

Somerville, when again they were restored to the privacy of their own room, while tears of joy were shed over her :

"This has indeed been a day replete with felicity to us both, my precious Amy," she exclaimed, "the first without alloy I have passed for years. May we strive to be more deserving, and never forget the blessed source from whence it has arisen—let us, on our knees, my child, return thanks that our sorrows have thus been changed into happiness unspeakable."

The afflicted parents of poor little Susan Gray, it will readily be supposed, were not forgotten; they received the utmost kindness and sympathy from the whole family at the Falcon's Nest, and her funeral was attended by all the children belonging to Lady Emily's school, to whom Mr. Martyn addressed a most touching discourse, which drew floods of tears from their softened hearts—mildly and feelingly did he descant upon the uncertainty of life, even in the earliest youth, and how blessed to be found in the performance of our Christian duties, when called to appear in the presence of our Saviour.

It was with considerable interest that the repentant father and mother of Susan were seen, on the Sunday following, entering the church together, with trembling steps; Dame Gray attired in the dress her departed child had taken so much pleasure in making for that very purpose—nor were they ever known to be absent, on the return of each Sabbath, from that day.

Amy's birthday passed, and the Christmas week arrived, bringing, with its graver thoughts, the pleasant associations annexed to that sacred season.

Christmas Day! how much is connected with that endeared term—endeared from our earliest childhood—long before we knew its vital importance to our eternal welfare: the cheerful family circle—the green holly—the mistletoe—the merry, youthful voices—all find their way to our hearts, linked, as they are, in our memories, with many beloved ones gone—many beloved ones divided by distance. Oh, it is indeed a day replete with every recollection that calls forth our gratitude to God, and our benevolent feelings for man, since it has united us in the one divine and sacred chain of Christianity—forever hallowed be its name!

The knowledge of Lord Blondville's intended union with the Lady Amanda, caused great rejoicings throughout the household of the Countess; even Mrs. Clements, the cross old housekeeper, was so far melted by its announcement, that, after some little maiden coyness, she permitted Gasper to lead her under the mistletoe in the servants' hall, and danced with Vernon to the merry air of "I'm o'er young to marry yet," played by some wandering minstrel. On the same auspicious night, Annetta was won over by Gasper, to promise that, on the marriage of her dear young lady, she would reward his fidelity

by tendering him her hand, provided he would allow her to talk as much as she liked for the rest of her life.

Soon after these festivities, the stranger guests took their leave, Miss Courtenay making it a request to Amy, that she might be called upon to officiate as one of her bridesmaids—a request which was most readily granted, to the delight of the young lady, who reflected that one wedding was not unlikely to prove the basis of a second.

The period fixed for this happy event was the ensuing summer. The Countess had earnestly wished that two years might have intervened ere the fates of these beloved objects were united; but she felt that it would be unwise to press the authority of a mother too far on her son, who had already conceded so much to her advice—and she very sensibly awarded her entire consent and approval, although so young a Countess as Amy had never before worn the coronet in the Earl's noble family.

Lord Blondville remained at the Falcon's Nest, in all the enjoyment of rides and walks, and social evenings, with the beloved Amy and his amiable family, until the opening of parliament, when he was obliged to be in town. A depression, for which he could scarcely account, overshadowed him on taking leave of her. Mr. Martyn observing it, rallied him, as he perceived that it added to the distress of Amy.

"You will no doubt laugh at the weakness I am going to plead guilty to," said the Earl afterwards to him—"but at the moment I gazed on her angel face, so like a being of a brighter world, the voice of the old crone in the woods came to my remembrance, and her foreboding words rang in my ears like a knell."

"Harold, Harold, yield not to such thoughts, which will cramp your energies, and are essentially wrong and improper," replied Mr. Martyn, gravely—"the winds are in the hollow of his hand"—the sea may not pass the boundary of his will—nor is the knowledge of what shall be, ever committed to sinful man, save what is necessary for his own salvation."

On the approach of spring, Mrs. Somerville removed, with her interesting charge, to a delightful residence she had taken, within a walk of the Falcon's Nest, called "the Wilderness." Here the pursuits of Amy were such as to open and strengthen her mind, and to lead her to a deeper knowledge of all that would tend to prepare her for the responsible station she was destined to fill—and (what was of infinitely more importance,) for that period when the coronet and all its pageantry would be laid in the dust, as worthless, and the spirit would soar to those joys which "eye hath not seen, or heart conceived." Not a trace of care was now visible on her fair young brow; she received constant letters