

leave off these monkey tricks?" said I, assisting Gasper to rise; "the first time I beheld you was in the character of a Charlatan, and methinks you have retained it ever since."—"That is better than the one of a saucy waiting-maid, Mademoiselle Annetta," he replied, marching out as stately as if he had been my lord himself."

"Annetta, when will you learn to restrain that silly tongue of yours?" said Ursula—"I prithee, peace with such idle folly."

"Folly it may be, dame Ursula," replied Annetta; "but see, it has brought a smile to the lips of my sweet young lady, and that was all I wanted."

And the affectionate girl stooped to kiss the fair brow from which she had been parting the long ringlets.

A gentle knock was now heard at the door. Annetta flew to unclose it, when the Countess entered. Amy rose in some confusion, her hair still streaming over her shoulders.

"My dear child, I am come to enquire how you are," said Lady Blondville; "I could not go to rest in peace without seeing you."

"You are very kind—I am much better," returned Amy; "and, I trust, tomorrow I shall be quite well."

"Are you equal to returning with me to my room?" enquired the Countess, gazing anxiously upon her; "I would wish earnestly to speak a few words to you."

Amy hesitated in some trepidation.

"You need not fear, my child," continued Lady Blondville, "I am not going to confess you, and I am alone—I will not detain you many minutes; nay, come even as you are," and she put her arm round her to lead her away.

"Go, Amy dearest," said Mrs. Somerville—"Lady Blondville is indeed most kind."

A large unoccupied bed-chamber divided the apartments of the Countess from those of Mrs. Somerville; they crossed this, and entered the one beyond, where Lady Blondville slept. The crimson damask curtains were closely drawn, and a cheerful fire, with a couch drawn near to it, gave an air of great comfort; a silver lamp stood on the table, and beside it lay a large open bible. Amy gazed timidly round her, as the light shed a feeble ray on the magnificent canopied bed, and then turned towards the Countess, whose tall, commanding figure, and full, dark eye, as it rested on her, looked so like the Earl's; but Amy, timid and gentle though she was, shrank not from its scrutiny, which was long and very grave, yet without the slightest severity; at length, laying her hand on her shoulder, Lady Blondville said:

"Amy, you are indeed a beautiful being—truth is stamped, with heaven's own impression, on that fair, open brow. Come this way, my child," and she led her towards a deep recess, lighted by a large gothic

window of stained glass, over which fell a gauze drape. The Countess cautiously raised this, when the object which presented itself was the sleeping figure of Lord Arthur, his smooth round cheek glowing with health, and radiant in the noble beauty of his race. Lady Blondville pressed her finger on her lip, as Amy made an involuntary movement of affection towards him:

"Disturb him not," she said, as she held her back, and continued gazing with the yearning love of a mother on her heart's treasure. "Amy," she continued, "each night that I look upon that slumbering boy, is your image present to my fancy with his, as I first beheld it, when in a dying state he lay supported in your arms; in that dread hour were you made, by a gracious God, the instrument of his preservation, at the risk of your own life—say, can I ever forget such devotion; oh, no, no, from that night I love I loved you as my own, and have united your name with those of my children, on my knees at the throne of grace—judge then the interest I take in all that concerns your welfare and happiness, and the distress I have felt to behold yours this day; nay, start not, my dear Amy, or tremble thus, I am not going to probe you; sit down here," and she drew towards the couch, and placed the agitated girl by her side. "This morning," continued Lady Blondville, "you seemed all gaiety, all happiness, but when we met again in the evening, I should have scarcely known you for the same. I was told that you were in tears when you returned from your walk. Now, as I would assuredly question one of my own daughters, dare I venture to ask you what called them forth, why you lingered with Sir Charles Courtenay, and how his conversation could have had the power to so affect you."

"Dearest Lady Blondville, I fear not to answer any question you may put to me," replied Amy, ingenuously looking up, while her voice faltered; "the cause of my remaining absent so long, was a sad one, and would have been told you before, only I feared it might reach the ears of Lady Emily, and I did not wish to cast a shadow over her happiness on a day like this," and with much feeling and a renewal of her tears, she narrated the sad fate of poor little Susan Grey. The Countess listened to her with the deepest attention, and when she ceased speaking, she strained her affectionately in her embrace, saying:

"My beloved girl, while I weep for the parents who have thus been deprived of a dear child, in so distressing a way, I rejoice from my heart at the removal of an anxiety I heavily felt, when I imagined that Sir Charles could have sufficient influence to cause you sorrow. Alas, Amy, you have not yet learnt the bitter task of concealing your feelings, and of wearing under a smile, troubled thoughts—this is to come."

At this moment the door was slowly opened, and the figure of Lord Blondville appeared; he started