

CHAPTER XIV.

That which showeth them to be wise, is the gathering of principles out of their particular experiments.

HOOVER.

What drugs, what charms,
What conjuration, and what mighty magic?

SHAKESPEARE.

THE chief object of Lord Eaglesholme's pursuits at this time was a developement of the wonders of electricity, in which he thought he had made some important discoveries, but from the want of an intelligent assistant, it had not been in his power to put them to the test of a well-regulated series of experiments. He communicated his thoughts to Amherst, and after a long, and, to Lord Eaglesholme, a very interesting discussion, they agreed to prosecute the subject together. They proceeded, therefore, to the room within the library, where they arranged the

machines and the necessary implements, and began seriously to work.

They had been engaged in their operations with much keenness during the greater part of the day, and for some particular purpose connected with what they were about, they had carried a long, and almost invisible wire, from the prime conductor of the machine in the inner-room, through the whole length of the library into the anti-room,—when it so happened that Cornelius O’Gollochar, who had somehow escaped from the watchful Pedro, having thought of something he had to do in his master’s room, came into the stair for the purpose of ascending to it; and the door of the hall being accidentally open, he was induced to enter it, perhaps from curiosity, or, it may be more likely, with the hope of meeting Mademoiselle Epingle, Miss Malcolm’s French maid, who had succeeded in wounding his heart, as much as her mistress had that of his master. After walking about the hall for some time, gaping and wondering at the different rarities it contained, he was led to wander into the anti-room also, and peeping into the library, he, with utter astonishment, and no small horror,

saw through the distant door, which was wide open, his master engaged with the necromantic Lord, in what he conceived to be some horrible incantation.

He could hardly believe his eyes. Lord Eaglesholme was in his black cap, and cinnamon-coloured silk robe. Amherst, for more ease to himself, had thrown off his own habiliments, and had arrayed himself in a large black silk *robe-de-chambre*, and a high fur-cap from his Lordship's wardrobe, and was employed in turning the winch of the machine with great industry.

“Och! sure enough he's in for it!” said O'Gollochar to himself. “Och, ullaloo! who could have thought that he would have so soon sould himself to the divil, as to be working his work at this rate already? Derry, zounds, what can that be that they are doing? Whirling the air in a glass-churn, as I'm a true born Irishman! Faith, now, I'll engage some poor ould woman's cow will be well drawn afore they take butter out of that barrel-full of emptiness. I wonder, after all, what sort of stuff the butter-milk will be. By the towers of the seven churches, and St Paddy to boot, I never could have believed this

though I seen it. It is enough to make one's hair stand on end, though it were a wig itself!"

Horrified as he was by what he conceived to be the hellish operations he saw going on, his solicitude for his master led him to wish to obtain a more accurate view of them. He moved, therefore, a little nearer to the library-door. But just as he had mounted a chair, accident brought him into contact with part of the apparatus, where the electric fluid had been accumulating, and he received so tremendous a shock, that he was thrown down backwards on the floor, where he lay for some moments stunned.

The noise of his fall brought the operators in a great hurry to the spot, where Amherst, to his no small surprise, found his servant lying on his back, with the chair above him. When his senses had returned, and he saw them standing over him, he began vociferating for mercy, in the idea that he was to be put to instant death, or to be otherwise dreadfully punished, for having witnessed their magical labours.

“Och! good gentleman conjurors, dears! let me go safe, and I'll never spy your churning again. I'll take my Bible oath, backwards if

you like, that I'll never blab to a soul that I was in your dairy, or that I caught you making butter. Och! mighty Lord, don't touch me with that magic wand, or may be you'll turn me into a mad-bull. Och, dear, dear Master Amherst Oakenwold, have mercy on me!"

"Why, O'Gollochar," said Amherst, "you seem to have changed yourself into a mad-bull, if we may judge by your roaring. Why do you bellow so? And what is the cause of my finding you in this situation?"

O'Gollochar explained, as well as his perturbation would permit, how he had been led by curiosity into the apartment where they found him, and where his attention had been arrested by their operations.

"But, sure, your honour," added he, "I've been handsomely punished. I'll never be prying any more after your conjurations. I've had such a thunderbolt as might have killed a horse, let alone an ass, as myself was, for coming here. I'm sure it went through my very heart, and demolished all my ten toes into the bargain."

So saying, he walked limping away, Amherst endeavouring to stifle his laughter until his man

was sufficiently far out of hearing, when he was compelled to give full vent to it. Even the grave Lord Eaglesholme could not resist smiling at the ridiculous nature of the accident.

“ I know,” said he, “ I am supposed by the ignorant peasants to be a conjuror, but this is the first time I was ever told so to my face. Your servant seems to have been saturated with the popular prejudice.”

“ He has been so, my Lord,” said Amherst, “ and your domestics seem to have very speedily discovered his weakness, for they have been already amusing themselves at his expence ;” and he related all that O’Gollochar had told him in the morning.

Lord Eaglesholme smiled again. “ I see,” said he, “ they have been taking liberties with my magic lanthorn. But I must order Robertson to put an immediate stop to their amusement, otherwise the poor fellow may be frightened out of the house.”

The occupations of the day, and the success of their experiments, which, as far as they had gone, had all tended to establish his previous theories, conspired to put Lord Eaglesholme in

better spirits at dinner than his niece had ever before observed him enjoy. He even gave the ladies an account of the conclusion of their day's labours, and the ludicrous downfall of Amherst's servant. Miss Malcolm was perfectly overjoyed with the change his short acquaintance with Amherst had wrought upon her uncle. Numerous were the looks of approbation, and of thanks, she threw towards him, and he felt that his exertions were more than rewarded.

As he handed her to the drawing-room, she whispered in his ear, " Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks, Mr Oakenwold! You saved my uncle's life, but now you are engaged in saving his mind!"

This evening was a most delightful one to Amherst. He felt himself more at ease in the apartment where reigned the queen of his heart. He was a welcome guest there, and the conviction that he was so, produced a flow of spirits, that made him doubly agreeable. He talked on general literature, and was amazed to discover the extent of Miss Malcolm's reading, and delighted to find that her critical taste so much resembled his own. He claimed her pro-

mise of showing him her drawings. In this art she was nearly self-taught, for Madame Bossanville's knowledge in it went no farther than its first principles. Yet her progress seemed wonderful in his eyes. She looked over his shoulder, and listened to his hints with an earnestness that delighted him; and the portfolio was shut, with a renewal of the determination, on the part of Eliza, to put his instructions in practice under his own eye.

Lord Eaglesholme sat down to chess with Madame Bossanville, and Miss Malcolm took up her Spanish guitar, and sang to Amherst, who occasionally supported her, and made her acquainted with a number of beautiful songs. Who has not felt the solace experienced by the lover, in uniting his voice with that of her he loves? 'Tis like an union of souls. In this instance both felt the full rapture of it. To Miss Malcolm it was a newly-discovered Heaven.

How delightfully have you made me spend this evening, Mr Oakenwold!" said this interesting child of nature to Amherst as they separated for the night. "I shall dream of some of the airs you have taught me, and shall long till the

arrival of to-morrow evening enables us to sing them again !”

When Amherst got to his apartment, he found O’Gollochar in a mixed humour. His spirits had been kept up all the evening by the lively Mademoiselle Epingle, to whom a tall handsome Irishman was a powerful attraction, and whose *gaiété de cœur* had banished every thought of necromancers and hobgoblins from his mind. But now the hour of his retirement to the lonely chamber at the top of the western tower approached, and his heart was fast sinking within him. Amherst rallied him on his apprehensions, and assured him that his sleep would this night be undisturbed. And, at last, after a thousand pretences for loitering a few moments longer, he was compelled to wind up his courage to the desperate effort. He shut the door, and Amherst heard his footsteps falling heavily and unwillingly along the passage, until the sound died upon his ear.

Amherst’s pillow was again haunted by the angel who hovered over it the night before, but her visits were unattended by the disagreeable fancies which then possessed him. He was en-

joying delicious repose when O'Gollochar came to him in the morning, and he was glad to observe, by his servant's face, that he also had been left unpersecuted.

“ Faith, and I was much obligated to your honour for keeping me quiet last night. There not a ghost or goblin trouble me at all, at all. I see,” said he, with a knowing wink, “ there is no harm in having a friend at court any way.”

And now Amherst's days glided on, one after the other, each more replete with happiness than the preceding. His mornings were delightfully spent in walking with Miss Malcolm, and in assisting her in the innocent amusement of trimming and arranging her plants and flowers. His forenoons were devoted to Lord Eaglesholme, to whom he had already made himself absolutely necessary; and the evenings were given up to the enchantment of his niece's conversation and music, which last had lost all relish for her, when unaccompanied by the fine tones of his mellow and manly voice. The more he was known by Lord Eaglesholme and the ladies, the more pleasure they seemed to take in his society. Even Madame Bossanville, to whose little comforts he

was studiously attentive, seemed always happy when she could engage him in conversation, and she frequently declared that he was not only a most agreeable young man, but that he was as well informed as he was agreeable, and as highly principled as well informed. In short, she protested that she had never met with his equal.

“ My dear Madame Bossanville, I am so glad you think well of him,” said Miss Malcolm to her after she had been loud in his commendations ; “ I, for my part, love him as I am sure I should have loved a brother if I had had one.”

“ A very proper kind of attachment,” said Madame Bossanville gravely. “ He seems, indeed, to have a more than brotherly affection towards you.”

“ Do you think so ?” replied Eliza with energy ; “ do you really think so ? Well, I hope I may continue to deserve his love.”

The eagerness of Lord Eaglesholme’s philosophical pursuits, assisted and fostered as his investigations now were by Amherst, continued to have the happiest effect on his mind. His sorrows, of whatever nature they were, seemed to be perfectly excluded from his thoughts. at least during

the day. It was generally when evening approached, and when his niece was doing all in her power to charm and to delight him, that some recollections would apparently cross him, and overcast the serenity of his countenance with a shade of melancholy, generally producing an agitation similar to that which took place on the first evening of Amherst's visit. On these occasions he left the room, and Amherst, whose anxiety about him led him occasionally to watch at his windows after he had retired to his apartment, saw him more than once rushing across the court-yard in his way out of the castle, and he had reason to believe that, in defiance of storms, he wandered at such times for the greater part of the night.

Whether he had any particular object that led him to follow this practice, or whether he flew from the painful thoughts of a restless pillow to lose them among the roaring elements, he could not comprehend. Could it be, that the high and honourable-minded noble, whose sentiments breathed nothing but purity, and whose heart seemed to be warmed by every human virtue,—could it be possible, that such a man had ever been guilty of crimes, that could now so load his

conscience as to drive him from his bed at midnight, to roam under the canopy of heaven? Misfortunes of the very worst description that flesh is heir to, could not account for a soul so ill at ease as his appeared to be. Yet Amherst could not bring his mind to give place for even the momentary reception of the dreadful suspicion, suggested by the alternative.