

ments, it was sedulously arranged that, until she took possession of them, she should have no means of knowing what was going forward in that part of the ancient building, or of exposing herself to be seen by the workmen engaged in the decorations. She had been, therefore, introduced on that evening to a part of the mansion which she had never yet seen, so different from all the rest, that it appeared, in comparison, like an enchanted palace. And when she first examined and occupied these splendid rooms, it was with the wild and unrestrained joy of a rustic beauty, who finds herself suddenly invested with a splendour which her most extravagant wishes had never imagined, and at the same time with the keen feeling of an affectionate heart, which knows that all the enchantment that surrounds her is the work of the great magician Love.

The Countess Amy, therefore,—for to that rank she was exalted by her private but solemn union with England's proudest earl,—had for a time flitted hastily from room to room, admiring each new proof of her lover and her bridegroom's taste, and feeling that admiration enhanced, as she recollected that all she gazed upon was one continued proof of his ardent and devoted affection.—'How beautiful are these hangings!—How natural these paintings, which seem to contend with life!—How richly wrought is that plate, which looks as if all the galleons of Spain had been intercepted on the broad seas to furnish it forth!—And O, Janet!' she exclaimed repeatedly to the daughter of Anthony Foster, the close attendant, who, with equal curiosity, but somewhat less ecstasie joy, followed on her mistress's footsteps—'O, Janet! how much more delightful to think that all these fair things have been assembled by his love, for the love of me! and that this evening—this very evening, which grows darker every instant, I shall thank him more for the love that has created such an unimagined paradise, than for all the wonders it contains!'

'The Lord is to be thanked first,' said the pretty puritan, 'who gave thee, lady, the kind and courteous husband, whose love has done so much for thee. I, too, have done my poor share. But if you thus run wildly from room to room, the toil of my curling and my curling pins will vanish like the frost-work on the window when the sun is high.'

'Thou sayest true, Janet,' said the young and beautiful countess, stopping suddenly from her tripping race of enraptured delight, and looking at herself from head to foot in a large mirror, such as she had never before seen, and which, indeed, had few to match it even in the queen's palace—'Thou sayest true, Janet!' she answered, as she saw, with pardonable self-applause, the noble mirror reflect such charms as were seldom presented to its fair and polished surface; 'I have more of the milkmaid than the countess, with these cheeks flushed with haste, and all these brown curls, which you laboured to bring to order, straying as wild as the tendrils of an unpruned vine—My falling ruff is chafed too, and shows the neck and bosom more than is modest and seemly—Come, Janet—we will practise state—we will go to the withdrawing-room, my good girl, and thou shalt put these

rebel locks in order, and imprison within lace and cambric the bosom that beats too high.'

They went to the withdrawing apartment accordingly, where the countess playfully stretched herself upon the pile of Moorish cushions, half sitting, half reclining, half rapt in her own thoughts, half listening to the prattle of her attendant.

While she was in this attitude, and with a corresponding expression betwixt listlessness and expectation on her fine and expressive features, you might have searched sea and land without finding anything half so expressive, or half so lovely. The wreath of brilliants, which mixed with her dark brown hair, did not match in lustre the hazel eye which a light brown eyebrow, pencilled with exquisite delicacy, and long eyelashes of the same colour, relieved and shaded. The exercise she had just taken, her excited expectation and gratified vanity, spread a glow over her fine features, which had been sometimes censured (as beauty as well as art has her minute erities) for being rather too pale. The milk-white pearls of the necklace which she wore, the same which she had just received as a true-love token from her husband, were excelled in purity by her teeth, and by the colour of her skin, saving where the blush of pleasure and self-satisfaction had somewhat stained the neck with a shade of light crimson.—'Now, have done with these busy fingers, Janet,' she said to her handmaiden, who was still officiously employed in bringing her hair and her dress into order—'Have done, I say—I must see your father ere my lord arrives, and also Master Richard Varney, whom my lord has highly in his esteem—but I could tell that of him would lose him favour.'

'O, do not do so, good my lady!' replied Janet; 'leave him to God, who punishes the wicked in his own time; but do not you cross Varney's path, for so thoroughly hath he my lord's ear, that few have thriven who have thwarted his courses.'

'And from whom had you this, my most righteous Janet?' said the countess; 'or why should I keep terms with so mean a gentleman as Varney, being, as I am, wife to his master and patron?'

'Nay, madam,' replied Janet Foster, 'your ladyship knows better than I—But I have heard my father say, he would rather cross a hungry wolf, than thwart Richard Varney in his projects—And he has often charged me to have a care of holding commerce with him.'

'Thy father said well, girl, for thee,' replied the lady, 'and I dare swear meant well. It is a pity, though, his face and manner do little match his true purpose—for I think his purpose may be true.'

'Doubt it not, my lady,' answered Janet, '—Doubt not that my father purposes well, though he is a plain man, and his blunt looks may belie his heart.'

'I will not doubt it, girl, were it only for thy sake; and yet he has one of those faces which men tremble when they look on—I think even thy mother, Janet—nay, have done with that poking-iron—could hardly look upon him without quaking.'