

CHAPTER XII.

She was a form of light and life,
That, seen, became a part of sight;
And rose where'er I turned my eye,
The morning star of memory.

BYRON.

Ainsi, loin du monde et des hommes, croissait en beauté cette jeune vierge, semblable à la fleur du désert, qui ne s'épanouit qu'en présence du soleil, et ne se pare pas moins de vives couleurs, quoiqu'elle ne puisse être vue que par l'astre à qui elle doit la vie.

MADAME COTTIN.

THE room into which Lord Eaglesholme ushered his guest was of ample dimensions. It was lighted by four large modern windows, reaching quite to the floor. They looked towards the gardens behind the castle, and one of them serving the purpose of a door, gave access to a broad terrace, running along the wall, and terminating at each end in a flight of steps leading into the walks. The whole

interior and furniture of this apartment appeared to have been recently done up in the French taste. The walls were covered, and the windows hung with light blue silk ; and large pier glasses in all directions, produced the effect of infinitely multiplied space.

But why should time be wasted in describing what was altogether unheeded by Amherst ? His eyes were only conscious of the presence of the fair inhabitant of this princely chamber. She and Madame Bossanville sat together on a sofa near one of the windows, busily employed in embroidering from some natural flowers, tastefully disposed on a stand before them. Their heads were turned away from the door at which Lord Eaglesholme and Amherst were entering, so that they had reached the middle of the room before the ladies observed them.

Eliza saw her uncle, before she perceived that he was followed by a stranger, and springing up, she ran towards him with great liveliness, and seizing him by the hand, exclaimed,

“ Oh ! I am so glad you are come, my dear, dear uncle ; now you must kiss me twice to-day,

because I shall show you such a beautiful piece of work as ——”

Here, seeing Amherst, she stopped in unspeakable confusion ; her laughing eyes fell upon the ground, and she stood blushing beside her uncle, who still retained her hand.

Amherst gazed upon them both, and he felt as if he looked upon beings of a superior race : He, tall, manly, dignified, with just enough of the traces of age to give powerful lines, and forcible expression to his finely-formed features, his dark mustachios, his raven locks hanging in graceful abundance over his shoulders, his body gently bent over his niece, and his full black eyes regarding her with the tenderest affection : She, all loveliness, gentleness, and grace, her figure rather above the middle size of woman, but soft and delicate in its mould, clothed in a long robe of rich rose-coloured silk, easily folded over the swell of her bosom, bound round her waist by a broad golden zone clasped with brilliants, and falling over her person in ample folds of drapery, covering an under garment of white embossed silk. Her hair, radiant as the sun, partly thrown aside from her alabaster forehead, and partly

shading it with natural ringlets, was collected behind by a golden comb and pearl loop, whence it strayed in luxuriant curls over her back, and around her beautiful neck, purer than the string of pearls that encircled it. Her oval countenance, her Grecian nose, her large and melting blue eyes, the regular arch of her eyebrows, her delicate mouth, the extreme clearness and brilliancy of her complexion, heightened by the modest confusion she now betrayed, and, above all, by that angelic expression of innocence naturally belonging to her, presented a contrast of the most interesting description, where the peculiar traits of each were relieved and brought out by those of the other.

“ Allow me, my love,” said Lord Eaglesholme, “ to introduce my friend, Mr Oakenwold, to your notice.”

Miss Malcolm half raised her eyes towards Amherst, and then dropped them again on the floor, slightly curtseying as she did so.

“ Mr Oakenwold, my Eliza, has double claims upon our hospitality and friendship. He is the son of my old friend, Sir Cable Oakenwold; and, last night, he saved your uncle’s life.”

This last piece of information acted like electricity on Miss Malcolm. “Your life, my dearest uncle!” said she, looking up with tender and breathless earnestness in his face. “Your life! Good Heavens, how came it in peril?”

“Last night,” said Lord Eaglesholme calmly, “last night, during my walk after dusk, I was set upon by two ruffians with the design of robbing, and probably of murdering me. But as I was about to engage in an unequal combat with them, Mr Oakenwold, who, it seems, was sent by my good angel to my rescue, rushed to my assistance, and though but imperfectly armed, bravely attacked one of the villains, and had nearly lost his life in defending mine.”

“Thank Heaven you are safe!” exclaimed Miss Malcolm, looking upwards, and clasping her hands with energy; then advancing quickly towards Amherst, and seizing his hand with the utmost fervour, “Oh! thanks, a thousand thanks to the preserver of my uncle!”

Amherst was enchanted. “Miss Malcolm,” said he, “the pleasure I at this present moment feel in receiving your approbation, would have more than rewarded me, had your uncle’s obliga-

tion been even as great as he is pleased to represent it. But he has forgotten to add, that in the conclusion of the combat, I should have been hurled over the cliff into the sea, had I not been saved by his ready sword. Any debt to me is thus more than balanced, and I shall ever bless the night, and the rencontre, which has been productive of sensations so delightful as those I now experience."

Miss Malcolm shuddered and grew pale, and Amherst felt her taper fingers clench his, as he mentioned the cliffs.

"Come, Eliza," said Lord Eaglesholme, "do you show Mr Oakenwold the way to the dining-room." Then turning to Madame Bossanville, an elderly lady, and apparently a foreigner, he gave her his arm; and Miss Malcolm, timid and trembling, led the way with Amherst, who had not relinquished her hand.

They crossed the hall, and entered a large and airy chamber running behind the library. It was pannelled with oak, and hung with historical and other pictures in old frames; the ceiling was subdivided into deep compartments, and strangely

decorated with rude figures of mermaids, tritons, satyrs, and other monsters, intermixed with wreaths of flowers, vine branches and grapes, and occasional coats of arms, all in high and heavily-relieved stucco. The side-board and other furniture, particularly the chairs, were all of massive carved oak, and the latter had high backs, and were fitted with red velvet cushions. The table was covered with old plate superbly embossed, and the viands and wines were rare and curious. Half a dozen servants in gorgeous liveries waited under Robertson, and Amherst observed, that when any of them was addressed, it was always in German, Spanish, Italian, or French, all of which seemed to be spoken with equal ease by Lord Eaglesholme and the ladies. The conversation at table was chiefly carried on in English, and Amherst was delighted to find, that Miss Malcolm soon began to view him with less restraint. The circumstances alluded to in her uncle's introduction of him made her already consider him almost in the light of a newly-acquired brother.

Madame Bossanville had evidently seen much

of the world, in the most respectable sense of the word. Her manners and observations showed that she had lived in the best society, and Amherst thought he could perceive the influence they had upon her pupil, whose mind gave tokens of an expansion much beyond what he was prepared to expect. He was charmed with the innocence, the artlessness, the liveliness, and the feeling she displayed, and, above all, with the warm attachment she manifested towards her uncle and Madame Bossanville. She had never known any necessity for concealing it, and it openly displayed itself in a thousand ways.

“How different,” thought Amherst, “from the cold unfeeling Miss Delassaux! how happy the man for whom such a heart may beat!”

The more he conversed with her, the more enraptured he became. She, too, seemed unconsciously to enjoy a new existence in his society.

After the conclusion of the family meal, Lord Eaglesholme, Amherst, and the ladies, rose together, and adjourned to the drawing-room, where, queen of her fairy palace, Miss Malcolm overcame her timidity, and exerted herself to please and to delight; but she seemed to have no self-

vanity to gratify by what she did. She took her Spanish guitar, and accompanying her voice, sang a number of little Italian and Spanish airs, gay as well as plaintive, with the purest taste and feeling. Amherst's eyes betrayed that she held the key of his heart, for he smiled or wept alternately just as her voice directed.

Lord Eaglesholme sat for a time absorbed in pleasing contemplation of her every action, and soothed as it were into a dream by her melody. By degrees his countenance became disturbed, an evident agitation of his whole frame succeeded, a flood of tears broke from his eyes, and striking his brow with both hands, he rushed out of the room as if his heart were bursting. Miss Malcolm stopped suddenly in the middle of the song she was singing, which, both in words and air, was of a lively character.

“ Oh ! Madame Bossanville, my poor uncle ! He has not been so for some days. I had hoped that I had succeeded in diverting him to-night.”

Throwing down her guitar on the sofa, she motioned to run after him. But a door that was heard to clang announced that he had retreated through the library to his apartments.

Madame Bossanville hastily arose, and ringing the bell, ordered Robertson, who appeared, to show Mr Oakenwold to his chamber, and wished him good night.

As Amherst was retiring by the door leading into the hall, he looked round towards the opposite one through which the ladies were retreating. Miss Malcolm also turned for a moment, and Amherst observed that she was bathed in tears. Her eyes met his. She smiled like the sun through a summer-shower, and running back towards him, held out her hand, and said, with the most bewitching artlessness,

“ Good night, Mr Oakenwold, we shall be happier I hope to-morrow.”

Amherst kissed her hand as she hastily withdrew it, and she tripped after her friend, leaving him to retire with food for a thousand mingled reflections.

In his apartment he found O’Gollochar, attended as before by his mute, (mute in reality as to him, since the man was a Spaniard,) who departed with Robertson as before. The Irishman seemed pregnant with something of which he was eager for an opportunity of being delivered ; and

the restlessness of his motions, the paleness of his countenance, and his loitering after he was told he might go, all seemed to whisper that his fears were the cause. But Amherst's train of thought at present was of too agreeable a nature for him to permit it to be disturbed by the absurdities of his servant, and, therefore, after various ineffectual attempts to begin a colloquy, he was obliged, though most unwillingly, to depart.

Amherst certainly fulfilled his servant's prediction, though from a different cause. He slept little during the night, but neither devils nor catathumpions had any share in disturbing his repose. It was the blue eye, the enchanting form, the angelic voice of the interesting Eliza, that still seemed to shoot its rays to his heart, that still danced before his imagination, that still swelled on his ears. The soft touch of her hand was still on his lips, and he felt as if it had conveyed an intoxicating fever into his veins, which, however, had more of pleasure than of pain in it. But the pleasure was of that gently stimulating kind that as effectually banishes sleep from the eyelids as pain can do. He lay awake till, fatigued with the various combinations of

thought engendered in his brain, he fell into a pleasing doze towards morning, with his senses steeped in an ecstasy, arising from the most delightful train of ideas that can be imagined.

But even his sleep was haunted ; and here, too, the angel of his waking dreams hovered around him. At one moment he was rambling with her among the thickets and wilds of the chace surrounding the castle ; at another, he was walking with her as a favoured lover on the sunny terraces of the gardens ; and again, by one of those whimsical transitions so common in dreams, bidding defiance to every attempt to trace any thing like an association, he was sitting with her in the same spot, near the temple of Venus, in the grounds of Brokenhurst-Hall, where he sat with Miss Delassaux at the time they were interrupted by the appearance of Mrs Morley. He thought he was assisting Miss Malcolm to string roses into wreaths, when suddenly Miss Delassaux appeared before them with the visage of a fury, her hair dishevelled, and intertwined with hissing adders : she sprang on them like a tigress from the thicket, and endeavoured to snatch and tear the roses : he, with some difficulty, succeeded

in frustrating her purpose, and, furious with disappointment, she drew a dagger from her bosom, and rushed at Miss Malcolm, who fled before her with shrieks of terror.

He strove with all his might to pursue, and to disarm the murderess ; but his limbs refused to move : in vain he toiled, in vain he essayed to shout for assistance ; not a step could he advance—not a sound could he utter ; the murderous weapon was about to descend upon her. The violence of his efforts seemed at once to have loosened both his limbs and his tongue. He leaped with one bound towards the wretch, and, screaming out “ Fiend ! monster ! fiend ! ” he grasped her envenomed hair, and was dragging her back from her prey, when—he awaked, and found himself on the floor, hauling O’Gollochar forcibly by the throat. The poor fellow sank down on his knees, clasped his hands together, and, with a countenance betraying the extremity of fear that appeared to have bereft him of his senses, roared out—

“ Och sweet Vargin ! Och holy St Patrick ! where is it, sweet master ?—Sweet Patrick, sweet holy Master Patrick, where’s the fiend ? where’s

the monster? where's the cacathumpion? where is it? Och, for the love of salvation, spake, Master Patrick Oakenwold, or I shall die!"

Amherst's eyes happening to glance towards a mirror opposite to him, he had a full view of the ludicrous attitudes of himself and his servant. The horrors of his dream were instantly obliterated by the absurdity of his present situation, and he could not resist smiling as he let go his hold of O'Gollochiar, and began to put on his robe-de-chambre.

"Och master dear," said the Irishman, who felt somewhat relieved by seeing him smile; "tell me, tell me, is it gone?—Och tell me, tell me, is it gone?"

"What do you mean?" said Amherst.

"Och, the fiend your honour saw to be sure, the monster, the cacathumpion your honour was spaking to."

"You fool, I saw nothing of the kind," said Amherst, somewhat ashamed of himself; "I was only disturbed by a disagreeable dream."

"Faith and it doesn't matter at all at all whether your sleep was prevented by divils in dreams or divils in waking arnest—Didn't I tould ye,

that, sure as eggs is eggs, you would be bothered by some of Satan's legion in some soort o' way, if you ventured to stay all night in this here Castle Warlock? But what is one divil, or twenty divils, to the badgeration I have suffered ever sin I put my nose into it? First and foremost, I have been eternally followed by a fellow with a long face and a black muzzle—Pedro, I think they call him; he must be something queer, for he never spakes a word; he sets me down here, and he takes me up there, and he never laves me all day, till he brings me out beyond the inner-gate at night, to show me to my bed a top o' the western tower as they call it. Then, as we were passing under the archway, the wizard Lord himself rushed by us from behind like a whirlwind, and where he went to, Heaven knows; then, as we are crossing the inner-court, I sees a tall giant, all in white, standing up in the moonshine again the wall—he was a good sixteen feet high, plase your Honour—'What in the name of goodness is that yonder, Pedro?' says I—But, when I looked round, Pedro was gone, and I hear him shutting the gate behind me. So I looks at the apparition, and offers to

go past him, houlding up the lantern in my hand, when stride—stride—stride—he crosses the court afore me in a couple of steps; and, och! would you believe it, dear master, he had an atomy's skull on his shoulders by way of a head, or may I never see Ireland again! and he nodded at me, and grinned so, that I gave a groan, and sounded outright upon the flags. The outlandish man at the gate came out of his house, and lifted me up, and lit my lantern again, and helped me up to my chamber at the top of the narrow winding stair.

“ So I goes to bed, and lies quaking for a while, until I, somehow or other, falls asleep; but I hadn't lain long when I was awakened by an earthquake that shook the whole tower, and a smoke and a sulphureous smell, enough to throttle me—So I looks out from under the bed-clothes, and I sees a light upon the wall opposite to me, then bounce comes a great open-mouthed crocodile across my eyes, with a divil riding upon his back—then brush comes a witch riding upon a broom—then hiss comes a great big serpent—then pell-mell comes a crowd of divils and monsters of all sorts, cacathumpions and all—and

there was such a flashing of lightning, and rolling of thunder, over my head, that I burst into a parfit parforation ;—then all at once the room was dark, and I hears them tittering and laughing, no doubt, as they soared away across the battlements of the castle. Och ! Master, sure ye won't stay here any longer, to have the very souls frightened out of our bodies at this rate."

Amherst laughed heartily whilst his servant gave him this long detail of his miseries with the most rueful countenance. He at once saw that the domestics had been amusing themselves at his expence, their tricks having been probably suggested by the well known reports of the country, with which they doubtless suspected his mind to be already crammed. He kept his suspicions to himself, however, as he thought it not unlikely that, if O'Gollochar were once brought to believe that the whole had been the effect of a conspiracy against him, he might perhaps take summary vengeance upon the actors the next time they should try it, and he did not relish the idea of his valet creating a squabble in the castle. He therefore tried to persuade him that he must have been deceived by fancy, or by

a dream. But the Irishman still stoutly maintained that he had seen a real spectre in the yard, and genuine hobgoblins in his sleeping apartment; and he concluded by again earnestly entreating his master to leave the castle and return to Sanderson Mains, "where every thing was so cozy."

"Why, O'Gollochar," said Amherst, "I suspect Duncan Brouster's punch-bowl is at the bottom of all this; you want to get back to the flesh-pots of Egypt."

"Faith now and as to that, master," said Cornelius, "we are well enough off here; we have mait and drink enough yonder below, in the servants' hall, but the not a cratur can talk a mouthful of sense to saison it; to be sure, there is Miss Malcolm's maid, Mamselle Spindle, or Pingle, or Pringle, or some such outlandish name, as pretty a girl as ever I see, an she had only been born in Ireland; she tried to spake to me in English when all the rest were as dumb as King William's statute in Dame Street, and what with our tongues and our eyes, and maybe our fingers too—for we had a hold of one another's hands two or three times—we managed to be very merry to-

gether, till her young lady's bell called her, though that fellow Pedro seemed to be jealous of me, and was main glad to get her away. Faith she is the only little article I should be sorry to lave in this same enchanted castle."

"Well, O'Gollochar, you must e'en try to amuse yourself with her the best way you can for some days, for I have already told you that the duration of my stay here will depend upon circumstances, and I am not to be diverted from my intention by your foolish fancies."

Poor O'Gollochar looked piteously in his face; but he said not a word more, for he saw his master was determined.