

sented to the mind—could we but reflect that some wretched babe, called into miserable existence by our heedless passions, may through the wretched period of their friendless existence have cause to curse our stolen raptures, sure there is not that human being so brutalized, that he would dare to seize the guilty pleasure:

'Oh horror! what a prospect!'

'Alas! my friend!' said Elphinston, 'I know not whether it will console you, to hear the mournful assurance, that by the horrors of this prospect you have no reason to be alarmed: It is the general report at M—, that your Maria and your child are both no more!'

'It is well! it is well!' said Courland, walking about with a kind of awful composure, like the dreadful calm which precedes the fury of a storm.—'They are blessed, among the cherubic host: and mine is all the guilt and all the torture.'

So saying, he flung himself upon a sofa, and leaning backwards in speechless agony, resigned himself to his fate. Nor could any entreaties rouse him from his stupor, or persuade him to take any nourishment or consolation; till, after several hours, observing that Elphinston still continued to sit in immovable watchfulness by his side, he at last consented to retire to bed; nor, indeed, to relieve his own affliction, but to prevent the wearying assiduity of his friend.

CHAPTER VI.

'Dull sleep instructs: nor sport vain dreams in vain.' YOUNG.

Our dreams, though not always, are certainly often the confused reflections of our waking thoughts: and as our minds, roving through all the possible contingencies connected with our present situations, must sometimes dwell, with particular vivacity, on those prospects which are afterward realized, it is perhaps hence (to drop a reflection by the way) that our dreams are, by the superstitious, sometimes conceived to be prophetic, only because they happened to represent those events which our waking thoughts, grasping the whole region of conjecture, could not fail, among other floating ideas, at some season to embrace.

Though sleep was the farthest thing from Courland's thoughts when he retired to bed, yet his mind, incessantly tossed between the ideas of his lost Maria, and the recollection of his projected scheme of benevolence, was at length oppressed by the drowsy god; and his perturbations subsided into a gentle slumber.

The thoughts which had agitated him while awake, still, however, continued to haunt his repose: their asperity softened, it is true, by a soothing melancholy hope; but their influence increased by the heightening force of a picturesque imagination.

He fancied himself roving, beneath the grey canopy of an over-clouded sky, over wild and irregular rocks, whose inhospitable sides were thinly strewed by thorns and brambles, that tore the bleeding sides of a few half famished lambs that in vain sought among them for herbage; and whose uncouth masses were intersected by a roaring torrent, that, every where foaming along, increased the gloom it contributed to diversify.

In the great bed of this water, which stretched before him, he beheld several hapless females, who, struggling against the whelming element, and seeing no other relief at hand, stretched forth their imploring hands, and entreated him to rescue them from their melancholy fate.

His heart melted with compassion; and he was preparing to plunge into the stream. The distant horizon instantly became clear and bright. A streak of white, like that which ushers in the morning star, was instantly succeeded by an orient glow, bright as that which immediately precedes the appearance of the sun.

While he was gazing with pleasing wonder at this change, the beautiful form of his Maria, clothed in a vestal robe, and with two shining pinions waving on her shoulders, slowly ascended in the midst of the dawning glory, and thus addressed him with the most benignant smile:

'Think not, my still dear and much-loved Courland, that I come to check the ardour of thy generous resolution, or to impede the exertions that would snatch these my unhappy sisters from the torrent of overwhelming misery. No: I come to fortify thy virtue, and encourage thy active generosity, by informing thee of the reward which shall crown the labours of thy repentant sensibility.

'Here, in this happy mansion, is the habitation of thy Maria, and the only path, by which thou canst attain it, is through the torrent that roars between us. Proceed then to rescue these unhappy females from an unmerited fate, so shall thy active benevolence procure that pardon which was granted to my repentant tears.

'Hail! then to thy Maria, and we shall both be happy, in a pure celestial union, where haughty parents shall no more embitter our joys, or thwart our spotless wishes. Then shall we be crowned with these unfading wreaths' she continued, waving

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