

THE CASTLE SPECTRE.

ments. The young Lord Percy heard of her charms, and, disguised as a peasant, he sought her society, and the consequence was that he became deeply enamoured, and secretly vowed that no other maiden should ever become his bride—he still kept to his rustic dress, resolving that if Angela accepted him, she should do it for love and preference alone, and not be swayed by advantage and the temptation his birth and wealth would hold out. He soon became convinced that her heart was truly his, and that their love was mutual; but his father he knew would never consent to such an union, and therefore he prolonged the courtship, without coming to any éclaircissement. He was scarce of age, and Angela but seventeen, when Earl Percy being taken ill in London, his son was sent for, and he arrived at their town residence only in time to close his father's eyes. The funeral being over, he hastened back to Northumberland, and sending for Allan to his castle, he explained how he had courted Angela under the name of Edwy, and now entreated the hand of the fair damsel in marriage. 'Why look so wretched and woe-begone, Allan?' said the earl, at the conclusion of his speech; 'I thought to have given thee joy—does my offer displease thee?'

The old man answered, it would have been the pride of his life to have beheld Angela the bride of Northumberland; but she was not his daughter.

'How!' said the astonished earl—Allan proceeded: 'Tis now near sixteen years since, that my dame and I were sitting by our poor fire, for our lot was then very humble, having met with keen losses and misfortunes, that a well-dressed stranger entered our cottage, and delivered to our care a lovely female child, and a considerable sum of money—he had much conversation with us, and it ended in our taking oaths to bring up Angela as our own, and never betray the secret; we were tempted to this by poverty, and likewise from a knowledge that we should do justice, and be tender to the child, which might not be the case were she to fall into other hands. The man seemed satisfied with our assurances that we would move the very next day (and we came here) where we were unknown, that the babe might pass for ours; and he left our dwelling, refusing, though it was late and stormy, a shelter for the night. My wife immediately looked out some clothes belonging to a little girl we had buried; and on going to change those of the little stranger, which seemed from its mantle

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to be damp, we were shocked and struck with horror, on removing that covering, to find an attempt had been made on its life; there was a wound on her throat, and the under garments were spotted with blood. Angela received from us parental care, and we looked on her as our own, nor did we suppose, year after year elapsing without any notice being taken, that she would ever be claimed; the money we received with her prospered, and we regarded both it and her as blessings sent from heaven; nor did we ever for a moment look on her as an incumbrance to our prospects, as I have heard of people being wicked enough to do in similar circumstances. Alas! my lord, while you were gone to London, Angela was taken from us, and we were told that she is the daughter of Sir Malcolm Mowbray, deceased; who on his death-bed acknowledged her as his child, and left her to the guardianship of his dearest friend, Earl Osmond, of Conway Castle, whither she is removed solely against her will, for title and grandeur had no effect on the dear girl. It was then, my lord, she revealed to me her love for Edwy, and charged me with a tender message, should he seek my cottage, for she said he had been obliged to go some miles hence, and she daily expected his return. Ah! noble Percy, would she had been your bride before this event, then she had received safe protection; for both dame and I think this a strange story, and the more so, as the very man who brought her here, is the one who fetched her away; and we have since learned that his name is Kenrick, a confidential dependant of the earl, which, connected with the wounded state in which we received her, does not look well.'

This account made Earl Percy anxious and uneasy; he without delay sent a courier with a letter to Osmond to ask the hand of Angela, but a positive denial was returned. The unhappy lover then set out in his peasant's dress to Conway Castle, in hopes to obtain an interview with his beloved. Just as he arrived in sight of the walls, he was so fortunate as to encounter Gilbert, an old servant of his father, but now a retainer of Earl Osmond—he had received many favours from Percy, and was bound to the noble youth by firm gratitude. The earl made himself known to Gilbert, explained his love for Angela, and his wish to have an interview with her, preparatory to his demanding her in person from her guardian.

'As to your personally seeing Earl Osmond,' replied