

"I congratulate you more for your gallantry than your sense, my friend," said Mr. Martyn, almost angrily, "what a pity that your harlequinade was not completed by a good sousing in the water, which Lion had nearly procured for you. I was not aware that you aimed at appearing in the character of a hero of romance."

"Can Martyn be severe?" returned the Earl, laughing; "surely, you would risk more for one you wished to please."

"I would risk my life in a good cause; but to afford a little pleasure, I would not inflict a great pain."

"Fain would I cast it back into the lake," said Amy, "even as king David threw away the pitcher of water, obtained for him by the Israelites rushing into the enemy's camp; but oh, I cannot. Is it not beautiful, my father?" holding up the flower to Mr. Martyn, who she had learnt to call by that endeared name.

"It is beautiful, my Amy," he replied; "all that comes from the hands of God is perfect, and, but for man, would remain so. Oh, beautiful world!" he continued, gazing around him, "thy Master made thee faultless, and many a flower has he scattered in our path—many a well of water springs up in the desert, to refresh us; countless are his mercies—and yet, for the glittering joys, the fictitious hopes, the dangerous ambition, or the baleful passion, all are cast away."

"But you would not have man without ambition?" asked Lord Blondville.

"There is a noble quality, call it ambition if you will," replied Mr. Martyn, "which leads us to soar above all that is mean and despicable, to all that is exalted, and glorious, and great; but if it only rests so far as this earth is concerned, and carries not its hopes beyond, I pity it, as altogether worthless, and beneath the desires of an immortal being."

On returning to the castle, Amy hastened to the room of the dear invalid, who, she found, had frequently enquired for her during her absence. The Countess was sitting by his side, watching, with all a fond mother's anxiety, over her treasure, and trembling as she beheld him so wasted and enfeebled. She was soon joined both by the Earl and Mr. Martyn; and beautiful it was to witness the gentle and affectionate attentions of her son, and to hear the gracious words of strength and comfort imparted by the amiable minister—who, from having experienced sorrow, knew so well how to soothe that of another. He did not, like the worldly comforter, bid her cease from weeping, or tell her she was wrong in yielding to her grief—that what she could not help she must endure; but he led her to the sufferings of her Saviour—to his sympathy in affliction—his tears at the tomb of his friend—and read to her that exquisite, touching story of the widow of Nain; until her heart acknowledged how

impossible it would be that a Being so full of mercy would lay on her the weight of a feather beyond what was really needful.

During this trying period, Amy proved to her as a daughter, devoting nearly her whole time to lessen the fatigue and anxiety she suffered. And oh! it was a joyful day when the beloved Arthur was sufficiently recovered to be carried by his brother into the cheerful drawing-room. Then, indeed, the Countess, on her knees, expressed her deep, her heartfelt thanksgiving; while Mr. Martyn, collecting all the household in the chapel, offered up that grateful incense so acceptable to God, and so proper and natural for man.

Weeks now fled past, and the time drew near when the return of Mrs. Somerville was expected. Arthur's health and strength were daily improving; he could now drive out, ride his pony, and, to Amy's infinite delight, once more become the companion of her short rambles; and snatched, as he had been, from the very verge of the grave, he was, if possible, more dear to her than ever.

"How shall I be able to part from him, from them *all*?" she would mentally exclaim; "alas! I had almost begun to forget that this is not my home—that I belong not to any here, but am an alien and a stranger."

"In such moments as these, Arthur, perceiving the sad expression of her countenance, would throw his arms round her neck, and, by his childish sympathy and affection, soften the bitterness of such reflections."

Lord Blondville, ever since the arrival of Amy at the castle, had declined all invitations, and latterly he had felt less inclination to enter into the society of the neighbourhood, amongst which, it was natural to suppose, that one like him would be much courted; but now, that the Countess was his guest, and that all anxiety for his brother had ceased, he unwillingly admitted that he had no longer an excuse, and he felt obliged to accept the card which requested his company at dinner at Lord —'s.

On the morning of the day, the Countess was sitting under the shadow of a peculiarly fine elm tree, which grew near the water's edge. She was watching with interest the gambols between Arthur and Lion, whose rough manner of showing his regard called forth many a laughing reproach, particularly when his ungente attentions were shared with Amy, who was, as usual, his companion.

Presently Lord Blondville drew near, and throwing himself on the grass at his mother's feet, he gazed for some little time on the scene before him; then playfully laying his head back on Lady Blondville's knee, he said:

"Is not Amy a most lovely and loveable being? My mother, we must never suffer her to leave us again."

"She has promised to return with me into De-