

THE CHIEFTAIN'S DAUGHTER.*

BY MISS M. HUNGERFORD.

CHAPTER XX.

THE third morning after the interview between Isabella and the robber chief, an hour before the dawn of day, Blanche stole gently into the apartment of the former, and arousing her from a gentle sleep, informed her that all was in readiness for her departure. Isabella sprang from her bed, and assisted by Blanche was soon arranged for her journey. Another entered bringing her morning repast, and both sat down to enjoy the last hour which they might ever spend with their well loved companion. Although the joys of home now seemed inviting her, Isabella still lingered, unwilling to say farewell, until a low rap at the door, admonished them of the passing moments, Isabella sprang to her feet, and threw an arm around the necks of each of the fair sisters of St. Maury, pressed her lips alternately to the lips of each, and then declared her readiness to depart. "Nay but you have another farewell to make," murmured Blanche. "Our poor brother, desired me to say that he would see you once again, before you leave us forever!"

They left the apartment, and sought that of St. Maury, who had arisen, and was sitting as when Isabella last beheld him. He extended his hand to her, and as she placed her own in his, he pressed it to his lips; she knelt beside him, and poured forth the grateful emotions of her heart.

"Arise fair maiden!" he exclaimed, "I cannot see you thus! to me no thanks are due, for in serving you I but add to my own enjoyment! you now leave our poor abode, and may you reach in safety the home of your fathers! May happiness, the purest that earth can give, ever be your's, and when its beams are spread around you, will you sometimes deign to think of the hopeless St. Maury, and those two pure angels, kindred spirits of thine own, that have shared and cheered his lowly lot?"

"Never, dearest, kindest friends will I forget you! and should the time ever arrive, when you will be unable to protect the sisters that you love, the home of Isabella McDonald shall be shared with them, as freely, as the generosity of St. Maury has been bestowed on me!"

"Thanks, thanks for this, for their unfriended state has been to me a source of much care; but time wears on, and we must say farewell! go now, and may good angels guard thee!"

Isabella left the apartment:—tears dimmed the lustre of her eyes, and pressing the hands of her weeping companions in silence, she joined the escort that awaited her homeward journey.

Slow and toilsome was their progress, as they traversed the mountains. Sometimes ascending steep and rugged heights, at others plunging into the depths of dark ravines, where even the bright rays of the sun could scarce penetrate the gloom; but all, the tender daughter of Glenelvin's Earl, bore without a murmur. The goal before her, she felt was worthy of any sacrifice, and with a firmness of purpose which astonished even her hardy guides, she encountered the difficulties of the way. The coming on of night found them in the depths of a dark and gloomy forest, and fearful of accident, they determined to remain until the following morning. Providing as well as it was possible for them to do for the comfort of their charge, they, by turns betook themselves to rest.

At an early hour of the following morning they resumed their route, and after much difficulty, they succeeded in emerging from the forest, and stood on the side of a high mountain, from which the eye wandered over an extensive range of mountain scenery, but apparently of a more gentle character than that amid which they had journeyed, and beyond which, lay spread out, in rich luxuriance, extensive plains, dotted here and there with the clustering hamlets of the happy peasantry. Long and earnestly did the eyes of the little group wander over the scene, and then, one who seemed the leader remarked, that he was assured there was naught to fear, and they began to descend the fearful steep.

"From this height, fair lady!" said one of the men, as he assisted Isabella in the descent, "we can command an extensive view of the world below; from hence we are often apprised of the approach of an enemy, far as it is from our haunt; for knowing as we do, every part of these mountains, a few hours will bring our trusty sentinel