

I beheld nothing, save cold stern looks, which were changed for smiles whenever you addressed others. If you believed that I had forgotten all your kindness, and the many dear associations connected with Blondeville Castle, I can no longer be surprised, but that you could believe it seems marvellous."

"Amy, dearest, your gentle reproach is my punishment, for it keenly touches me," returned the Earl, now sitting down by her, "and could you only have witnessed the struggles I endured to disguise my feelings all last evening, you would have known how deeply I shared in all yours."

"And yet you could dance," said Amy, faintly smiling.

"Even so, Amy, so well can we conceal, under the mask of indifference, our private thoughts; with us it is the *"viso sciolto pensieri stretti,"* while yours are undisguised, as they are pure and innocent. Is not this the case, my own beloved?"

"It is a new lesson which you have taught me," replied Amy, her eyes bending beneath his admiring gaze, "but I knew not that you could prove so severe a master."

"Then forget it Amy, and let the remembrance of yesterday be erased for ever from your mind."

"Not so, since I trust I have gleaned much profit from its trials, and as we are taught to forgive those who are only made the instruments in Divine hands, to chasten us for our good, so do I from my heart forgive you for every pang you inflicted," and with a look the most angelic, she placed her hand in his, while he, unable to conceal his emotion, turned away, and walked towards the window.

When again he resumed his seat by her side, the open casket on the table attracted his notice.

"What treasures have you here, Amy," he enquired, taking it up, "what little book is this?"

It was a small bible, beautifully bound in velvet, with a gold clasp, upon which was engraved the name of 'Agnes.' The Earl took it from its case, and unclasped it; the leaves were much worn, and marked in many places, while numerous pictures enriched its pages, although defaced and torn.

"That was the valued companion of my childhood," replied Amy, "and my only book for five long years, it was concealed in my dress by day, and under my pillow at night; you know not how dear it is to me."

The Earl looked over it with considerable interest.

"Are these all your own pencil marks," he asked.

"Not all, many of them were my mamma Manfredonia's, to whom it belonged."

"Amy, do you know I have a fancy for this little book," said Lord Blondeville, after giving it much attention, "will you bestow it on me?"

"Ah, how you pain me by your request," she replied, "since I may not comply with it—it was

given to mamma by Mr. Martyn, before she married, and I know she valued it more than any thing she possessed; when she was dying, she placed it in Mrs. Somerville's hands for me, with a desire that I never would part with it. I wish you had asked me for any thing else, for there is nothing but this tiny book which I would refuse you."

"Do you promise that, dearest?" returned the Earl, smiling at her eagerness.

"Yes, indeed, I do."

"From which of these pretty hands did I extract the thorn—do you remember?" and he pressed them both.

"From this—I remember well"

"Then, Amy, may I claim it as mine—will you give me this instead of the book?"

Amy started, and became in an instant violently agitated, while the colour mounted to her cheek.

"Oh, I meant not that—I am not prepared—pray, pray spare me," and she strove to disengage herself.

"Amy, my own darling, be composed, and listen to me," said the Earl, gently detaining her, and gazing earnestly and affectionately on her lovely face—"if my lesson of yesterday stamped me as a severe mentor, do you forget all those which you used to listen to with such pleasure?—no, I see you do not—the remembrance of those days are, to me, full of the most delightful associations. Before I beheld you, I felt there was a want—a blank to be filled up; which none but one like you could have effected; your extraordinary beauty, I confess it was, which first charmed me—but even this faded before the deeper feelings which your gentle, innocent and most engaging manners inspired, dictated, as they were, by a mind imbued with a love of all that was good, and pure, and holy. Yes, Amy, my beloved, qualities like these can alone rivet our affections—which they never fail to do, unless we are lost to every right feeling, by the constant contamination of sin. Now, tell me, dearest, would you wish those days to return?—would you be happy to wander again over the grounds of the old castle, with Mr. Martyn as your guide and friend, Harold your protector and your fond companion, and Arthur your play-fellow? Yes, yes, I read it in that dear smile—look at me, my own Amy, and answer me."

Amy raised her dark blue eyes, and fixed them on the Earl, whose countenance was now animated with an expression the most noble and exalted; she clasped her hands together, while, in a tone solemn and full of pathos, she replied:

"Harold, you have taken me by surprise, and to answer you, tries my courage to the uttermost—yet I will not deny you the response which my heart dictates: with you, and you alone, it would be happiness to wander in a desert where no sun ever shone—where no other footstep ever strayed—where all was dark around us, save the light kindled by your deeming love, to guide us both to heaven"—and