

CHAPTER XV.

Spesso amor sotto la forma
 D'amista ride, e s'asconde,
 Ma nel suo diverso aspetto,
 Sempre egli è l'istesso amor.

BONDELMONTI.

Seemed all on fire that chapel proud,
 Where Roslin's chiefs uncoffined lie ;
 Each baron, for a sable shroud,
 Sheathed in his iron panoply.

— — — — —
 There are twenty of Roslin's barons bold
 Lie buried within that proud chapelle ;
 Each one the holy vault doth hold.

Lay of the Last Minstrel.

AMHERST was so much occupied in assisting Lord Eaglesholme with his electrical experiments, that more than a week elapsed before he and Miss Malcolm could carry their projected sketching excursion into effect. One morning, however, his Lordship told him, much to his satisfaction, that he was to be engaged ; and, arm in arm, they left the castle together.

Having got beyond the drawbridge, they bounded over the lawn, the motion of their steps corresponding to the dance of their spirits, which expanded with the freedom they now enjoyed. Their tongues, too, gave a ready utterance to their thoughts. Where all was purity and innocence, there was little occasion for concealment.

Ever since Amherst first saw Miss Malcolm, his love for her had been betraying itself in his every action and expression. Although she felt his attentions highly pleasing, her inexperience had never permitted her to impute them to the tender cause, from which they in reality proceeded. For her part, she, who had never known what it was to hide her affection from the only two persons who had claims on it, was equally open in manifesting that she now felt daily growing in her bosom for Amherst, what she believed to be friendship, or an attachment in no respect different from the affection she bore her uncle and Madame Bossanville. But Amherst, blest with all the quick-sightedness naturally belonging to an ardent passion, watched and recorded every artless expression that escaped the lips of the ingenuous girl. He saw with inward rapture that

she loved him, though unconsciously, and he only waited the favourable moment, when he might declare the state of his heart to her, and open her eyes to a proper understanding of her own.

They passed from the peninsula, and entered a thick wood, following a track rather worn by the deer than by human foot. It wound through the undergrowth of hazle, holly, and juniper, and here and there the lesser boughs of the bushes on each side appeared to have been twisted and peeled by the frolicksome bucks, and the more open and softer spots, occurring occasionally, bore deep traces of their wanton sports, or sylvan war, being trampled in many a ring.

The path that at first descended gradually, became steeper as they advanced, until at length the declivity increased so much, that the adventurous pair were obliged to avail themselves of the bushes, to assist them in clambering down. The rocks now appeared, and, protruding themselves from the soil, reared their bold angular masses over the glen. Their way lay down a cleft between two of these, and intrepid as Eliza showed herself, the exertion of all Amherst's skill and care became necessary to prevent accident. It is needless to

say how very delightful he felt the precious charge, or to tell how his heart beat, when, for her better security, in some of the more hazardous parts of the descent, he planted himself firmly, to receive her delicate form, as she slipped into his arms from above, or how his blood ran in riot from his hand to its fountainhead, every time she grasped it for greater security. It is enough to tell, that they at last reached the bottom in safety, and issued from among the tangled brushwood, into one of the most bewitching scenes ever fancied.

They had dropped, as it were, from the clouds into what might be called the head of the glen, where it was closed by a barrier of rock of immense height, running entirely across it, and presenting an abrupt and broken wall towards the hollow valley, that wound from its base, for nearly a mile, until it opened out to the sea. The cliffs towered up on all sides, in detached castellated masses, from the luxuriant bushes, and tall timber trees, growing wherever they could find nourishment. Having expanded into two semi-circles, they again approached each other a little way farther down, where the glen was contracted

to a narrow pass, thus forming a superb natural enclosure, of about two or three hundred yards in diameter.

Bursting from the thick foliage of the woods, the river threw itself over the precipice in front, in one white sheet of foam, losing itself behind the trees of an interposing ledge; there being broken in its fall, it again poured out in several contending columns, to be received in the clear pool at the bottom. From thence the stream ran wide and deep, towards the point of a ledge of rock, pushing itself forward from under the steeps they had descended, and rose, fringed with bushes and vegetation, about sixty feet above the level bottom; and the river, being thus diverted from the straight course, swept round by the base of the precipices on the opposite side, and, after embracing a green semicircular level, it disappeared through the narrow pass behind them.

Nothing could be more wild and solitary than this romantic and secluded spot. The thick short grass rendered it a favourite haunt of the deer. But Amherst might have fancied it fairy land, nay, he might have supposed, that he and his fair companion were the first happy mortals whose fa-

voured feet had ever been permitted to penetrate into it, had not the illusion been disturbed by the presence of a small Gothic chapel, standing on the low platform of rock, between them and the waterfall. The little building was seen in perspective, and the gable that looked towards them presented a large Gothic window, where the mullions and tracery still remained entire, intertwined with the tendrils of the ivy every where clothing the walls. Over this were the remains of a ruined belfry, where still hung the bell, though now silent, save when storms awakened its partial and unwilling tones.

A burying-ground occupied the rest of the natural terrace, and amongst the broken grave-stones an antique cross, of large dimensions, appeared leaning to one side, partly shaken from the ruined steps which propped its shaft. A stair, cut in the side of the rock, led up to the burying-ground, and to the chapel, that was entered by a door at the farther end.

Their feet no sooner pressed the velvet sod, than Eliza, her bosom heaving, and her cheeks glowing with the exertion she had just undergone, looked eagerly in Amherst's face, to watch

the effect produced on him by a scene at once so lovely, so wild, and so sequestered. He gazed around him in silent admiration, his countenance eloquently expressing the emotions of delight awakened by the contemplation of it. His silence, however, soon gave way to one of those ecstasies, usual with him on such occasions; his admiration burst forth in the full and flowing poetry of language; and he praised the good taste that had selected so exquisite a subject for the pencil. He hastened to choose a point of view, where the various objects formed the happiest composition.

A groupe of grand trees rose from the level ground, near the base of the rocks forming the pass through which the river escaped; from behind them, the whole amphitheatre was finely commanded. Here Amherst threw a shawl over some flat stones he had piled up, and formed a seat for his pupil.

“But before we begin,” said he, “I have a great curiosity to examine the chapel somewhat nearer.”

“I shall be glad to go there with you,” said Miss Malcolm; “for my hands still tremble from the agitation of the descent hither, and require a little time to render them steady enough

to begin my work. It has long ceased to be used for the purposes of religion," said she, as she bent her steps towards the rock on which it stood; "but it has been prevented from falling into utter ruin, owing to its covering the vault, where lie the mortal remains of the Lords of Eaglesholme, the massive stone roof having been so far repaired from time to time, as to keep it from falling in, though its windows have long ceased to possess the stained glass that once, no doubt, decorated them. The tomb-stones, scattered over the burying-ground, are chiefly those of the followers of the house, whose departed members sleep in the dark chamber within it."

By this time they had climbed the steps cut in the side of the rock, and winding through shrubs and mantling ivy of the wildest growth, scrambling everywhere around it. They lingered for a time among the broken and moss-covered grave-stones, picturesquely intermingled with large plants of burdock and nightshade. But the attempts of friendship, or of affection, to rescue a beloved or revered name from that oblivion to which the mass of mankind are hastening, were here, alas! already defeated, the faded hierogly-

phics still marking, but no longer distinguishing them.

They then turned towards the door of the chapel, which they found locked; but by the help of a large stone, placed by Amherst close to the wall, they were enabled to raise themselves to a level with one of the narrow windows in the side of the building, through which they had a view into the interior. The walls, and groined roof, exhibited all the rich carving and tracery of Gothic architecture, and many a grotesque and uncouth figure seemed to groan under the weight of stone it supported. In various recesses round the sides, lay the rude effigies of the perhaps still ruder warriors of the house of Eaglesholme, stretched at length under arched canopies, ornamented with finely executed foliage, and having the insignia of heraldry blended with many a pious text. At one end had stood that altar, at which masses had been sung for them, and at which, perhaps, had their bequests still remained in force, masses should have even now been chaunting for their guilty souls. There was something solemn and imposing in the sight.

Four great iron-rings, in a large oblong flag-

stone, in the centre of the pavement, indicated the mouth of the vault, through which the coffins of the members of the house of Eaglesholme had been lowered for many successive generations, and where those, who, once clad in silk, and furs, and cloth of gold, ran the gay round of unrestrained pleasure, or, cased in polished steel, and bearing proudly on their barbed steeds, had roused the din of arms, now mouldered into worthless dust,—themselves, and all their mighty deeds long since forgotten. No sound was heard, but the confused rush of the waterfall, coming mellowed on the ear, from the thick intervening foliage. All would have been still and motionless within, had not a little robin appeared, hopping proudly over the recumbent effigies of the heroes, turning up his jealous little eye toward the window occupied by the prying visitors, and rearing his tiny head, and tuning his feeble pipe of defiance, as if in mockery of the angry passions, the deadly feuds, and the warlike deeds of the mighty dead below.

After Amherst had satisfied his curiosity, he and his fair companion hastened to return to their station under the trees, where they were

soon busily employed in the work of the day. The industry of Eliza was indefatigable, and Amherst was as unwearied in his attention. How sweet were their respective tasks, and how sweetly were they seasoned by tender converse ! The result of his instruction, as well as of his soft whispers, was highly satisfactory to both ; but whether the successful sketch produced by the taper fingers of Eliza, or the ideas excited in both their bosoms by their mutual expressions, had the greater share in creating their pleasurable sensations, the reader, who may have been similarly engaged, may determine.

The day was now far spent, and Eliza was giving the last touches to her drawing, when she recollected, that at the time she last visited the glen with her uncle, she had observed a profusion of a favourite wild-flower, growing high up in one of the ravines, on the other side of the glen, by which she had at that time descended.

Having expressed her regret, that the day was now too far spent, to admit of her clambering to the spot to gather some of it,

“ Describe the place to me,” said he, “ and I

will climb thither, and fetch you some before you finish the work of that window."

"I shall, indeed, feel much obliged to you," replied she. "Then, since you are so good, you will find the remains of stepping-stones opposite to the chapel rock, on which you may cross the river to the farther bank, and just behind yonder thorn, you will find a cleft in the crag, that will lead you up to one of the loveliest haunts of Flora you ever beheld."

Eager to obey her wishes, Amherst darted off. She saw him springing actively from stone to stone, as he bounded across the river, and then, his figure dived amidst the brushwood, at the bottom of the ravine she had indicated to him.

Eliza's pencil was busily employed in darkening the deep shades of the interior of the chapel, to give greater relief to the intervening mullions, the minuter parts requiring frequent examination, and occupying all her attention, when, as her eyes were carried backwards and forwards, between the drawing and the object she was delineating, they were arrested midway by the appearance of the long shadow of a human figure, advancing on the surface of the sunny lawn,

across the line they were traversing. She immediately glanced towards the side whence it proceeded, when she perceived a tall man stealing, as it were, upon her, from the thickets to the right. When her eye first caught him, he was moving on tiptoe, but he no sooner saw that he was observed, than he advanced towards her, assuming a careless, strutting gait.

Though sufficiently bold, it is easy to imagine that Miss Malcolm felt some uneasiness at the idea of being alone, on the approach of this stranger. Her thoughts passed with inconceivable rapidity. She inwardly regretted the unlucky absence of Amherst, and the recollection of the attempt on her uncle's life flashed across her mind. What was to be done? The appearance of alarm, might be the very means of begetting a real cause for it. She, therefore, continued to employ her pencil, as busily as if totally devoid of apprehension, in the hope, that the stranger would pass by without disturbing her. But she was mistaken, for after striding slowly up to within three paces of the spot where she was seated, he abruptly halted, and with his head thrown impudently to one side, and with an air

of the most consummate assurance, he began to address her.

“ A pleasant evening, young Lady. You seem to be busy.” Eliza appeared not to mind him. “ What ! drawing plans, eh ?” continued he, moving a step nearer to her as he said so, that he might command a view of her paper. “ Methinks, you might find some better edifice to plan after, than that ricketty old mass box.”

Then, drooping his head a little, with the pretence of looking more narrowly at her drawing, he threw his eyes askance, and peered under her bonnet.

At length, a heavy gold chain, of rare and delicate workmanship, with a locket ornamented with precious stones, and letters in cypher, which she always wore round her neck, suddenly attracted his notice, and he rudely demanded,

“ Where had you that chain and locket, young woman ? I mistake if I have not had my head lanterns on it before now ; let’s have a peep at it ;” and, saying so, he, without ceremony, motioned as if to lay hold of the chain.

It was perhaps the very trepidation she was in, that had hitherto kept Eliza to her seat, but now

she started up in real terror, and retreating a step or two, with a resolution that fear alone could have inspired, she drew herself up, and looking on him with a proud and determined air, she cried,

“Dare not to touch or to approach me, Sir ! I am the niece of Lord Eaglesholme, and though apparently alone, I am not unprotected. Instantly be gone, or you will pay dearly for your insolence.”

The lofty and undaunted attitude she had assumed, her tone, and eye, seemed at first to stagger him ; but recovering himself, he looked cautiously around, and finding nobody within view to interfere with him, he bit his nether lip as if resolved on his purpose, and exclaimed, whilst his eyes flashed fire,

“Hell and the Devil ! I must, and will look at it, be ye who you may, my pretty bird !” and saying so, he sprang towards her to grasp it.

Eliza’s factitious courage having been all summoned into one effort, now gave way. She shrieked, and fled across the turf in the direction of the chapel, making for the stones by which Amherst had crossed the river. The ruffian

pursued her with all his might, and gained upon her fast. She had hardly reached the middle of the area, when he already seemed to be on the point of seizing her. She called for help in an agony of despair, for murder was in her thoughts.

The villain was in the very act of laying his impure hands on her floating drapery, when the bell of the chapel sent forth a deep knell, and the air was cleft by a loud and unearthly yell, heard far above the continued din of the waterfall, and echoing with a prolonged and piercing sound around the circle of the wooded steps. Amazement seized the wretch. He stopped, in confusion, and looked towards the chapel whence it proceeded. The dark shades of its vaulted interior were in an instant dispelled by a bright flame, rising in spiral columns to the roof, as if from the centre of the pavement. In the midst of the blaze of light appeared, through the tracery of the window, the hideous form of *the dwarfie carline o' the cove!*

She seemed supported on the thin element. She whirled her lean arms as if menacing the ruffian from his purpose, and shrieking, "Beware!" she uttered another yell more appalling

than the first, that resounded from the vaulted roof like the blast of the last dread trumpet. The villain stood aghast, as if awed by a supernatural appearance, so instantaneous and transient, and exclaiming with all the dismay of superstitious terror, "Hell and its fiends indeed!" he ran off down the glen, and quickly disappeared beyond the pass.

Eliza, who, though she had caught a glimpse of the apparition, was in too great fear of her pursuer to observe that he had left her, continued her flight as if murder was pressing at her heels. She reached the stepping-stones, and sprang from one to another with astonishing exertion. She had already gained the middle of the stream, when she saw Amherst on the opposite bank. He had heard the screams, and, impelled by the confused idea of some dreadful calamity, hastened to her assistance, and arrived just at that moment, pale with apprehension.

The next interval was much wider than those she had already cleared, the floods having removed one of the stones from its place. She hesitated for an instant, but believing her pursuer

still behind her, and seeing her protector so near, she made a violent attempt, and leaped to the opposite stone. Its surface was worn round and smooth by the action of many a winter's flood. She balanced herself with difficulty—her footing became unsteady—she quivered for an instant—and before her anxious lover could fly to her aid, she was precipitated into the stream.

It was deep and powerful, and Amherst saw her borne off before his eyes. With the utmost distraction he rushed into the water, and dashing the current aside with arms that nothing could oppose, reached her, before the buoyancy of her garments had been so far overcome as to allow of her being submerged,—caught hold of them, and bore her to the bank.

He seated her gently on the green turf, but it was some time before she recovered, so as to be able to speak. He hung over her with the most tender solicitude, and in a state of anxiety not to be described. At length she started, and threw her eyes hastily around her, as if in mortal apprehension of seeing some object of terror, but being satisfied that there was no one near her but Amherst, she clasped her hands together, and

looked up to Heaven, and then, in the anxious face of her lover, and murmuring some earnest though broken ejaculations of gratitude to both for her preservation, she sank down again exhausted by the fatigue and agitation she had undergone.

Amherst's misery was inconceivable; but it was soon relieved by her returning consciousness. She slowly regained perfect possession of herself, and he eagerly inquired into the cause of the accident. He was thunderstruck by her narration of the circumstances.

Although Eliza's view of the apparition of the chapel had been transient, and all other dread had been absorbed at the moment in the overwhelming fear of murder, that came with the ruffian who pursued her, yet it had made so strong an impression on her mind, that now, after all cause of alarm was removed, she could not think of the spectre without shuddering;—yet a faint recollection, like that of a dream, remained with her, as if it was not entirely new to her. She was far above every superstitious dread, yet to account for so strange and so sudden an appearance was impossible.

Amherst guessed, from her description, that it must have been the same mysterious being, he had three several times seen, who had thus interposed to save Miss Malcolm. He hastened to the chapel with the hope of unravelling the mystery, but he found it locked as before, and every thing in the inside remained as they had left it; nor could he perceive the marks of fire on the pavement, or on the walls.

On reaching the castle, Amherst hastened to find out Lord Eaglesholme, to whom he communicated the disastrous adventures of the day. His Lordship heard the whole particulars, with an uneasiness, strongly manifesting the extreme affection he had for his niece. When Amherst told him, how he had had the good fortune to be the means of rescuing Miss Malcolm from the stream, he grasped his hand, with a sense of gratitude, that melted him to tears.

“ My dear friend,” said he, with a more than ordinary warmth of manner, “ my dear Amherst, you seem to be fated to be the guardian angel of our family. Already have you saved me from being murdered, and now my niece has to thank

you for her life. You have made me bankrupt,— I lack the means to repay you.”

Amherst felt inwardly rejoiced at what fell from his Lordship, auguring as it did so well for his hopes. My Lord, thought he, you possess a treasure that will more than repay me for all I have done, without your being made one jot the poorer by the gift. But this was not the moment to broach such a subject. It is true, he had been sufficiently convinced, by all that passed during the day, that he already possessed the heart of the lovely and artless Eliza; and from the expressions which dropped from her as they returned homewards, he was satisfied, that gratitude had now come into alliance with love, to strengthen and to give stability to it, and had thus conspired to make her all his own. He had yet to put that question, which has made so many tremble, but which to him was pregnant with no fears of the result, and he determined to seize the first favourable opportunity, to put his happiness beyond all doubt.

Meanwhile he continued his conversation with Lord Eaglesholme, telling him what he had heard from Miss Malcolm about the extraordinary ap-

partition, which had shown itself at the window of the chapel. Lord Eaglesholme looked grave, surveyed him in silence, and then threw down his eyes to the ground, where they remained fixed for a time in profound thought.

“But this truly mysterious being is not a stranger to me, my Lord,” continued Amherst; “I have now seen her three several times, and always accompanied with circumstances perfectly inexplicable.”

He then detailed the particulars of her former appearances.—His Lordship still maintained his silence and gravity.—It was evidently a subject on which he did not wish to enter.