

an one so young—so innocent—and I am fully determined that I will not leave you without endeavouring to remove the cause."

"Oh, you cannot, even you cannot do that," replied Lady Amanda, "I ought to be accustomed to it, but I fear I never shall."

A few minutes walk brought them to the gorge of the valley, which they descended by a circuitous path, and after winding their way through a thick plantation, they found themselves at the gate of Lady Amanda's home. Dame Ursula unlocked the wicket, and on their entrance she carefully relocked it. The house was low, surrounded by a trellis, covered with ivy—its aspect was gloomy, though kept in the neatest order. Lady Amanda led the way to the small but exquisitely furnished drawing-room—here were her books, her musical instruments, her flowers—all bespeaking the refined taste of higher rank than the cottage, from its humble exterior, deserved to shelter.

"Will you tell Mrs. Somerville that Lord Blondeville is here," said she to dame Ursula, who instantly withdrew.

The Earl thought, as he gazed around him, and on the lovely inmate of this singular abode, that he was in some place of enchantment.

A beautiful cross, studded with precious stones, lay on the table—he took it up. "Is this yours?" he enquired, in a tone slightly mournful.

"It is mine," she replied, "I value it, I love it."

"You are then a Catholic?"

"Oh no, no, indeed I am not, my religion is the same as my mother's."

"Thank God," returned Lord Blondeville, earnestly, "from your foreign name, and a few slight touches in your appearance, I thought you owed your birth to *cara Italia*—and yet those blue eyes speak to me of England."

Lady Amanda turned pale as he uttered this—at the same moment the door opened, and a very lady-like person entered, who she immediately introduced as Mrs. Somerville.

"You are a truant this day, my child," said the lady affectionately. "I was becoming uneasy, when I heard the sound of your welcome voice."

"I did not indeed intend to stay so long, dearest mamma," replied Lady Amanda; "I am sorry I made you anxious."

"Ah, my Amy, a very little does that now—you find us, my Lord, in a strange, secluded spot," continued Mrs. Somerville, "but even this, I fear, will not be long left to us in peace—you will pardon me, as a stranger, for speaking very unreservedly to you—but I can assure you, unprotected as we are, and placed in peculiarly distressing circumstances, I have frequently longed for an opportunity of addressing you, and imploring your advice or assistance; and it is singular that accident should have this day given it to me."

The Earl was surprised—but everything he had seen in these interesting strangers was mysterious.

"I have already told the Lady Amanda," he replied, "how sincerely I desire to remove an anxiety and terror, which is to me inexplicable; I can only repeat the same to you—tell me, I entreat you, how I may serve you both."

"If your Lordship has patience to listen to a long story."

"I will listen to you forever," replied Lord Blondeville smiling, as his eyes were turned on Lady Amanda.

"My child, you must leave us for awhile," said Mrs. Somerville; "nay, it is imperative," she added, on perceiving the countenance of the Earl overshadowed; "but she shall return to thank you again ere your departure." Lady Amanda then left the room.

"That beautiful child," continued Mrs. Somerville, "is the daughter of the dearest friend I ever had in the world, whose maiden name was Agnes Denison. Her parents were wealthy, proud, worldly minded persons whose only care was the aggrandizement of their children. She had received, with her brother, a highly finished education—the more solid parts of which were derived from a peculiarly gifted clergyman, who resided in the family as tutor—the oft repeated tale that he should become most deeply attached to his interesting pupil, was all too natural—and the moment it was perceived by the ambitious parents, that he should be banished from the house, equally so. Thus a shade of sorrow was cast on her path from her earliest years. To divert her mind from dwelling on the object of her affection, she was carried to the continent, where constant travelling and change of scene, it was hoped, would efface him from her remembrance; but this took longer than they imagined—all her letters to me were filled with the one interesting theme. I was of course very guarded in my replies, and offered her the best advice I could for years not many superior to her own. My own marriage, and removal from the neighbourhood I had hitherto resided in, at this time took place, and for several years I was unable to trace my friend Agnes. At length a letter from her reached me, which filled me with misery on her account—she had been prevailed on to marry an Italian nobleman, whose only recommendations were high rank, great wealth, and the most surpassing beauty of person—the Duke de Manfredonia. His mind was weak, united to a great obstinacy of disposition and very violent passions—he was guided in every thing by his Confessor, one of the most bigotted, austere and designing of men. Agnes was carried from her friends almost immediately after her marriage, and no communication allowed to be kept up—the only indulgence shown her was the permission to retain the attached servant who had been with her from child-