

## THE BLACK BONNET.

ROSAMOND, at this time, was with her mother in London. One morning an elderly lady came to pay her mother a visit. This lady was an old friend of her mother's, but she had been for some years absent from England, so that Rosamond had never before seen her. When the lady had left the room Rosamond exclaimed,

"Mamma, I do not like that old woman at all. I am sorry that you promised to go to see her in the country, and to take me with you, for I dislike her, mamma."

"I will not take you with me to her house, if you do not wish to go there, Rosamond; but why you should dislike that lady I cannot even guess—you never saw her before this morning, and you know nothing about her."

"That is true, mamma, but I really do dislike her; I disliked her from the first minute she came into the room."

"For what reason?"

"Reason, mamma? I do not know; I have no particular reason."

"Well, particular or not, give me some reason."

"I cannot give you a reason, mamma, for I do not know why I do not like the woman; but you know that very often—or at least sometimes—without any reason—without knowing why—we like or dislike people."

"*We!* Speak for yourself, Rosamond; for my part, I always have some reason for liking or disliking people."

"Mamma, I daresay I have some reason, too, if I could find it out; but I never thought about it."

"I advise you to think about it, and find it out. Silly people sometimes like, or *take a fancy*, as they call it, at first

sight, to persons who do not deserve to be liked, who have bad tempers, bad characters, bad qualities. Sometimes silly people take a dislike, or, as they call it, an *antipathy*, to those who have good qualities, good characters, and good tempers."

"That would be unlucky, unfortunate," said Rosamond, beginning to look grave.

"Yes; unlucky, unfortunate for the silly people, because they might, if they had their choice, choose to live with the bad instead of with the good—choose to live with those who would make them unhappy, instead of with those who would make them happy."

"That would be a sad thing, indeed, mamma—very sad. Perhaps that woman to whom I took a dislike, or, what do you call it? an *antipathy*, may be a good woman, mamma."

"It is possible, Rosamond."

"Mamma, I will not be one of the silly people; I will not have an antipathy. What is an antipathy, mamma?"

"A feeling of dislike for which we can give no reason."

Rosamond stood still and silent for some moments, considering deeply, and then, suddenly bursting out laughing, she laughed for some time without being able to speak. At last she said,

"Mamma, I am laughing at the very odd, silly reason I was going to give you for disliking that lady—only because she had an ugly, crooked sort of pinch in the front of her black bonnet."

"Perhaps that was a sufficient reason for disliking the black bonnet," said Rosamond's mother, "but not quite sufficient for disliking the person who wore it."

"No, mamma, because she does not always wear it, I

suppose. She does not sleep in it, I daresay, and, if I were to see her without it, I might like her."

"Possibly."

"But, mamma, there is another reason why I disliked her, and this, perhaps, is a bad and unjust reason; but still I cannot help disliking the thing, and this thing she cannot take off or put on as she pleases. I can never see her without it, mamma, and this is a thing I must always dislike, and my knowing that this is the reason that I dislike her does not make me dislike her the least the less."

"The *least the less!*" repeated Rosamond's mother. "By the accuracy of your language, Rosamond, I perceive how accurately you think at present."

"Oh, mamma, but this does not depend on thinking; this depends on feeling, mamma. I wonder—I have a great curiosity to know—whether you took notice of that shocking thing?"

"When you have told me what this shocking thing is, I shall be able to satisfy your curiosity."

"Mamma, if you do not know it, it did not shock you—that is clear."

"Not perfectly clear."

"Then, mamma, you did see it, did you? And how could you help being shocked by it?"

"Will you tell me what you mean, Rosamond?"

"Then, mamma, you did not see it?"

"*It!* what?"

"When her glove was off, mamma, did you not see the shocking finger, mamma—the stump of a finger, and the great scar all over the back of her hand? Mamma, I am glad she did not offer to shake hands with me, for I think I could not have touched her hand; I should have drawn mine back."

"There is no danger that she should ever offer to shake hands with you, Rosamond, with that hand; she knows that it is disagreeable. If you observe, she gave me her other hand."

"That was well done. So she knows it is disagreeable. Poor woman! how sorry and ashamed of it she must be."

"She has no reason to be ashamed; she has more reason to be proud of it."

"Proud of it! Why, mamma? Then you know something more about it. Will you tell me all you know, mamma?"

"I know that she burnt that hand in saving her little granddaughter from being burnt to death. The child, going too near the grate when she was in a room by herself, set fire to her frock, and the muslin was in flames instantly. As she could not put out the flame, she ran screaming to the door. The servants came—some were afraid, and some did not know what to do. Her grandmother heard the child's screams, ran upstairs, and saw all her clothes and her hair on fire. She instantly rolled her up in a rug that was on the hearth. The kind grandmother did not, however, escape unhurt, though she did not at the time know, or feel, how much. But when the surgeon had dressed the child's burns, then she showed him her own hand. It was so terribly burnt, that it was found necessary to cut off one joint of the finger. The scar which you saw is the mark of the burn."

"Dear, good, courageous woman! And what a kind, kind grandmother!" cried Rosamond. "Oh, mamma, if I had known all this. Now I do know all this, how differently I feel. How unjust, how foolish, to dislike her. And for a pinch in a black bonnet. And for that very scar—that very hand! Mamma, I would not draw back my

hand if she were to offer to shake hands with me now.  
Mamma, I wish to go and see her now. Will you take me  
with you to her house in the country?"

"I will, my dear."