

**DAVID ARMSTRONG; OR,
BEFORE THE DAWN, IN
TWO VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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David Armstrong; or, Before the dawn, in two volumes, Vol. II by Anonymous

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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BEFORE THE DAWN.

CHAPTER XXV.

TRULY did David say that he had never denied Deeta anything he could give her; and this made her entreaties to be allowed to go to the play very hard to resist, especially after they were backed by Hermann's, who, in his character of acknowledged lover, thought it stupidly fastidious of David to refuse. Surely *he* was capable of taking care of his treasure! David could not explain all the reasons he had for his unwillingness to let Deeta come under the spell of the acted drama; and at length—when a

great actress, a very queen of tragedy, came to the Imperial with her travelling company—he reluctantly consented to let the child go there with Hermann.

Mrs Armstrong held up her hands in horror when she heard this, and implored him to think better of it. Was it not enough that one of the family had disgraced as decent and respectable a name as any in the north country; without the bairn, that had been kept from the very knowledge of evil, having her silly, flighty, vain little head turned to the same thing? What could he expect but shame and sorrow if he sanctioned such folly?

Little cared Deeta! She sang the live-long day as she flew about the house, working with threefold vigour as she thought of the coming pleasure.

She pulled out her prettiest dresses, and surveyed them with a dissatisfied look, because Hermann told her she must dress

very plainly, and she did so want to be gay.

Her lovely rippling hair was shaken down and dressed in three different ways before she was satisfied with it.

It really seemed as if Mrs Armstrong's fears would be realised, and the little creature's head turned ; so wild and restless was she all the morning.

But with noon came David to his dinner ; and the sight of his white, sad face, brought the first cloud over Deeta's sunny gladness.

He smiled, listening while she chattered and chirruped away to him of her anticipated treat, counting as usual upon his ready sympathy with all her pleasures ; but the smile was a forced one, and soon flitted, leaving uncertainty and gloom behind.

Deeta watched him for a few minutes intently, and then hung her head, like a child that had received an angry word, where it confidently expected a caress.