gave it away? Monstrous! I protest I will not speak to you again for a month." So saying, he left her, and carefully avoided to look at or speak to her again. Julia, who, conscious of being beheld by her father with looks of mortification and resentment, and by the man of her choice with indifference, had no satisfaction to enable her to support the unpleasantness of her situation, except the consciousness that her sorrow had been the cause of happiness to others, and that the family whom she had relieved were probably at that moment naming her with praises and blessings. "Then why should I be so selfish as to repine?" thought Julia: perhaps no one present has such a right to rejoice;

for how poor are the gratifications of vanity to the triumphs of benevolence !”

So like a philosopher reasoned our heroine ; but she felt like a woman, and, spite of herself, an expression of vexation still prevailed over the usual sweetness of her countenance.

The races at length finished, and with them she flattered herself would finish her mortification ; but in vain. The company was expected to stay to partake of a cold collation, which was to be preceded by music and dancing ; and Julia was obliged to accept the unwelcome invitation.

As the ladies were most of them very young, they were supposed not to have yet forgotten the art of dancing minuets, an art now of so little use ; and Mr. Hanmer begged Sir Frederic would lead out his daughter to shew off in a minuet. The baronet obeyed ; and then offered to take out Julia for the same purpose ; but she, blushing, refused to comply.

“ Well, what’s that for ?” cried Beresford angrily, who knew that Julia was remarkable for dancing a good minuet. “ Why can’t you dance when you are asked, Miss Beresford ?” “ Because,” replied Julia in a faltering voice, “ I have no gown on, and I can’t dance a minuet in my—in my pelisse.”

“Rot your pelisse!” exclaimed Beresford, forgetting all decency and decorum, and turned to the window to hide his angry emotions; while Julia hung her head, abashed, and the baronet led out Miss Tracey, who, throwing off the cloak which she had worn before, having expected such an exhibition would take place, displayed a very fine form, set off by the most becoming gown possible.

“Charming! admirable! what a figure! what grace!” was murmured throughout the room. Mr. Beresford’s proud heart throbbed almost to agony; while Julia, though ever ready to acknowledge the excellence of another, still felt the whole scene so vexatious to her, principally from the mortification of her father, that her only resource was again thinking on the family rescued from misery by her.

Reels were next called for, and Julia then stood up to dance; but she had not danced five minutes, when, exhausted by the various emotions which she had undergone during the last eight and forty hours, her head became so giddy, that she could not proceed, and was obliged to sit down.

“I believe the deuce is in the girl,” muttered Mr. Beresford; and, to increase her distress, Julia overheard him.

In a short time the dancing was discontinued, and a concert begun. Miss Hanmer played a sonata, and Miss Tracey sung a bravura song with great execution. Julia was then called upon to play; but she timidly answered that she never played lessons:—

“But you sing,” said Miss Hanmer.

“Sometimes; but I beg to be excused singing now.”

“What! you will not sing neither?” said Mr. Beresford.

“I can’t sing now, indeed, sir; I am not well enough; and I tremble so much that I have not a steady note in my voice.”

“So, Miss,” whispered Mr. Beresford, “and this is what I get in return for having squandered so much money on your education!”

The Miss Traceys were then applied to, and they sung, with great applause, a difficult Italian duo, and were complimented into the bargain on their readiness to oblige.

Poor Julia!

“You see, Miss Beresford, how silly and contemptible you look,” whispered Beresford, “while those squalling misses run away with all the admiration.”

Julia’s persecutions were not yet over. “Though you are not well enough, Miss Beres-

ford, to sing a song," said Mr. Hanmer, "which requires much exertion, surely you can sing a ballad without music, which is, I am told, your forte."

"So I have heard," cried Sir Frederic. "Do, Miss Beresford, oblige us."

"Do," said the Miss Traceys; "and we have a claim on you."

"I own it," replied Julia, in a voice scarcely audible; "but you, who are such proficient in music, must know, that, to sing a simple ballad, requires more self-possession and steadiness of tone than any other kind of singing; as all the merit depends on the clearness of utterance, and the power of sustaining the notes."

"True; but do try."

"Indeed I cannot:" and, shrugging up their shoulders, the ladies desisted from further importunities. "I am so surprised," said one of them to the other, leaning across two or three gentlemen: "I heard that Miss Beresford was remarkably good humoured and obliging, and she seems quite sullen and obstinate; don't you think so?"

"O dear, yes! and not obliging at all."

"No, indeed," cried Miss Hanmer; "she seems to presume on her wealth, I think: what think you, gentlemen?"

But the gentlemen were not so hasty in their judgments ; two of them only observed that Miss Beresford was in no respect like herself that day.

“ I don't think she is well,” said the baronet.

“ Perhaps she is in love,” said Miss Tracey, laughing at the shrewdness of her own observation.

“ Perhaps so,” replied Sir Frederic, thoughtfully.

It was Sir Frederic's intention to marry, and, if possible, a young woman born in the same county as himself ; for he wished her to have the same local prejudices as he had, and to have the same early attachments : consequently, he inquired of his steward, before he came to reside at his seat, into the character of the ladies in the neighbourhood ; but the steward could, or would talk of no one but Julia Beresford ; and of her he gave so exalted a character, that Sir Frederic, who only remembered her as a pleasing, modest girl, was very sorry that he had not paid her more attention.

Soon after, in the gallery of an eminent painter, he saw her picture ; and though he thought it flattered, he gazed on it with pleasure, and fancied that Julia, when animated, might be quite as handsome as that was. Since that time he had frequently thought of her, and thought

of her as a woman formed to make him happy; and indeed he had gone to look at her picture the day before he came down to the country, and had it strongly in his remembrance when he saw Julia herself, pale, spiritless, and ill-dressed, in Mr. Hanmer's drawing room.

Perhaps it would be too much to say, that he felt as much chagrined as Mr. Beresford; but certain it is, that he was sensibly disappointed, and could not help yielding to the superior attraction of the lovely and elegant Miss Tracey: besides, she was the object of general attention, and

“ We know of old, that all contend

“ To win her grace whom all commend.”

The concert being over, the company adjourned to an elegant entertainment set out in an open pavilion in the park, which commanded a most lovely view of the adjacent country.

Julia seated herself near the entrance; the baronet placed himself between the two lovely sisters; and Beresford, in order to be able to vent his spleen every now and then in his daughter's ear, took a chair beside her.

The collation had every delicacy to tempt the palate, and every decoration to gratify the taste; and all, except the pensive Julia, seemed to enjoy it:—when, as she was leaning from the door

to speak to a lady at the head of the table, a little boy, about ten years old, peeped into the pavilion, as if anxiously looking for some one.

The child was so clean, and so neat in his dress, that a gentleman near him patted his curly head, and asked him what he wanted.

“A lady.”

“But what lady? Here is one, and a pretty one too,” showing the lady next him; “will not she do?”

“Oh no! see is not my lady,” replied the boy.

At this moment Julia turned round, and the little boy, clapping his hands, exclaimed, “Oh! that’s she! that’s she!” Then running out, he cried, “Mother! mother! father! father! here she is! we have found her at last!” and before Julia, who suspected what was to follow, could leave her place, and get out of the pavilion, the poor man and woman whom she had relieved, and their now well-clothed, happy looking family, appeared before the door of it.

“What does all this mean?” cried Mr. Hammer. “Good people, whom do you want?”

“We come, sir,” cried the man, “in search of that young lady,” pointing to Julia; “as we could not go from the neighbourhood without coming to thank and bless her; for she saved me from going for a soldier, and my wife and chil-

dren from a workhouse, sir, and made me and mine as comfortable as you now see us."

"Dear father! let me pass, pray do," cried Julia, trembling with emotion, and oppressed with ingenuous modesty.

"Stay where you are, girl," cried Beresford, in a voice between laughing and crying.

"Well, but how came you hither?" cried Mr. Hanmer, who began to think this was a premeditated scheme of Julia's to show off before the company.

"Why, sir—shall I tell the whole story?" asked the man.

"No, no; pray go away," cried Julia, "and I'll come and speak to you."

"By no means," cried the baronet eagerly: "the story, the story, if you please,"

The man then began, and related Julia's meeting him and his family, her having relieved them, and then running away to avoid their thanks, and to prevent her being followed, as it seemed, and being known—that, resolved not to rest till they had learnt the name of their benefactress, they had described her person and her dress: "but bless your honour," interrupted the woman, "when we said what she had done for us, we had not to ask any more, for every body said it could be nobody but Miss Julia Beresford!"

Here Julia hid her face on her father's shoulder, and the company said not a word. The young ladies appeared conscience struck; for it seemed that none in the neighbourhood (and they were of it,) could do a kind action but Miss Julia Beresford.

"Well, my good man, go on," cried Beresford, gently.

"Well, sir, yesterday I heard that if I went to live at a market town four miles off, I could get more work to do than I have in my own village, and employ for my little boy too; so we resolved to go and try our luck there: but we could not be easy to go away, without coming to thank and bless that good young lady; so, hearing at her house that she was come hither, we made bold to follow her; your servants told us where to find her. Ah! bless her!—thanks to her, I can afford to hire a cart for my poor sick wife and family."

"Ah! miss, miss," cried the little boy, pulling Julia by the arm, "only think, we shall ride in a cart, with a tall horse; and brother and I have got new shoes—only look!"

But miss was crying, and did not like to look; however, she made an effort, and looked up, but was forced to turn away her head again, overset by a "God bless you!" heartily pro-

nounced by the poor woman, and echoed by the man.

“This is quite a scene, I protest,” cried Miss Tracey.

“But one in which we should all have been proud to have been actors, I trust,” answered the baronet. “What say you, gentlemen and ladies?” continued he, coming forward: “though we cannot equal Miss Beresford’s kindness, since she sought out poverty, and it comes to us, what say you? shall we make a purse for these good people, that they may not think there is only one kind being in the neighbourhood?”

“Agreed!” cried every one; and as Sir Frederic held the *hat*, the subscription from the ladies was a very liberal one; but Mr. Beresford gave *five guineas*: then Mr. Hanmer desired the overjoyed family to go to his house to get some refreshment, and the company reseated themselves.

But Mr. Beresford having quitted his seat, in order to wipe his eyes unseen at the door, the baronet had taken the vacant place by Julia.

“Now, ladies and gentlemen,” cried Beresford, blowing his nose, “you shall see a new sight—a parent asking pardon of his child. Julia, my dear, I know I behaved very ill—I know I was very cross to you—very savage; I know

I was. You are a good girl—and always were, and ever will be the pride of my life—so let's kiss and be friends:" and Julia, throwing herself into her father's arms, declared she should now be herself again.

"What! more scenes!" cried Mr. Hanmer.—
"What, are you sentimental too, Beresford? Who would have thought it!"

"Why, I'll tell a story now," replied he:—
"that girl vexed and mortified me confoundedly, that she did. I wished her to be smart, to do honour to you and your daughter to day; so I sent her twelve guineas to buy a very handsome velvet pelisse, which she took a fancy to, but which I thought too dear. But instead of that, here she come in this old fright, and a fine dowdy figure she looks—and when I reproached her, she said she had given the money away; and so I suppose it was this very money which she gave to these poor people. Heh! was it not so, Julia?"

"It was," replied Julia; "and I dared not then be so extravagant as to get the pelisse too."

"So, Hanmer," continued Beresford, "you may sneer at me for being *sentimental*, if you please; but I am now prouder of my girl in her shabby cloak here, than if she were dressed out in silks and satins.

“And so you ought to be,” cried Sir Frederic. “And Miss Beresford has converted this garment,” lifting up the end of the pelisse, “into a robe of honour:” so saying, he gallantly pressed it to his lips. “Come, I will give you a toast,” continued he:—“Here is the health of the woman who was capable of sacrificing the gratification of her personal vanity to the claims of benevolence!”

The ladies put up their pretty lips, but drank the toast, and Beresford went to the door to wipe his eyes again; while Julia could not help owning to herself, that if she had had her moments of mortification, they were richly paid.

The collation was now resumed, and Julia partook of it with pleasure; her heart was at ease, her cheek recovered her bloom, and her eyes their lustre. Again the Miss Traceys sung, and with increased brilliancy of execution. “It was wonderful! they sung like professors,” every one said; and then again was Julia requested to sing.

“I can sing *now*,” replied she; and I never refuse when I *can* do so. Now I have found my father’s favour, I shall find my voice too;” and then, without any more preamble, she sung a plaintive and simple ballad, in a manner the most touching and unadorned.

No one applauded while she sung, for all seemed afraid to lose any particle of tones so sweet and so pathetic; but when she had ended, every one, except Sir Frederic, loudly commended her, and he was silent; but Julia saw that his eyes glistened, and she heard him sigh, and she was very glad that he said nothing.

Again the sisters sung, and Julia too, and then the party broke up; but Mrs. Tracey invited the same party to meet at her house in the evening, to a ball and supper, and they all agreed to wait on her.

As they returned to the house, Sir Frederic gave his arm to Julia, and Miss Tracey walked before them.

"That is a very fine, showy, elegant girl," observed Sir Frederic.

"She is indeed, and very handsome," replied Julia; "and her singing is really wonderful."

"Just so," replied Sir Frederic; "it is wonderful, but not pleasing. Her singing is like herself—she is a bravura song—showy and brilliant but not *touching*—not interesting." Julia smiled at the illustration; and the baronet continued:

"Will you be angry at my presumption, Mr. Beresford, if I venture to add, that you too, resemble your singing? If Miss Tracey be a b

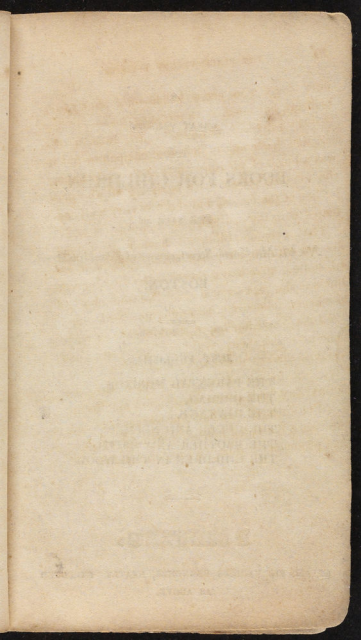
vura song, you are a ballad—not showy, not brilliant, but touching, interesting, and—

“O! pray say no more,” cried Julia, blushing, and hastening to join the company—but it was a blush of pleasure; and as she rode home, she amused herself with analysing all the properties of the *ballad*, and she was very well contented with the analysis.

That evening, Julia, all herself again, and dressed with exquisite and becoming taste, danced, smiled, talked, and was universally admired. But was she *particularly* so? Did the man of her heart follow her with delighted attention?

“Julia,” said her happy father, as they went home at night, “you will have the velvet pelisse, and Sir Frederic too, I expect.”

Nor was he mistaken. The pelisse was hers the next day, and the baronet some months after. But Julia, to this hour, preserves with the utmost care the faded pelisse, which Sir Frederic had pronounced to be “a robe of honour.”



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