

# LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

OF

## SCOTTISH LIFE.

### THE LILY OF LIDDESDALE.

THE Country all around rang with the beauty of Amy Gordon ; and although it was not known who first bestowed upon her the appellation, yet now she bore no other than the Lily of Liddesdale. She was the only child of a shepherd, and herself a shepherdess. Never had she been out of the valley in which she was born ; but many had come from the neighbouring districts just to look upon her as she rested with her flock on the hill-side, as she issued smiling from her father's door, or sat in her serener loveliness in the kirk on Sabbath-day. Sometimes there are living beings in nature as beautiful as in romance ; reality surpasses imagination ; and we see breathing, brightening, and moving before our eyes, sights dearer to our hearts than any we ever beheld in the land of sleep.

It was thus that all felt who looked on the Lily of Liddesdale. She had grown up under the dews, and breath, and light of heaven, among the solitary hills ; and, now that she had attained to perfect womanhood, nature rejoiced in the beauty that gladdened the stillness of these undisturbed glens. Why should this one maiden have been created lovelier than all others ? In what did her surpassing loveliness consist ? None could tell ; for had the most imaginative poet described this maiden, something that floated around her, an air of felt but unspeakable grace and lustre, would have been wanting in his picture. Her face was pale, yet tinged with such a faint and leaf-like crimson, that though she well deserved the name of the Lily, yet was she at times also like unto the Rose. When asleep, or in silent thought, she was like the fairest of all the liliated brood ; but when gliding along the braes, or singing her songs by the river side, she might well remind one of that other brighter and more dazzling Flower. Amy Gordon knew that she was beautiful. She knew it from the eyes that in delight met hers, from the tones of so many gentle voices, from words of affection from the old, and love from the young, from the sudden smile that met her when, in the morning, she tied up at the little mirror her long raven hair, and from the face and figure that looked up to her when she stooped to dip her pitcher in the clear mountain-well. True that she was of lowly birth, and that her manners were formed in a shepherd's

hut, and among shepherdesses on the hill. But one week passed in the halls of the highly born would have sufficed to hide the little graceful symptoms of her humble lineage, and to equal her in elegance with those whom in beauty she had far excelled. The sun and the rain had indeed touched her hands, but nature had shaped them delicate and small. Light were her footsteps upon the verdant turf, and through the birch-wood glades and down the rocky dells she glided or bounded along, with a beauty that seemed at once native and alien there, like some creature of another clime that still had kindred with this, an Oriental antelope among the roes of a Scottish forest.

Amy Gordon had reached her nineteenth summer—and as yet she knew of love only as she had read of it in old Border songs and ballads. These ancient ditties were her delight—and her silent soul was filled with wild and beautiful traditions. In them love seemed, for the most part, something sad, and whether prosperous or unhappy, alike terminating in tears. In them the young maiden was spoken of as dying in her prime, of fever, consumption, or a pining heart; and her lover, a gallant warrior, or a peaceful shepherd, killed in battle, or perishing in some midnight storm. In them, too, were sometimes heard blessed voices whispering affection beneath the greenwood tree, or among the shattered cliffs overgrown with light-waving trees in some long, deep, solitary glen. To Amy Gordon, as she chaunted to herself, in the blooming



or verdant desert, all these various traditionary lays, love seemed a kind of beautiful superstition belonging to the memory of the dead. In such tales she felt a sad and pleasant sympathy; but it was as with something far remote—although at times the music of her own voice, as it gave an affecting expression to feelings embodied in such artless words, touched a chord within her heart, that dimly told her that heart might one day have its own peculiar and overwhelming love.

The Summer that was now shining had been calm and sunny beyond the memory of the oldest shepherd. Never had nature seemed so delightful to Amy's eyes and to Amy's heart; and never had she seemed so delightful to the eyes and the hearts of all who beheld her with her flock. Often would she wreath the sprigs of heather round her raven ringlets, till her dark hair was brightened with a galaxy of richest blossoms. Or dishevelling her tresses, and letting fall from them that shower of glowing and balmy pearls, she would bind them up again in simpler braiding, and fix on the silken folds two or three water-lilies, large, massy, and whiter than the snow. Necklaces did she wear in her playful glee, of the purple fruit that feed the small birds in the moors, and beautiful was the gentle stain then visible over the blue veins of her milk-white breast. So were floating by the days of her nineteenth summer among the hills. The evenings she spent by the side of her

grey-headed father—and the old man was blest. Her nights past in a world of gentle dreams.

But though Amy Gordon knew not yet what it was to love, she was herself the object of as deep, true, tender, and passionate love, as ever swelled and kindled within a human breast. Her own cousin, Walter Harden, now lived and would have died for her; but had not hitherto ventured to tell his passion. He was a few years older than her, and had long loved her with the gentle purity of a brother's affection. Amy had no brother of her own, and always called Walter Harden by that endearing name. That very name of brother had probably so familiarized her heart towards him, that never had she thought of him, even for a single moment, in any other light. But although he too called Amy sister, his heart burned with other feelings, and he must win her to be his bride, and possess her as his wife, or die. When she was a mere child he had led her by the hand—when a fair girl he had in his arms lifted her across the swollen burns, and over the snow-drifts—now that she was a woman he had looked on her in silence, but with a soul overcharged with a thousand thoughts, hopes, and desires, which he feared to speak of to her ear, for he knew, and saw, and felt, in sorrow, that she loved him but as a brother. He knew, however, that she loved none else; and in that—and that alone—was his hope,—so he at last determined to woo the Lily of Liddesdale,

and win her, in her beauty and fragrance, to bloom within his house.

The Lily was sitting alone in a deep hollow among the hills, with her sheep and lambs pasturing or playing around her, while over that little secluded circle a single hawk was hanging far up in the sky. She was glad, but not surprised, to see her brother standing beside her; and when he sat down by her side and took her hand into his, she looked upon him with a gentle smile, and asked if he was going upon business farther on among the hills. Walter Harden instantly poured forth, in a torrent, the passion of his soul, beseeched her not to shut up her sweet bosom against him, but to promise to become, before summer was over, his wedded wife. He spoke with fervour but trepidation—kissed her cheek—and then awaited, with a fast throbbing and palpitating heart, his Amy's reply.

There was no guile—no art—no hypocrisy, in the pure and happy heart of the Lily of Liddesdale. She took not away her hand from that of him who pressed it—she rose not up from the turf, although her gentle side just touched his heart—she turned not away her face so beautiful—nor changed the silvery sweetness of her speech. Walter Harden was such a man, as in a war of freemen defending their mountains against a tyrant, would have advanced his plume in every scene of danger, and have been chosen a leader among his pastoral compeers. Amy turned her large beaming

hazel eyes upon his face, and saw that it was overshadowed. There was something in its expression too sad and solemn, mingling with the flush of hope and passion, to suffer her, with playful or careless words, to turn away from herself the meaning of what she had heard. Her lover saw in her kind, but unagitated silence, that to him she was but a sister; and rising to go, he said, "Blessed be thou all the days of thy life—farewell—my sweet Amy—farewell."

But they did not thus part. They walked together on the lonely hill-side—down the banks of the little wimpling burn,—and then out of one small glen into another, and their talk was affectionate and kind. Amy heard him speak of feelings to her unknown, and almost wondered that she could be so dear to him, so necessary to his life, as he passionately vowed. Nor could such vows be unpleasant to her ear, uttered by that manly voice, and enforced by the silent speech of those bold but gentle eyes. She concealed nothing from him, but frankly confessed, that hitherto she had looked upon him even as her own father's son. "Let us be happy, Walter, as we have been so long. I cannot marry you—oh—no—no—but since you say it would kill you if I married another, then I swear to you by all that is sacred,—yes, by the Bible on which we have often read together, and by yonder sun setting over the Windhead, that you never will see that day." Walter Harden was satisfied; he spoke of love and marriage no more; and on the sweet,



fresh, airless, and dewy quiet of Evening, they walked together down into the inhabited vale, and parted, almost like brother and sister, as they had been used to do for so many happy years.

Soon after this, Amy was sent by her father to the Priory, the ancient seat of the Elliots, with some wicker baskets which they had made for the young ladies there. A small plantation of willows was in the corner of the meadow in which their cottage stood, and from them the old shepherd and his daughter formed many little articles of such elegance and ingenuity, that they did not seem out of place even in the splendid rooms of the Priory. Amy had slung some of these pieces of rural workmanship round her waist, while some were hanging on her arms, and thus she was gliding along a footpath through the old elm-woods that shelter the Priory, when she met young George Elliot, the heir of that ancient family, going out with his angle to the river side. The youth, who had but a short time before returned from England, where he had been for several years, knew at the first glance that the fair creature before him could be no other than the Lily of Liddesdale. With the utmost gentleness and benignity he called her by that name, and after a few words of courtesy, he smilingly asked her for one small flower basket to keep for her sake. He unloosened one from her graceful waist, and with that liberty which superior rank justified, but, at the same time, with that tender-



ness which an amiable mind prompted, he kissed her fair forehead, and they parted—she to the Priory, and he down to the Linn at the Cushat-wood.

Never had the Boy beheld a creature so perfectly beautiful. The silence and the songs of morning were upon the dewy woods, when that vision rose before him—his soul was full of the joy of youth—and when Amy disappeared, he wondered how he could have parted so soon—in a few moments—from that bright and beaming Dryad. Smiles had been in her eyes and round her pearly teeth while they spoke together, and he remembered the soft and fragrant lock of hair that touched his lips as he gently kissed her forehead. The beauty of that living creature sank into his soul along with all the sweet influences of nature now rejoicing in the full, ripe, rich spirit of Summer, and in fancy he saw that Lily springing up in every glade through which he was now roaming, and when he had reached the Linn, on the bank too of every romantic nook and bay where the clear waters eddied or slept. “She must recross the bridge on her way home,” said the enamoured Boy to himself, and fearing that Amy Gordon might already be returning from the Priory, he clambered up the face of the shrubby precipice; and, bounding over the large green mossy stones, and through the entangling briars and brushwood, he soon was at the Bridge, and sat down on a high bank, under a cliff, commanding a view of the path by which the fair maiden must approach on her homeward journey.

The heart of the innocent Amy had fluttered, too, as the tall, slim, graceful stripling had kissed her brow. No rudeness—no insult—no pride—no haughty freedom had been in his demeanour towards her ; but she felt gladly conscious in her mind, that he had been delighted with her looks, and would, perhaps, think now and then afterwards, as he walked through the woods, of the shepherd's daughter, with whom he had not disdained to speak. Amy thought, while she half looked back, as he disappeared among the trees, that he was just such a youth as the old minstrels sang of in their war or love ballads,—and that he was well worthy some rich and noble bride, whom he might bring to his Hall on a snow-white palfrey with silken reins, and silver bells on its mane. And she began to recite to herself, as she walked along, one of those old Border tales.

Amy left her baskets at the Priory, and was near the Bridge, on her return, when she beheld the young Heir spring down from the bank before her, and come forward with a sparkling countenance. “I must have that sweet tress that hangs over thy sweeter forehead,” said he, with a low and eager voice, “and I will keep it for the sake of the fairest Flower that ever bloomed in my father's woods—even the Lily of Liddesdale.” The lock was given—for how could it be refused? And the shepherdess saw the young and high-born Heir of the Priory put it into his breast. She proceeded across the hill—down the long Falcon-

Glen—and through the Witch-wood—and still he was by her side. There was a charm in his speech—and in every word he said—and in his gentle demeanour—that touched poor Amy's very heart; and, as he gave her assistance, although all unneeded, over the uneven hollows, and the springs and marshes, she had neither the courage, nor the wish, nor the power, to request him to turn back to the Priory. They entered a small quiet green circlet, bare of trees, in the bosom of a coppice-wood; and, the youth taking her hand, made her sit down on the mossy trunk of a fallen yew, and said: "Amy—my fair Amy—before we part—will you sing me one of your old Border songs? and let it be one of love. Did not the sons of Nobles, long ago, often love the daughters of them that dwelt in huts?"

Amy Gordon sat there an hour with the loving, but honourable Boy, and sang many a plaintive tune, and recited many a romantic story. She believed every word she uttered, whether of human lovers, or of the affection of fairies, the silent creatures of the woods and knowes, towards our race. For herself, she felt a constant wild delight in fictions, which to her were all as truths; and she was glad and proud to see how they held, in silent attention, him at whose request she recited or sang. But now she sprang to her feet, and beseeching him to forgive the freedom she had used in thus venturing to speak so long in such a presence, but, at the same time, remembering that a lock of her hair was near his heart, and perceiving

that the little basket she had let him take was half filled with wild flowers, the Lily of Liddesdale made a graceful obeisance, and disappeared. Nor did the youth follow her—they had sat together for one delightful hour—and he returned by himself to the Priory.

From this day the trouble of a new delight was in the heart of young Elliot. The spirit of innocence was blended with that of beauty all over Amy, the Shepherdess; and it was their perfect union that the noble boy so dearly loved. Yet what could she be to him more than a gleam of rainbow light—a phantom of the woods—an imagination that past away into the silence of the far-off green pastoral hills? She belonged almost to another world—another life. His dwelling, and that of his forefathers, was a princely Hall. She, and all her nameless line, were dwellers in turf-built huts. “In other times,” thought he, “I might have transplanted that Lily into mine own garden; but these are foolish fancies! Am I in love with poor Amy Gordon, the daughter of a Shepherd?” As these thoughts were passing through his mind, he was bounding along a ridge of hills, from which many a sweet vale was visible; and he formed a sudden determination to visit the Cottage of Amy’s father, which he had seen some years ago pointed out when he was with a gay party of Lords and Ladies, on a visit to the ruins of Hermitage-Castle. He bounded like a deer along; and as he



descended into a little vale, lo! on a green mound, the Lily of Liddesdale herding her sheep!

Amy was half terrified to see him standing in his graceful beauty before her in that solitary place. In a moment her soul was disquieted within her, and she felt that it indeed was love. She wished that she might sink into that verdant mound, from which she vainly strove to rise, as the impassioned youth lay down on the turf at her side, and telling her to fear nothing, called her by a thousand tender and endearing names. Never, till he had seen Amy, had he felt one tremor of love; but now his heart was kindled, and in that utter solitude, where all was so quiet and so peaceful, there seemed to him a preternatural charm over all her character. He burst out into passionate vows and prayers, and called God to witness, that if she would love him, he would forget all distinction of rank, and marry his beautiful Amy, and she should live yet in his own Hall. The words were uttered, and there was silence. Their echo sounded for a moment strange to his own ears; but he fixed his soul upon her countenance, and repeated them over and over again with wilder emphasis, and more impassioned utterance. Amy was confounded with fear and perplexity; but when she saw him kneeling before her, the meek, innocent, humble girl, could not endure the sight, and said, "Sir, behold in me one willing to be your servant. Yes, willing is poor Amy Gordon to kiss your feet. I am a poor

man's daughter.—Oh! Sir, you surely came not hither for evil? No—no—evil dwells not in such a shape. Away then—away then—my noble master—for if Walter Harden were to see you!—if my old Father knew this, his heart would break!”

Once more they parted. Amy returned home in the evening at the usual hour; but there was no peace now for her soul. Such intense and passionate love had been vowed to her—such winning and delightful expressions whispered into her heart by one so far above her in all things, but who felt no degradation in equaling her to him in the warmth and depth of his affection, that she sometimes strove to think it all but one of her wild dreams awakened by some verse or incident in some old ballad. But she had felt his kisses on her cheek—his thrilling voice was in her soul—and she was oppressed with a passion, pure, it is true, and most innocently humble, but a passion that seemed to be like life itself, never to be overcome, and that could cease only when the heart he had deluded—for what else than delusion could it be—ceased to beat. Thus agitated, she had directed her way homewards with hurried and heedless steps. She minded not the miry pits—the quivering marshes—and the wet rushy moors. Instead of crossing the little sinuous moorland streams at their narrow places, where her light feet used to bound across them, she waded through them in her feverish anxiety, and sometimes, after hurrying along the braes, she sat suddenly down, breath-

less, weak, and exhausted, and retraced in weeping bewilderment all the scene of fear, joy, endearments, caresses, and wild persuasions, from which she had torn herself away, and escaped. On reaching home, she went to her bed trembling and shivering, and drowned in tears—and could scarcely dare, much as she needed comfort, even to say her prayers.—Amy was in a high fever—during the night she became delirious—and her old Father sat by her bedside till morning, fearing that he was going to lose his child.

There was grief over the great Strath and all its glens, when the rumour spread over them that Amy Gordon was dying. Her wonderful beauty had but given a tenderer and brighter character to the love which her unsullied innocence and simple goodness had universally inspired ; and it was felt, even among the sobbings of a natural affection, that if the Lily of Liddesdale should die, something would be taken away of which they all were proud, and from whose lustre there was a diffusion over their own lives. Many a gentle hand touched the closed door of her cottage, and many a low voice inquired how God was dealing with her—but where now was Walter Harden when his Lily was like to fade ? He was at her bed's foot, as her Father was at its head. Was she not his sister, although she would not be his bride ? And when he beheld her glazed eyes wandering unconsciously in delirium, and felt her blood throbbing so rapidly in her beautiful transparent veins, he prayed to God that

Amy might recover, even although her heart were never to be his, even although it were to fly to the bosom of him whose name she constantly kept repeating in her wandering phantasies. For Amy, although she sometimes kindly whispered the name of Walter Harden, and asked why her brother came not to see her on her death-bed, yet far oftener spake beseechingly and passionately as if to that other Youth, and implored him to break not the heart of a poor simple Shepherdess who was willing to kiss his feet.

Neither the Father of poor Amy nor Walter Harden had known before that she had ever seen young George Elliot—but they soon understood, from the innocent distraction of her speech, that the noble Boy had left pure the Lily he loved; and Walter said, that it belonged not to that line ever to injure the helpless. Many a pang it gave her, no doubt, to think that his Amy's heart, which all his life-long tenderness could not win, had yielded itself up in tumultuous joy to one—two—three meetings of an hour, or perhaps only a few minutes, with one removed so high and so far from her humble life and all its concerns. These were cold sickening pangs of humiliation and jealousy, that might, in a less generous nature, have crushed all love. But it was not so with him; and cheerfully would Walter Harden have taken that burning fever into his own veins, so that it could have been removed from her's—cheerfully would he have laid down his own manly head on that pillow, so that Amy could have lifted up her long



raven tresses, now often miserably dishevelled in her ravings, and braiding them once more, walk out well and happy into the sunshine of the beautiful day, rendered more beautiful still by her presence. Hard would it have been to have resigned her bosom to any human touch; but hideous seemed it beyond all thought to resign it to the touch of death. Let Heaven but avert that doom, and his affectionate soul felt that it could be satisfied.

Out of a long deep trance-like sleep Amy at last awoke, and her eyes fell upon the face of Walter Harden. She regarded long and earnestly its pitying and solemn expression, then prest her hand to her forehead and wept. "Is my father dead and buried—and did he die of grief and shame for his Amy? Oh! that needed not have been, for I am innocent. Neither Walter, have I broken, nor will I ever break my promise unto thee. I remember it well—by the Bible—and yon setting sun. But, I am weak and faint—Oh! tell me, Walter! all that has happened! Have I been ill—for hours—or for days—or weeks—or months? For that I know not,—so wild and so strange, so sad and so sorrowful, so miserable and so wretched, have been my many thousand dreams!"

There was no concealment and no disguise. Amy was kindly and tenderly told by her father and her brother all that she had uttered, as far as they understood it, during her illness. Nor had the innocent creature anything more to tell. Her soul was after the

fever calm, quiet, and happy. The form, voice, and shape of that beautiful Youth were to her little more now than the words and the sights of a dream. Sickness and decay had brought her spirit back to all the humble and tranquil thoughts and feelings of her lowly life. In the woods, and among the hills, that bright and noble being had for a time touched her senses, her heart, her soul, and her imagination. All was new, strange, stirring, overwhelming, irresistible, and paradise to her spirit. But it was gone—and might it stay away for ever, so she prayed, as her kind brother lifted up her head with his gentle hand, and laid it down as gently on the pillow he had smoothed. “Walter! I will be your wife! for thee my affection is calm and deep,—but that other—Oh! that was only a passing dream!” Walter leaned over her and kissed her pale lips. “Yes! Walter,” she continued, “I once promised to marry none other—but now I promise to marry thee—if indeed God will forgive me for such words, lying as I am perhaps on my death-bed. I utter them to make you happy. If I live, life will be dear to me only for thy sake—if I die, walk thou along with my father at the coffin’s head, and lay thine Amy in the mould. I am the Lily of Liddesdale,—you know that was once the vain creature’s name!—and white, pale, and withered enough indeed is, I trow, the poor Lily now!”

Walter Harden heard her affectionate words with a deep delight, but he determined in his soul not to

bind Amy down to these promises, sacred and fervent as they were, if, on her complete recovery, he discovered that they originated in gratitude, and not in love. From pure and disinterested devotion of spirit did he watch the progress of her recovery, nor did he ever allude to young Elliot but in terms of respect and admiration. Amy had expressed her surprise that he had never come to inquire how she was during her illness, and added, with a sigh, "Love at first sight cannot be thought to last long. Yet surely he would have wept to hear that I was dead." Walter then told her that he had been hurried away to France, the very day after she had seen him, to attend the death-bed of his Father, and had not yet returned to Scotland—but that the Ladies of the Priory had sent a messenger to know how she was every day, and that to their kindness was owing many of the conveniences she had enjoyed. Poor Amy was glad to hear that she had no reason to think the noble boy would have neglected her in her illness; and she could not but look with pride upon her lover, who was not afraid to vindicate the character of one who she had confessed had been but too dear to her only a few weeks ago. This generosity and manly confidence on the part of her cousin quite won and subdued her heart, and Walter Harden never approached her now without awakening in her bosom something of that delightful agitation and troubled joy which her simple heart had first suffered in the presence of her young noble

lover. Amy was in love with Walter almost as much as he was with her, and the names of brother and sister, pleasant as they had ever been, were now laid aside.

Amy Gordon rose from her sick-bed, and even as the flower whose name she bore, did she again lift up her drooping head beneath the dews and the sunshine. Again did she go to the hill-side, and sit and sing beside her flock. But Walter Harden was oftener with her than before, and ere the harvest moon should hang her mild, clear, unhaloed orb over the late reapers on the upland grain-fields, had Amy promised that she would become his wife. She saw him now in his own natural light—the best, the most intelligent, the most industrious, and the handsomest shepherd over all the hills; and when it was known that there was to be a marriage between Walter Harden and Amy Gordon, none felt surprised, although some, sighing, said, it was seldom, indeed, that fortune so allowed those to wed whom nature had united.

The Lily of Liddesdale was now bright and beautiful as ever, and was returning homewards by herself from the far-off hills during one rich golden sunset, when, in a dark hollow, she heard the sound of horses' feet, and in an instant young George Elliot was at her side. Amy's dream was over—and she looked on the beautiful youth with an unquaking heart. "I have been far away—Amy—across the seas. My Father—you may have heard of it, was ill—and I attend-



ed his bed. I loved him, Amy,—I loved my Father—but he is dead;” and here the noble youth’s tears fell fast—“ Nothing now, but the world’s laugh, prevents me making you my wife—yes—my wife—sweetest Lily—and what care I for the world? for thou art both earth and heaven to me.”

The impetuous, ardent, and impassioned Boy scarcely looked in Amy’s face—he remembered her confusion, her fear, her sighs, her tears, his half-permitted kisses, his faintly repelled embraces, and all his suffered endearments of brow, lip, and cheek, in that solitary dell; so with a powerful arm he lifted her upon another steed, which, till now, she had scarcely observed—other horsemen seemed to the frightened, and speechless, and motionless maiden to be near—and away they went over the smooth turf like the wind, till her eyes were blind with the rapid flight, and her head dizzy. She heard kind words whispering in her ear; but Amy, since that fever, had never been so strong as before, and her high-blooded palfrey was now carrying her fleetly away over hill and hollow in a swoon.

At last she seemed to be falling down from a height, but softly, as if borne on the wings of the air; and as her feet touched the ground, she knew that young Elliot had taken her from that fleet courser, and looking up, she saw that she was in a wood of old shadowy trees of gigantic size, perfectly still, and far away from all known dwellings both on hill and plain. But a cottage was before her, and she and young Elliot were on the

green in its front. It was thickly covered with honeysuckle, and moss-roses that hung their beautiful full-blown shining lamps high as the thatched roof—and Amy's soul sickened at the still, secluded, lovely, and lonely sight. "This shall be our bridal abode," whispered her lover into her ear with panting breath. "Fear me not—distrust me not—I am not base—but my love to thee is tender and true. Soon shall we be married—aye—this very evening must thou be mine—and may the hand that now clasps thy sweet waist wither, and the tongue that woos thee be palsied, if ever I cease to love thee as my Amy—my Lily—my wedded wife!"

The wearied and half-fainting maiden could as yet make no reply. The dream that she had believed was gone for ever now brightened upon her in the intense light of reality, and it was in her power to become the wife of him for whom she had, in the innocence and simplicity of her nature, once felt a consuming passion that had brought her to the brink of the grave. His warm breath was on her bosom—words charged with bewitching persuasion went thrilling through her heart-strings—and if she had any pride, (and what human heart has it not,) it might well mingle now with love, and impel her into the embrace that was now open to clasp her close to a burning heart.

A stately and beautiful lady came smiling from the cottage door, and Amy knew that it was the sister of Elliot, and kneeled down before her. Last time

the shepherdess had seen that lady it was when, with a fearful step, she took her baskets into the hall, and blushing scarcely lifted up her eyes, when she and her high-born sisters deigned to commend her workmanship, and whisper into each other that the Lily of Liddesdale deserved her name. "Amy," said she, with a gentle voice as she took her hand, "Amy Gordon!—my brother loves you—and he has won me to acknowledge you as my sister. I can deny my brother nothing—and his grief has brought low the pride—perhaps the foolish pride, of my heart. Will you marry him, Amy? Will you, the daughter of a poor shepherd, marry the young heir of the Priory, and the descendant, Amy, of a noble race? Amy—I see that thou art beautiful—I know that thou art good—may God and my mother forgive me this, but my sister must thou be—behold my brother is at his shepherdess's feet!"

Amy Gordon had now nothing to fear. That sweet, young, pure, noble Lady was her friend—and she felt persuaded now that in good truth young Elliot wished to make her his wife. Might she indeed live the Lady of the Priory—be a sister to these beautiful creatures—dwell among those ancient woods—and all those spacious lawns and richest gardens—and might she be, not in a dream, but in living reality, the wife, of him on whose bosom her heart had died with joy in that lonely dell, and love him and yield him her love even unto the very hour till she was dead? Such changes of estate had been long ago,

and sung of in many a ballad ; and was she to be the one maiden of millions, the one born in hundreds of years, to whom this blessed lot was to befall ? But these thoughts passed on and away like sun rays upon a stream ; the cloud, not a dark one, of reality returned over her. She thought of Walter Harden, and in an instant her soul was fixed ; nor from that instant could it be shaken by terror or by love, by the countenance of death, or the countenance, far more powerful than of death, that of the Youth before her, pale and flushed alternately with the fluctuations of many passions.

Amy felt in her soul the collected voice, as it were, of many happy and humble years among her hills, and that told her not to forsake her own natural life. The Flower that lived happily and beautifully in its own secluded nook by the side of the lonely tarn, or torrent, might lose much both of its fragrance and its lustre, when transplanted into a richer soil and more sheltered bed. Could she forget for ever her father's ingle—the earthen floor—its simple furniture of day and night ? Could she forget all the familiar places round about the Hut where she was born ? And if she left them all, and was taken up even in the arms of love into another sphere of life, would not that be the same, or worse than to forget them, and would it not be sacrilege to the holiness of the many Sabbath nights on which she had sat at her widowed father's knees ? Yet might such thoughts have been destroyed in her beating heart by the whispered music of young



Elliot's eloquent and impassioned voice. But Walter Harden, though ignorant of her present jeopardy, seemed to stand before her, and she remembered his face when he sat beside her dying bed, his prayers over her when he thought she slept, and their oaths of fidelity mutually sworn before the great God.

“ Will you, my noble and honoured Master, suffer me, all unworthy as I am to be yours, to leave your bosom. Sir, I am too miserable about you, to pretend to feel any offence, because you will not let me go. I might well be proud of your love, since, indeed, it happens so that you do love me; but let me kneel down at your beautiful sister's feet, for to her I may be able to speak—to you I feel that it may not be, for humble am I, although unfortunately I have found favour in your eyes.”

The agitated youth released Amy from his arms, and she flung herself down upon her knees before that lovely Lady.

“ Lady! hear me speak—a simple uneducated girl of the hills, and tell me if you would wish to hear me break an oath sworn upon the Bible, and so to lose my immortal soul? So have I sworn to be the wife of Walter Harden—the wife of a poor Shepherd; and, Lady, may I be on the left hand of God at the great judgment-day, if ever I be forsworn. I love Walter Harden. Do you counsel me to break his kind, faithful heart? O Sir, my noble young Master, how dare a creature such as I to speak so freely to your beauti-

ful sister? how dare I keep my eyes open when you are at your servant's feet? Oh! Sir—had I been born a lady, I would have lived—died for you—gone with you all over the world—all over the sea, and all the islands of the sea. I would have sighed, wept, and pined away, till I had won your love—for your love would have been a blessed thing—that do I well know from the few moments you stooped to let your heart beat against the bosom of a low-born shepherdess. Even now—dearly as I love Walter Harden—fain would I lay me down and die upon this daisied green, and be buried beneath it, rather than that poor Amy Gordon should affect the soul of her young master thus; for never saw I, and never can I again see, a youth so beautiful, so winning, so overwhelming to a maiden's heart, as he before whom I now implore permission to grovel in the dust. Send me away—spurn me from you—let me crawl away out of your presence—I can find my way back to my Father's house.”

It might have been a trying thing to the pride of this high-minded and high-born youth, to be refused in marriage by the daughter of one of his poorest Shepherds; so would it have been had he loved less; but all pride was extinguished, and so seemed for ever and ever the light of this world's happiness. To plead farther, he felt was in vain. Her soul had been given to another, and the seal of an oath set upon it, never to be broken, but by the hand of death. So he lift-

ed her up in his arms, kissed her madly a hundred times, cheek, brow, neck, and bosom, and then rushed into the woods. Amy followed him with her streaming eyes, and then turned again towards the beautiful Lady who was sobbing audibly for her brother's sake.

“ Oh! weep not lady! that I, poor Amy Gordon, have refused to become the wife of your noble brother. The time will come, and soon too, when he and you and your fair sisters and your stately mother, will all be thankful that I yielded not to entreaties that would then have brought disgrace upon your house! Never—never would your mother have forgiven you—and as for me, would not she have wished me dead and buried rather than the bride of her only and darling son? You know that, simple and innocent as I am, I now speak but the truth, and how, then, could your noble brother have continued to love me, who had brought dishonour, and disagreement, and distraction, among those who are now all so dear to one another? O yes—yes—he would soon have hated poor Amy Gordon, and, without any blame, perhaps, broken my heart, or sent me away from the Priory back to my Father's hut. Blessed be God, that all this evil has not been wrought by me! all—all—will soon be as before.”

She to whom Amy thus fervently spoke felt that her words were not wholly without truth. Nor could she help admiring the noble, heroic, and virtuous conduct of this poor shepherdess, whom all this world's

temptations would have failed to lure from the right path. Before this meeting she had thought of Amy as far her inferior indeed, and it was long before her proper pride had yielded to the love of her brother, whose passion she feared might otherwise had led to some horrible catastrophe. Now that he had fled from them in distraction, this terror again possessed her,—and she whispered it to the pale trembling shepherdess. “Follow him—follow him—gentle lady, into the wood—lose not a moment—call upon him by name—and that sweet voice must bring him back. But fear not—he is too good to do evil—fear not—receive my blessing—and let me return to my father’s hut—it is but a few miles, and that distance is nothing to one who has lived all her life among the hills. My poor father will think I have died in some solitary place.”

The Lady wept to think that she, whom she had been willing to receive as a sister, should return all by herself so many miles at night to a lonely hut. But her soul was sick with fear for her brother—so she took from her shoulders a long rich Indian silk scarf of gorgeous colours, and throwing it over Amy’s figure, said, “Fair creature and good, keep this for my sake—and now farewell.” She gazed on the Lily for a moment in delighted wonder at her graceful beauty, as she bent on one knee, enrobed in that unwonted garb, and then rising up, gathered the flowing drapery around her, and disappeared.

“God in his infinite mercy be praised,” cried Wal-



ter Harden, as he and the Old Man, who had been seeking Amy for hours all over the hills, saw the Lily gliding towards them up a little narrow dell, covered from head to foot with the splendid raiment that shone in a soft shower of moonlight. Joy and astonishment for a while held them speechless—but they soon knew all that had happened ; and Walter Harden lifted her up in his arms and carried her home, exhausted now and faint with fatigue and trepidation, as if she were but a lamb rescued from a snow-wreath.

Next moon was that which the reapers love—and before it had waned Amy slept in the bosom of her husband, Walter Harden. Years past on—and other flowers besides the Lily of Liddesdale, were blooming in his house. One summer evening, when the shepherd, his fair wife, and their children, were sitting together on the green before the door, enjoying probably the sight and the noise of the imps much more than the murmurs of the sylvan Liddel, which perhaps they did not hear, a gay cavalcade rode up to the cottage, and a noble-looking young man dismounting from his horse, and gently assisting a beautiful lady to do the same, walked up to her whom he had known only by a name now almost forgotten—and with a beaming smile said, “ Fair Lily of Liddesdale—this is my wife, the Lady of the Priory—come—it is hard to say which of you should bear off the bell.” Amy rose from her seat with an air graceful as ever, but something more matronly than that of Elliot’s younger bride—and

while these two fair creatures beheld each other with mutual admiration, their husbands stood there equally happy, and equally proud—George Elliot of the Priory—and Walter Harden of the Glenfoot.