THE

VILLAGE COQUETTE;

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUCH IS THE WORLD."

VOL. I.

Women, like princes, find no real friends:
All who approach them their own ends pursne:
Lovers and ministers are never true.
Hence oft from reason heedless beauty strays,
And the most trusted guide the most betrays:
Hence by fond dreams of fancy'd pow'r amus'd,
When most you tyrannize, you're most abus'd.—LITTLETON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. AND W. B. WHITTAKER,
AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MDCCCXXII.

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Northumberland-court.

PREFACE.

IT is an observation which, though *vulgar*, is nevertheless true, "That one half of the world does not know how the other half lives;" and I am not certain that my VILLAGE COQUETTE throws any additional light on this common saying, but I believe all who shall honour her with a perusal, will discover the moral I would inculcate, though I must leave its application to the judgment of the reader. If I have not given a new reading of the remark to which I have alluded, I have offered some illustrations that may recall to the reader's mind the portraitures of beings whose multiplicity renders them familiar and insignificant in the crowded scenes of life, but who, when shewn up in their native simplicity, can

"Hold the mirror up to nature,"

and in their wayward fancy, tell an unadorned tale of as much value to their listening auditors, as the famed romance of heroes who have fleshed their falchions with the blood of their enemies.

In the present work I have attempted to delineate characters in the more humble walks of life; and, in this respect, my VILLAGE COQUETTE is directly the converse of my first novel, SUCH IS THE WORLD. There my heroine was a high-born dame of busy and creative fancy; here, as the title of my story obviously announces, I have chosen a country lass in whose character vanity plays its part with as much address as ambition and gallantry played theirs in the persons of the Countess of Annandale, and Lady Violet. And after making the usual allowances for blandishments of fictitious narrative, it will perhaps be discovered that the beings I now present for the amusement of my reader, have a large share of the realities of ordinary life in their composition, and derive their chief colouring from an attentive observation of their unfortunate originals.

My VILLAGE COQUETTE is now however dressed up and ready for exhibition, and must therefore make her appearance with what grace she can before a discerning but indulgent public. But I confess it is not without some apprehensions that I have availed myself of the sorrows of the *many*, to render them interesting to the fastidious *few*, who erroneously imagine that all their sympathies belong to the afflictions and miseries of the *great*, while the lowly, sorrowful, and distressed, have little or no claim on their pity.

Before I eventually take my leave at this time of those eyes which gaze upon me, I cannot help expressing the amusement I felt when on scanning some of the REVIEWS OF SUCH IS THE WORLD, I found myself "handled" and treated as one of the lords of the creation, though in fact I am a very woman, who in writing the VILLAGE COQUETTE, have had a much dearer object in view than, by this appeal, to court their censure or invite their praise. I have attempted, with what success I know not, to dispense for the present with "lords and ladies," and to shew in the life of a Village girl, that the unaccountable and invincible power of beauty, cannot always confer happiness, nor is contempt of the world's opinion a proof of wisdom in the female character; for, "*As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman without discretion.*"

F.J.

KENSINGTON,

December, 1821.

THE

VILLAGE COQUETTE.

CHAPTER I.

You foolish shepherd, wherefore do you follow her,
Like foggy south, puffing with wind and rain?
You are a thousand times a properer man
Than she a woman: 'tis such fools as you
That make the world full of ill-favour'd children:
'Tis not her glass, but you that flatter her;
And out of you she sees herself more proper
Than any of her lineaments can shew her.—
But, mistress, know yourself: down on your knees,
And thank heaven fasting, for a good man's love:
For I must tell you friendly in your ear,—
Sell when you can; you are not for all markets:
Cry the man mercy; love him, take his offer—
Foul is most foul, being foul to be a scoffer.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

ABOUT forty miles from London, and in the county of Bedford, is situated the romantic village of Silvershoe. The village consists chiefly of a main street, and only one of an inferior kind, inhabited by the poorer parts of the community. Various farm-houses lay scattered in its vicinity, the principal of which were distinguished by the names of their occupiers. The three of most importance were called Woodbine-farm, Meadow-farm, and Cowslip-farm.

In the middle of the main street was a small cross, just at the entrance of a long avenue of elms, that led to the great gates of West Park: a splendid domain, that had for many ages belonged to the noble family of Wilsden. On one side of the cross was the church and churchyard; on the other, one of the principal houses of the village. The park was spacious and romantic, richly wooded, and stored with fine deer and even cattle.

There were many traditional stories attached to various spots within its precincts, which will be mentioned in their proper places. From the great gates to the mansion, which lay on the right hand, was a semicircular avenue of chestnut trees of immense size, between which was a carriage road. Nearly facing the cross, but at a considerable distance, was a steep rising ground, on the top of which was a pleasure-house; on each side of this building, was a thick brush-wood, denominated "the old copses." Here strange noises were often heard, the ground appeared hollow, and the story ran, that a vaulted passage from this very spot, passed all the way under ground as far as Sheffield; that several attempts had been made to trace its course, but that the daring explorer had always been deterred from continuing his subterraneous peregrinations, by uncommon noises, and a very natural, but *portentous omen*, viz., the extinction of his light. Many years had elapsed since any research of this kind had been made; yet frequently the village children, at their sports, would declare they heard strange voices in the wind, and

would fly with precipitation, at the first signal given by some timid luckless wight, whose ears were more acute than those of his companions.

On entering the great gates, if you turned towards the left, the scenery was more wild and romantic than to the right: through this part of the park there was a common foot-path, leading to a little wood called Strawberry-wood, which led by a short cut to a neighbouring village. This was not, however, much frequented, except in the early part of the day, for reasons which will be told hereafter.

At the entrance of the village, from the London road, on the right hand, stood the George Inn,

——————where nut-brown draughts inspir'd,
Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retir'd:

and on the opposite side, was the inferior street, already mentioned, and which led to Woodbine-farm, one of the principal tenements on the Wilsden estate. This farm had been occupied for nearly two centuries by succeeding members of the same family. Farmer Woodbine was a widower: he had two lovely daughters; Betsy, the elder one, was fair with blue eyes; the complexion of Mary was more brilliant and eloquent, and her eyes were of a dark hazel. The old farmer had no cares in this world but those which arose from an untimely shower when his hay was down, or an unfortunate thunder-storm which blasted his wheat, till his girls attained that age when loveliness and beauty are most attractive. Mary Woodbine, at the age of nineteen, had received more offers of marriage than any other girl in the village; yet she was *still* single, though beset with lovers. The one she most favoured, however, was young Farmer Meadows.

William Meadows was a handsome young man, of about five-and-twenty, of a dark complexion, with black hair and eyes. He was a constant visiter at Woodbine-farm, and with him Mary often walked in the evening, amidst the lovely scenery of the neighbouring country. Betsy was most generally her companion, as was also George Underwood, whose admiration for the gentler blue-eyed sister, was in no respect inferior to that of William Meadows for the more animated Mary. Sometimes, however, the latter would walk with William alone, and Farmer Woodbine, who had the highest opinion of this young man, never objected to their solitary rambles. On one of these occasions, the following conversation between these rustic lovers took place. They had wandered for some time along the banks of a rippling stream, and had crossed a small bridge, consisting of a single plank, with a rail on one side, when William Meadows, enchanted with the scenery, and his own sensations, exclaimed to the lovely girl, whose arm was linked within his, and whose hand he fondly pressed,

"What a lovely prospect, Mary! Do let us rest here awhile."

"I do not like the seat beneath the *willow*," replied Mary Woodbine, with an arch look.

"Ah! dear Mary," resumed the youth, "you need not fear the willow—*you* will never wear it."

"No, indeed," she replied, gaily, "I never intend it; but so, for once in my life, and to please you, I will sit beneath it."

"To please me!" ejaculated William, his eyes sparkling with delight: "here let us sit then."

The two lovers having chosen a knoll of earth close to the rippling stream, which glided gently at their feet, a silence of a few minutes ensued, during which, young

Meadows had placed one arm round the waist of Mary Woodbine, while the hand of the other held a rose which she had just taken from her bosom.

"It is not so sweet as your cheek, Mary," said he, as he drew her closer to him, and imprinted a kiss upon her averted face.

"For shame, William," exclaimed Mary, half offended, half pleased; "you are so silly."

Another silence followed this reproof, and Mary's eyes, wandering listlessly over the extensive prospect, were at length arrested at discovering old Judy Gabriel, who was directing her aged steps towards her solitary hut. Mary started up: "I wish, William" she said, "you would supply poor old Judy with wood, she is almost sinking beneath that load of sticks."

"She shall have plenty of wood," replied young Meadows; "but sit again, dear Mary."

Another quarter of an hour was passed in delightful and composed feelings by William, arising from the serenity of the scene, and the delight of being near the capricious object of his affections; but Mary began to think the time tedious, for although she liked William better than any other young man in the village, yet she was not actuated by the same romantic passion as her lover. She was fond of general admiration, and delighted in exercising the power she was aware she possessed over more hearts than one. William, at length, addressed her upon ordinary subjects; and old Judy again obtruded herself upon their obversation, for she appeared at the door of her hut.

"See, Mary," said William, "by the light smoke which rises through the trees, she has already lighted a fire—but what makes you sigh so, Mary?"

"Oh, it is so dull here," said Mary, yawning; "it is so still that one can almost *hear* the willow leaves dip in the water: it makes me melancholy—heigho! I wish to-morrow was come. To-morrow is May-day—fair-day too; and next week Bedford races. Oh, how delightful!" continued she, with increasing animation; "there will be such gay doings. And do you know, William, there is to be a show from London: a play show—Mr. Grigs told me so; and George Underwood says there will be the smallest woman there that ever was seen, and the tallest man: but what's better than all, there is such a fortune-teller coming—he can tell all that *has* ever happened to you, and all that ever *is* to happen to you. Oh! I shall have my fortune told: won't you, William? Dear me! how grave you are."

"I know my fate," replied William; "but, Mary, I wish you wouldn't go to the races at Bedford."

"Not go to the races!" she exclaimed, and jumping up, "why I would'nt miss them for all the world. The young lord is to be there; and, besides, there is a regiment quartered in the neighbourhood, and I so much like to look at the soldiers—they are so smart, and they walk so well; and the officers are always so polite. Don't you recollect last fair-day, when that grand regiment passed through Silvershoe? I am sure I shall never forget them: one of the officers was so polite, and so handsome, I should know him among a thousand. Oh, how I wish the race time was come! There is to be a ball at the inn, and there will be"—

How long Mary would have gone on enumerating the various pleasures which were to be found at the races, we cannot pretend to say, had she not been interrupted by a sigh from William.

“La! William, you are so mopish—Oh! good gracious, there is Mr. Grigs coming.”

“If you do go to the races, Mary,” said William, “will you promise to ride my grey mare, and keep with *me* all the evening.”

“I will ride the grey mare,” she replied; “but I can’t promise to keep all the evening with you; because,” she continued, as she plucked a bunch of primroses to pieces, “if my young lord should ask me to walk with him, or dance with him, I can’t refuse.”

“Who?” said the petrified William.

“Why, my young lord. I met him this morning, and he said, he hoped I should be at the races.”

“What can it signify to him?” said William. “Ah! Mary, I fear—”

“Oh, if you are going to preach a sermon to me, good bye to you,” said the thoughtless girl, regardless of the pain she was giving her worthy lover; and the near approach of Mr. Grigs, prevented all further conversation, except that Mary begged William would withdraw his arm from her waist, and walk a little faster.

“Fine evening, Miss Mary,” said the trim apothecary, as he advanced; “pleasant evening this for a stroll *taty à taty*. Don’t you think so, Mr. Meadows? May I offer my arm, Miss Mary? For my part, I think the evening—the evening is the only time for a walk. Don’t you, Mr. Meadows?”

Mr. Meadows made no reply. “Are you not well, Mr. Meadows? Is not Mr. Meadows well, Miss Mary?”

“I don’t know,” replied Mary, stealing a sly glance at her lover; “an’t you well, Mr. Meadows?” she inquired, with pretended anxiety.

“This is too much,” said William; “I perceive that my company is not agreeable. Good evening to you both.”

“You are not going, William,” said Mary; “we can’t part with you yet—can we, Mr. Grigs?”

“Oh! no, certainly,” replied the doctor (for such, in Silvershoe, was Mr. Grigs called). By-the-bye, Miss Mary, to-morrow is fair-day; and next week we shall have Bedford races. I shall be very happy to drive you there in my gig—quite new—just come from London—all neat and clean, and comfortable—my arms painted on the pannel.”

“Indeed!” said Mary.

“Yes, Miss Mary—harness new too—in short, I can assure you that it is the neatest thing in the county—hem!—save and except my lord’s phaëton—By-the-bye, I saw my lord this morning: his lordship admired my chaise very much. I am sure, Miss Mary, you will find it more agreeable than bumping on a double horse. Mr. Meadows you have no objection?”

Mr. Grigs had now indeed offended Mary unintentionally: in the first place, she never went bumping on a double horse, but always rode single; in the second, she did not at all approve of Mr. Grigs’ insinuation that Mr. Meadows was to be consulted as to how she should go to the races. She had never given William reason to suppose that he had any influence over her actions; indeed, he himself never entertained such an extraordinary idea, for he had on the contrary, always found that if he proposed going to the right, she chose to go to the left.

Mary, therefore, replied to Mr. Grigs' last observation, that she was free mistress of her own actions, and did not consult William Meadows as to how she should go to the races.

She, however, declined Mr. Grigs' offer very decidedly, of going in his new gig: the doctor did all he could to make her change her resolution, but in vain. Young Meadows was silent; and, at the moment when all parties wished for an interruption, George Underwood leaped over a neighbouring stile.

George was a frank, open-hearted young man, the devoted admirer of Betsy Woodbine, Mary's sister. The eyes of the latter brightened at his approach.

"George," she cried, advancing to meet him, "you will take Betsy and me to the races, in your taxed cart, won't you?"

"Astonishing!" ejaculated Mr. Grigs, "astonishing that she should prefer a taxed cart to my whiskey!"

George, in the mean while, was expressing the pleasure it would give him to escort the two sisters. "But what is the matter now, Mary?" he added. "Has William affronted you?—and the doctor too looks mighty glum."

"I will give them a parting smile to cheer them," said Mary, turning quickly round; and extending a hand to each of them, she said, "thank you both for your offer, gentlemen; but I prefer George's taxed cart, to your whiskey, Mr. Grigs, or your grey mare, Mr. William Meadows."

Mr. Grigs was seriously affronted with Miss Mary's very extraordinary conduct, and he resolved to be a match for her; he therefore directed his steps towards Farmer Cowslip's, where he knew his whiskey and himself would be duly appreciated. Susan Cowslip was from home; and the doctor, thus twice disappointed, resolved on not going to the races at all.

William Meadows, with bitter feelings, returned towards his farm, secretly vowing to think no more of such a fickle being as Mary Woodbine. He even endeavoured to persuade himself, that there were many girls in the village prettier than Mary; at least, he was sure there were many who would be kinder. Just as he had brought his mind to this tone, Susan Cowslip very opportunely crossed the path. Susan was a pretty girl, now about eighteen, and William offered her his arm. Susan was delighted beyond measure at this unexpected mark of his kindness, and instantly accepted it, pretending to blush. She sighed too, and looked so tenderly at William, that he could not avoid taking her hand, but without saying a word.

At length Susan said, "Mary Woodbine so takes all your attention, Mr. William, that no one else has the chance of a look from you."

William begged she would never name Mary Woodbine again to him.

"I always said, Mary was too fickle for you," replied the delighted Susan; "and there just now, I saw her and George Underwood walking together, laughing and toying so!" William felt rather uncomfortable at this communication; and Susan, who observed it, went on thus, "Ah! Mr. Meadows, if you knew what I know, I am sure—there are so many *people*—hem—who think highly of you—whom you never dreamt of."

Now although the year happened to be leap-year, and though maids have then the privilege of going a courting, yet William, who had been used to look for two or three days, with the greatest anxiety, for one encouraging word from Mary, felt dissatisfied with poor Susan, who, without waiting for one word of kindness, had volunteered a

dozen. He could not frame one syllable in reply; but walked on in silence, knocking off the heads of all the thistles which came within reach of his hazel switch. He certainly, at this moment, did not present a very animated picture, though Susan declared she never had had such an agreeable walk in her life. And, there were those within hearing, who were as much amused with the pretty looks of Susan, and the sheepish, awkward manner of William. George Underwood and Mary were on the other side of the hedge, and as they drew near the little gate which opened into the lane, Mary sprang forwards, and met William just as his switch was raised against a tall, unoffending thistle.

"Bless me, Mr. Meadows," said Mary, "why you were so lost in thought, you had nearly switched me, instead of the thistle. Good evening to you, Susan Cowslip. This is a pretty lane; and the evening is drawing in very fast. I have heard *some* people say, no prudent girl would walk alone in a lane in the evening, or with a *nice* young man. I was afraid of being even with George, so I joined you; for, you know, Susan, people are sometimes *so* ill-natured—I declare I think George has left me; and the evening advances, and I am almost afraid to walk by myself. If I was not afraid of intruding, I would ask you to let me take one arm, Mr. Meadows."

At this moment she stumbled, and William instinctively sprung forward to assist her.

"Are you hurt, Mary?" were the first words he spoke.

"A little," she replied. "I have sprained my ankle, I believe."

"Rest awhile, Mary," said William; "or lean more on me, and let us hasten home."

"Oh, it's of no consequence," added Mary; "only I fear I shall not be able to go to the races on the grey mare."

William forgot all his resolutions when he heard Mary say this; and she continued, "To be sure, if I cannot ride her, there are other people who can." Here she sighed, and looked at Susan.

"No one shall ride her but yourself, dear Mary," said the delighted William, while Susan Cowslip, who was ready to die with vexation, indignantly withdrew her arm from that of William, and walked on before them.

"Oh William," resumed Mary, "I see now that you are like all the rest. I had thought," she added, turning away her face, "that *you* at least were true-hearted."

William's astonishment prevented him from speaking for some time; at length, in the most soothing accents, and with the most affectionate earnestness, he begged she would believe "he never could love any one but herself. Do not weep dear Mary; I cannot bear it."

"And so," replied Mary, in a drawling, whimpering tone, as she limped along, her head still averted from William, "you really thought that I was going."—Here she turned short round, and continued, in a quick and animated tone, "you really thought I was going to be such a fool as to wear the willow, did you?" "No," she continued, "I would have you to know, Mr. Meadows, that you may take your Susan Cowslip to your arms whenever you please; and that having made you both a couple of —— I will not say what, I wish you both good evening, a very good evening." So saying, she sprung from the astonished William, and calling loudly for George, who was waiting for her, she soon left the disconsolate youth and the mortified Susan to their own meditations.

George told her, very candidly, she had carried the joke too far. "Nonsense," replied the thoughtless girl, "do you think I should grieve if William *were* to fall in love

with Susan Cowslip!" Her colour rose as she spoke, and after a short pause, which betrayed that William was dearer to her heart than she chose to allow, she added the following demonstrative threat. "But let him if he dare: I will tease his heart out. For my part, you know, George, I have more than one, or even two, strings to my bow. You need not look so grave; if you do, I shall not send Betsy to you when I get home. It is well you had not me to deal with. What work there would have been between us."

"I would have matched you," said George, laughing; "William has spoiled you."

CHAPTER II.

In a close lane as I pursu'd my journey;
I spy'd a withered hag, with age grown double,
Picking dry sticks, and mumbling as she went.

OTWAY.

MARY WOODBINE was, in truth, not only spoiled by William, but by almost the whole of the inhabitants of the village. Her beauty and arch manners; her gaiety and excellent disposition, had from childhood attached all who knew her. When she was about ten years of age, she was sent to a *boarding-school* in a neighbouring town, and on Saturday she came home to stay till Monday. Always on these occasions, and on her return, she was accompanied by two or three of the neighbouring farmers' sons. William Meadows, who was about six years older than herself, was generally foremost in offering his services. He had more than once been flogged for not being in school at the proper time: for how could he, when chasing a butterfly for Mary, think of the *Universal Spelling-Book*, or *Whittingham's Guide to Arithmetic*. Once he had nearly broken his leg in getting a nightingale's nest for her; but he was amply repaid for this danger, on seeing the pale cheek and tearful eye of Mary, as she entreated he would *never* climb a tree again.

Even old Judy Gabriel, who had the reputation of being a witch, declared Mary Woodbine was the prettiest and best behaved child in all the village. Poor Judy was an object of terror to all the children; and Mary, who was no heroine, would go a mile about rather than meet her. But she took great care not to let the old woman see she was afraid of her, but always stopped to make her a low curtesy when she could not avoid passing her. The praises of the old woman would produce a second, for Mary would walk a few steps and then turn round and make another curtesy, quite to the ground; and so would go on till some friendly lane or place of shelter would present itself; and then she would run as fast as her little legs would carry her, till she fancied herself quite safe from pursuit.

This sensation of fear had, however, gradually subsided: for once, when Mary was attacked by a drover's dog, which was passing through a lane, leading to the village, Judy had sprung out of her hut, and with her broom laid the dog senseless at Mary's feet. Poor Mary as if spell-bound stood stock-still, so astonished was she at the sudden appearance of the old woman, and the prostration of her ferocious enemy, till Judy in shrill accents, but with soothing words, roused the little girl from her transitory stupor. She led her into her hut, and when Mary's feelings found relief in tears, the poor old soul wiped the pearly-drops with her coarse, but clean, apron. Mary was, however, very uneasy at finding herself shut in with dame Judy alone, but she was afraid to say she wished to go, lest she should affront the old woman, who might possibly ride away with her up the chimney, mounted on her usual vehicle a broomstick: but her fears had attained their climax, when she saw the fine tabby cat, which had been asleep by the expiring embers, turn upon her side and stretch out one of her fore feet, and display, what most cats do display occasionally, her sharp talons.

To Mary's imagination, however, Judy Gabriel's cat's claws looked longer than those of any other cat she had ever seen; and in desperation she exclaimed, "Let me go, Goody Gabriel——if you please," she added after a momentary pause, and dropping a low curtesy at the same time.

“Poor chield,” said the old woman, “thou art like the rest, and poor Judy is shunned and feared by all.” A tear rose to Judy’s eyelid which Mary observed, and the old woman taking a chalk-parrot from a little shelf offered it to Mary, who after some hesitation took it. Still she was anxious to go, and Judy having opened the door for her, Mary dropped another curtesy at the threshold.

“Bless thee, sweet chield!”—another curtesy followed this affectionate apostrophe, but the sight of William Meadows banished Mary’s fear, and she soon vanished from Judy’s sight.

Judy Gabriel at the time our tale commences, was eighty years of age: she had married early in life, and had buried, to use her own expressions, “a husband, and four sweet children, in the churchyard of Silvershoe;” a fifth was a wanderer no one knew whither; her early acquaintance were all gone, and from the romantic turn of her mind, she had secluded herself from society, till the present generation were strangers almost to her family: the few, who were nearly of her own age, shunned her company, because, she had long acquired the reputation of being a witch. Her tall form, which, though bent with age, still retained a superiority over that of most of her neighbours, was no improper representation of that sort of being assigned by superstition as the necessary appendage of a country village: her face was long, thin and sallow; her dark eye still retained part of its original lustre, and when kindled with anger, or flashing with scorn, few of the villagers could encounter its energetic expressions.

The intimacy of Mary and Judy notwithstanding all these repelling exteriors, became in time very great, to the astonishment of all the little girls and boys in the village. From one degree of endurance to another, Mary was completely familiarized to her keen glance; she would run to meet her, and even take hold of the thin withered hand which was always extended to welcome her; the old woman’s countenance glowed with delight when she saw the little cherub approach her; and in her morning and evening orisons she would never fail to acknowledge the happiness she felt in the society of the lovely child.

Mary soon persuaded William Meadows to join her in these visits to Judy, and the old woman seated in an high-back’d armed chair, with Mary and William on each side of her, and puss stretched at their feet, would relate such tales of wonder, as made her young auditors tremble with thrilling delight.

Judy had been the favourite attendant of one of the young ladies’ at the hall, who had been drowned in a large pond close by Strawberry-wood. By this pond grew an old crab-tree, one limb of which extended horizontally across the water; here this young lady had taken her seat, in defiance of all Judy’s remonstrances, and while swinging her basket of wood-strawberries, lost her balance and fell. Judy in an agony screamed loudly for help, and at length conquering her excessive aversion to the water plunged in; but her efforts to save her young mistress were vain, and she herself was with difficulty rescued from this perilous situation.

Judy’s senses were evidently affected on this unfortunate subject, and from indulging the melancholy pleasure of frequently visiting the fatal spot where the accident happened, her imagination, naturally of the most romantic and enthusiastic kind, conjured up the person of her beloved mistress, and she declared that the young lady sat every night upon the branch of this crab-tree, with her little dog under one arm, and swinging her basket with the other. This story she would again and again repeat to William and

Mary; till at last, on their report of the matter, no one would pass by the old crab-tree after sun-set.

Many of the villagers declared that they had seen the figure in the distance, though no one was so presumptuous as to dare to approach it.

There was a marvellous trunk also full of treasure, which Judy knew to be concealed at a particular spot, and which had been often dug for, and even seen; but according to her account it sunk deeper and deeper, as soon as it was discovered, and thus eluded the avaricious grasp of the family of the Gropers, who were very active in search of it.

William and Mary would listen to such stories with eager attention, and detail them to their school-fellows with every possible exaggeration.

Frequently they went to look for the little white mouse, which ran down every evening from the park-gate, up to the great house; and William Meadows and another lad, had stolen from their homes one evening, to watch till twelve o'clock at midnight, that they might see the coachman without a head, who drove furiously down the avenue of huge elms; the park-gates opening of their own accord, and shutting themselves with great violence after he had passed through.

But it happened unfortunately for our trembling and breathless heroes, who lay crouching on the ground at the entrance of the avenue, that the night turned out stormy, and though they had chosen the full moon to illumine them in their nocturnal excursion, the coy goddess withdrew behind a cloud, just as the village clock began to strike twelve. A sudden gust of wind too rising at this moment, and, sweeping through the stillness of the night up the long avenue, the boys felt assured that the noise was produced by the carriage wheels belonging to the headless coachman.—They heard the whip, or rather an old tree crack, and up they sprung, not daring to look behind, after the very object they came purposely to see.

The following day the tale was whispered round, and many a stout heart on passing through the great gates in the evening, found its courage increased, by a quick pace; and an effort to whistle away those sensations which the marvellous stories of Judy had occasioned.

Nay, a consultation was held in the porch of the George Inn, where many a venerable head shook its white locks, and hinted, it was strange Judy should be the only person, to declare all these mighty secrets of the world of spirits.

"As to the trunk," said one man, who went by the name of the Neighbour Grope, "I'm sure she ought to be made to tell us how she comed to know about that: it's my very belief that 'at 'ere old woman is a witch, and she ought to be ducked to make her tell where it's hid: for my part I have dug about the old copses, and strawberry-wood, till I'm tired."

A long debate ensued, and, strange as it may appear, the poor old woman was dubbed a witch, and a ducking was threatened, unless she would disclose the secret.

A party accordingly sallied forth and knocked at Judy's door; when she opened it, she had a prayer book in her hand; but in rising and moving, she had turned it with the upper end of the book towards her; this was observed by the clerk of the parish; who could read of course: many of his companions could not. (There were no Lancasterian schools in those days.) The clerk started back, appalled at the ominous sight. The wicked wretch was no doubt reading her prayers backwards.

“What do you want?” said Judy in shrill accents, looking over her spectacles at the group before her.

“Hem!” said the clerk, “hem! we be come, Judy, just for to ask you a civil question.”

“Yes,” interrupted Neighbour Grope, looking over the clerk’s shoulder. “We be come just to ax you about the trunk. Come now, you needn’t mutter your prayers back’ards, but tell us where it is to be found, and how you comed to know about it?”

The old woman replied not.

“Come, come,” he resumed, “tell us at once, or we’ll make you.”

“You shall never make me betray a trust,” replied the old woman, shutting to the door and bolting it in the inside.

A long altercation now ensued, as to what was next to be done; and at length it was agreed to force the door: a violent kick from one of the party, made it start from its hinges; but this great deed effected, no one seemed inclined first to enter the secluded dwelling. The clerk was thought the most proper person, as he would know best how to encounter a spirit; because he could read. The clerk himself, was willing to resign the honour intended him; but “some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them;” and the latter was the clerk’s case.

After much hesitation, and many encouraging promises from his friends, that they would stand by him if the old witch should assail him; the clerk entered.

“Out upon ye, rude hinds,” screamed Judy, “ye have forced the door from its hinges, and what would ye more?”

Here she turned round, for the cat, awaked by the crash, and alarmed at the sight of so many strangers, had sprung terrified to a little cupboard, where the dame kept her small stock of crockery, and had knocked down a basin: Judy shook her fist at her, and exclaimed, “Ye old witch, come away;—see too, you have added your mischief to theirs.”

At the words, “old witch,” the clerk retreated a few steps, but he was pushed on by his friends, and in trembling accents, he repeated the purport of their visit, namely, to extort from her the secret respecting the trunk, or in case of denial, to duck her, till she became reasonable.

“Shame on ye, carls, as ye are,” she replied, “to assault a poor old woman in this way. Begone and trouble me not—I shall not tell ye, what ye came to know,—and as for ducking me, though ye have many hands, and strong ones too, ye will not find it an easy task.”

This answer, which implied defiance, was sufficient to rouse the anger of her assailants; and some of the strongest of them seized the old woman, but not without much difficulty, and forced her out of the house, carrying her to a pond, by the brink of which, was a regular ducking stool, that had stood there from time immemorial. As they carried the poor old creature along, they were met by the boys and girls coming from school, who inquired the cause of the uproar? Among the rest were William Meadows and Mary Woodbine.

“Ah, chields,” screamed Judy, “this comes a your babbling; ye have told about the trunk, and now I maun be ducked.”

William Meadows looked aghast, and Mary burst into a violent flood of tears. At this moment the bearers of the poor old woman stopped to commit her to fresh hands, for she was in truth rather weighty.

Mary observing this, sprang towards her, and climbing up her knees, fastened her little arms close round the old woman's neck: there she clung, pressed closely by poor Judy, who was well aware that while she could retain her youthful champion, no harm could happen to her. Mary sobbed and screamed when the rustics attempted to touch her, and William Meadows bursting from the hold of one of the countrymen, fastened himself to the old woman also. Poor Judy thus armed addressed her assailants in these words:

"Have you no feelings of pity left? and would you tear these two angels from me? shame on you; but while Judy has one atom of strength left she will not let go her hold."

Mary turned round and sobbed out "We will all be—be—be—ducked together."

What was now to be done? opinions differed, for no one dared to touch the old woman for fear of hurting the children—most opportunely the curate appeared, and inquired the cause of the tumult—Mary upon hearing his voice loosened her hold, and caught his hand, begging he would not let them duck Goody Gabriel.

Many of the party had disappeared at the sight of the parson; and after repeated commands for silence on his part, he at last obtained from the clerk a knowledge of the affair. A severe reprimand, for their folly and wickedness was the result of this information, and threats were also used to secure protection to the inoffensive old Judy Gabriel.

Judy was now taken under the immediate protection of the parson, and Mary and William.

As the two latter grew up, they were perhaps her most powerful defenders; for although she was still said to mildew the corn and bewitch the cattle, she lived in tolerable peace, for Mary would speak to no one who molested Judy Gabriel.

From this time forth, Mary appeared in the eyes of Judy, as little less than a protecting angel, and the old woman had no greater delight, than to get William Meadows into her hut, and talk of the beloved object of her affections. All the kindly social feelings of her nature had been roused at the resolution of Mary to be ducked with her. She felt no longer that she was alone in the wide world, and her enthusiastic gratitude would have led her, had it been required, to sacrifice her life, if by so doing, she could have benefited the lovely girl.

Mary had in her eyes but one fault:—she teased William Meadows:—and there were moments when raising her withered arms to heaven, she would pray that Mary might have no cause to repent her childish conduct towards the worthy youth. Sometimes she would fix her keen dark eye, upon the thoughtless girl, and in few, yet powerful words, would reprobate her conduct.

Mary would shrink abashed at her authoritative tone, and almost involuntarily would promise to treat William better.

"I think I love him," she would add.

"Then," replied the old woman, with a sigh, "cease to torment him."

CHAPTER III.

Upon the green the virgins wait,
In rosy chaplets gay,
’Till morn unbars her golden gate
And give the promis’d May.
* * * * * *
Strike up the tabor’s boldest notes,
We’ll rouse the nodding grove;
The nested birds shall raise their throats,
And hail the maid I love.
* * * * * *
Now lightsome oe’r the level mead,
Where midnight faries rove,
Like them the jocund dance we’ll lead,
Or tune the reed to love;
For see, the rosy May draws nigh;
She claims a virgin queen;
And hark! the happy shepherds cry,
’Tis Kate of Aberdeen. CUNNINGHAM.

SUCH was the state of affairs in Silvershoe, when this story opens.

Mary’s imprudent coquetry often laid her open to the private attacks of some of her own sex; the evil passions of our nature are to be found every where, and there wanted not ill-natured persons in the village, who could tell many tales, which with a little falsifying addition, threw no great credit on the prudence of Mary.

She had been seen walking late in the evening with George Underwood, several times: to be sure, her sister was with her,—but there was no occasion to mention any thing about her sister.

But it were needless here, to repeat the innumerable opportunities she gave to her enemies to misrepresent her conduct.

The girl or woman, who, confident in her own internal rectitude, ventures to set *public opinion* at defiance, cannot expect to escape unhurt, in passing through that fiery ordeal.

Among the evil spirits of Silvershoe, was one Sally Greenly, whose mother was a widow, and she herself was an only child. She admired William Meadows, and therefore disliked Mary Woodbine, and in revenge she had circulated many stories to the prejudice of the latter; a circumstance with which Mary was well acquainted; but, thoughtless of the consequences, she took great delight in evincing the most sovereign contempt for every thing Sally Greenly said or did concerning her. But enraged at length, at a report Sally had spread, that William Meadows had forsaken her, she told George Underwood, Mr. Grigs, who was her devoted admirer, William, and half-a-dozen other young men, that Sally Greenly was the most spiteful creature living; that she had told a number of stories about her, and that she wished to goodness some one of them would play her a trick, which would teach her better manners.

Mary's wishes were laws, and the first of May, the fair day, was fixed for this purpose.

It had long been the custom in Silvershoe, to celebrate May morning with great festivity. A queen was elected, who presided over the day's sports, and Mary had been chosen queen, four successive years. May eve at length arrived, and on Mary's return to the farm, after George had said a word to Betsy, the two girls shut themselves in their own room to trim their bonnets. Betsy was two years older than Mary, whom she loved with the most ardent affection; and when the latter told her how she had parted with William Meadows, Betsy could not help lamenting her sister's folly.

"Ah dear Betsy", said Mary, playfully kissing her sister, "after to-morrow, I will follow your advice; but he wanted me not to go to the races, and I was resolved not to be laughed at:—for the lads would all have said—"*ah, she dares not go:—William Meadows would not let her*".—So now, Betsy, let's talk of our dress; do you think I shall be chosen queen of the May to-morrow? Oh! I hope I shall, if it were only to spite Sally Greenly.—Ah! that an ill-natured puss! but there's a rod in pickle for her.

The two sisters staid above stairs till eight o'clock, when they joined their family at supper.

"Ah, my sweet cherubs," said farmer Woodbine, as his blooming daughters entered the kitchen,—"well, my girls, to-morrow is May day; who is to be queen?—There girls, there is a new kerchief for each of you,—I shall give you in charge to William Meadows, and George Underwood; they are worthy lads."

Early on the following day, the lasses in the village of Silvershoe were all up, each anxious, yet fearing, to look out at the window. For on these occasions it was customary to hang a May bush at the door of the favourite lasses, ornamented with such spring flowers as could be collected at that season of the year. Mary was up with the lark, and peeping out at her casement window, she saw two large May bushes covered with flowers, from one of which was suspended a crown of roses.

"Oh, Betsy," she exclaimed, "look! two *such* may bushes! and a crown too! make haste."

In a very short time, such music as the village could furnish, was heard in the distance. Mary's heart beat high, as the sounds drew near, and a procession of young men, each accompanied by a lass, arrived in front of farmer Woodbine's house. Where is the female heart that would not bound at such homage as this?

The old farmer opened his door, and glancing at the May bushes, he said "You are all welcome lads, but you spoil my Mary, you do indeed."

"No, no," said a number of voices, female as well as male; for Mary was so good-natured, that she was much beloved by her own sex. When Mary appeared, the youths and maids in the procession set up a shout; and after partaking of a good substantial breakfast at the farm, they repaired to the cross, there to confer the crown of beauty, on beauty's queen.

Old farmer Woodbine was rather dispointed at not seeing young Meadows among the group; he however, at length appeared, and as Mary was at this moment pleased to her utmost wish, she greeted him with one of her sweetest smiles. The joy which irradiated his countenance, induced her to extend her hand to him, and in ecstacy he placed himself beside her.

The party now in full trim, hastened to the cross, where a seat covered with ivy, and adorned with spring flowers, was placed:—close by it, stood old Judy Gabriel. As William handed Mary to her throne, the old woman dropped on her knees, and with upraised eyes, and clasped hands, implored heaven to bless with its choicest gifts, the lovely maid and handsome youth.

The tears trickled down her venerable cheek, for busy memory recalled times long gone by, when beauty's crown had been conferred on one of her own lovely daughters.

"She, sleeps there, Mary," said the old woman, pointing to the church-yard, where a mossy heap of earth was decked with fresh gathered flowers.

"May you be as good as she was; and, then, though the cold hand of death should nip your early blossom, you will be, as she is now, a beautiful angel."

Judy Gabriel's solemn apostrophe, checked the mirth of the moment. She soon perceived this, and clasping the hands of William and Mary together, she pressed them to her heart, and in silence slowly withdrew to her own home.

A tear trembled in the eyelids of Mary and Betsy, which the former brushing hastily away, she with a smile complained that she was weary of her ivy seat.

The crown was immediately placed on her fair brow, and leaning on William, she descended, and once more bent her steps to her father's house.

The gaiety of the party had again burst forth in shouts of joyous mirth, which was interrupted by sounds of a more discordant nature. The cause was soon discovered, for Sally Greenly's mother was seen running towards them screaming and scolding, shaking a huge bunch of May dressed with stinging nettles. Shouts of laughter burst from all the young men, who in a trice explained to their female companions the cause of dame Greenly's wrath. Instead of the flowery May bush, they had suspended opposite Sally's door, the obnoxious bush, adorned with *stinging nettles*, "which," said young farmer Cowslip, "we thought more adapted to her ill-natured *stinging* disposition, than May flowers or primroses, and so forth."

Sally did not make her appearance during the whole day, though the fair was well attended, and the festivity of the day concluded with a dance at the George inn, where events, which shall be recorded in the next chapter, caused an unusual sensation in the village of Silvershoe.

CHAPTER IV.

’Tis said that woman, prone to changing,
Through all the rounds of folly ranging,
On life’s uncertain ocean riding,
No reason rule, no rudder guiding,
Is like the comet’s wand’ring light,
Eccentric, ominous, and bright;
Reckless and shifting as the wind;
A sea, whose fathom none can find;
A moon, still changing and revolving;
A riddle, past all human solving,
A bliss, a plague, a heaven, a ****,
A—something that no man can tell.

FABLES OF LOVE AND VANITY.

MARY WOODBINE had passed all the day in company with William Meadows. Old Judy’s solemn apostrophe had softened her heart, and without paying any attention to the rattle of George, the fine speeches of Mr. Grigs, who had dined at her father’s, or the more unsophisticated declarations of admiration from two or three of the young farmers, she seemed wholly devoted to William, that is to say, she permitted his attentions, and appeared pleased with all he said and did.

The evening at length arrived, and the happy villagers repaired to the George Inn. Old farmer Woodbine, whose anxiety on Mary’s account, made him more alive to certain appearances, than were most of the other farmers who had daughters, chose to accompany his girls to the ball at the inn.

A seat was prepared for Mary at the top of the room, over which was suspended a fresh crown of roses, which Mr. Hawthorn the gardener at the hall, had brought from the green-house for that purpose.

When Woodbine and his lovely daughters entered the room, they were met and welcomed by many a hearty squeeze of the hand, a short time after which dancing began; Mary led off with William, then followed Betsy and George; and Mr. Grigs with Susan Cowslip formed the third couple. A blind fiddler, a pipe and tabor struck up Nancy Dawson, and the vibrating floor soon gave proof that the dancers were strong and active, though perhaps Monsieur Vestris might have discovered many steps that were not *true*.

Nancy Dawson was followed by “Come haste to the wedding;” and George Underwood and Mary went down this dance with great spirit. Mr. Grigs next claimed Mary’s hand.

Mr. Grigs was about five feet nothing and a half, well proportioned, extremely lively, tolerably clever in his profession, and very good-natured; but extremely vain.

With all the airs of a petit maître he tripped with Mary on the light fantastic toe, every now and then exclaiming, “Charming Miss Mary, charming, delightful! you dance like a little fairy.”

Mary’s next partner was the reverse of Mr. Grigs. Edward Underwood was a tall overgrown boy of seventeen, with long, lanky dark hair, hanging carelessly about his face, partly concealing a pair of very fine dark eyes: but Edward had never learned to

dance, and he was conscious of his own deficiency; but Mary, who liked him very much, asked him.

"You can't, I am sure, refuse Miss Mary," said Mr. Grigs; "'tis impossible."

Edward took his station beside Mary, (who was seated by her father) and playfully receiving the homage of the village youths, when a sprucely dressed gentlemanly traveller entered the ball room.

This man had on a smart riding dress of those days, (same forty years ago,) "a whole coat, not half a one, buckskin breeches, high topped boots, and a riding whip in his hand. He looked around with something like contempt at the rural festivity, which was going on, but espying Mary, he fixed his eyes upon her with a confident stare. She coloured indignantly, but instantly resuming her playful manner, she told Edward she was certain the strange gentleman was going to ask her to dance; "if he does," she added, "you leave me, and I will match him, for he looks as if he thought I could not refuse him."

Mary was right; it has been said that no man ever intended a civil thing towards a woman, but she guessed it before it was accomplished. The London gentleman advanced with a polite saunter, towards farmer Woodbine, and with no little conceit, he began to discuss the politics of the day.

But farmer Woodbine was no politician, and the gentleman therefore had an opportunity of holding forth learnedly, and without contradiction, on the domestic disturbances of the times, till finding that many of his auditors began to yawn, and catching the sly smile of Mary, he suddenly stopped short, and half resolved in his own mind not to condescend to ask her to dance with him; but Mary was bewitching, though she was but little amused with his eloquence; and he therefore without further ceremony held out his hand to her, and in drawling accents entreated he might be permitted the honour of leading her to the dance.

"Sir!" said Mary, affecting great surprise.

"Permit me, Ma'am, the honour of leading you to the dance."

"Oh, Sir," replied Mary, looking modestly, "you are so polite."

The stranger bowed, and holding out his hand, Mary presented hers with a profound curtsy.

As he led her out, he exclaimed, "what a barbarous tune that is; it is really insufferably boisterous; I like soft, gently gliding airs."

Mary said it was called "Cheshire rounds," and that it was a great favourite in the country; but she supposed in London they had very fine tunes."

The gentleman led her to the middle of the group, and took his station opposite to her. But when Susan Cowslip began the dance, Mary called out "Edward, Edward, come, come, why don't you take your place."

"Edward advanced reluctantly, and Mary curtsying to the London gentleman said, "If you please, Sir, will you make room for my partner."

"Your partner, Ma'am," exclaimed the surprised beau! "I thought you had done me the honour to accept my services."

"Sir," she replied, "you only asked to *lead me to* the dance; you didn't ask me to dance with you. "Not ask you!" exclaimed the stranger, surprised at the coquetry of his partner. "I did not think, Sir," she continued, "you would condescend to dance with a

poor silly country girl." "Not condescend! I asked you here." "I am engaged to Edward, said Mary, and half a dozen more besides.

"But you're engaged to me first!"

"O dear, no Sir; and so, Sir, as the dancers are coming down, Sir, will you please to let me have my own partner."

The London gentleman turned upon his heel, and with that silence which is most expressive of suppressed rage, mixed with sovereign contempt, took his station a few moments before the fire, with his back to the company; then turning round he drew from his bosom a newspaper, and appeared to be absorbed in the perusal of its motley contents; but his eyes involuntarily followed the country girl, who had excited many a suppressed laugh at his expense.

She was, he thought, the prettiest creature he had ever seen; and her assumed simplicity in accepting his hand to lead her to the dance, and then to leave him in the lurch, excited a smile even from himself. It was, he thought, a clever hit; and he must have another word with this village idol, for such he soon discovered her to be.

Mary, in the mean time, was laughing at her partner, who with long steps, and bent knees, was striding down the middle, occasionally enlivening his steps by a hop.

"Now allemande," said Mary, "foot it, Edward, foot out the time."

Edward did not understand footing out the time, but Mary did; and with native grace, and much coquetry, she was turning herself round, when, in an awkward attempt on his part to imitate her, his foot caught her heel, and they both fell to the ground. Peals of laughter followed this momentary prostration of the youthful couple, and Mary joined with good humour in the laugh, telling Edward, "he was an awkward country booby."

Her mirth was however transitory; for at this moment at the door of the apartment there stood the young lord, to whom we have alluded, accompanied by another gentleman. They were both laughing heartily, and had not been before perceived. The sudden resolution of Mary not to dance any more, and the flush which added beauty to her lovely cheek, first intimated that some extraordinary event had taken place. Her eyes once turned towards the door of the apartment, and the eyes of her companions mechanically followed their direction. The pipe and tabor stopped, and the blind man's arm being suddenly seized by his companion, a long drawling squeak usurped the place of the merry notes of "The Black Joke."

"What is the matter," said the poor old soul? Nobody paid any attention to his query. For Farmer Woodbine, the father of the village, had risen from his seat, and was going towards the door to meet his lord. Lord Wilsden held out his hand to the venerable old man, who invited his lordship to take the armed chair he had just vacated by the fire-side. The young nobleman refused, but seated himself on the bench, begging he might not interrupt the festivity; but finding that no one could be persuaded to dance before his lord, he asked farmer Woodbine, if he might have the pleasure of leading down one dance with the queen of the May.

Mary's heart bounded to her lips, as her father desired she would accept the intended honour.

"The honour is mine," replied his lordship, Miss Woodbine is sovereign here; and her sovereignty is more to be envied than that of the first potentate on earth: for her power extends over the *hearts* of men.

Colonel Ednor, the gentleman who accompanied his lordship was equally struck by Mary Woodbine's beauty, but as one only could dance with Mary at the same time, he chose Susan Cowslip as his partner, passing by Betsy Woodbine who appeared insipid in his eyes, though her features were more regular than those of her sister Mary.

But it was Mary's manner which made her so irresistibly captivating, and as she went down the dance with her noble partner, she acquitted herself with a grace entirely her own.

Lord Wilsden paid her many compliments, to which she listened with great pleasure; but perhaps in her heart, she was as much flattered by the encomiums he also bestowed on her sister and William Meadows. His lordship was amused with Mr. Grigs's efforts to be familiar and witty, and pleased as he saw the restraint gradually wear away, which his presence had at first imposed. Colonel Ednor in the mean time was paying Susan Cowslip the most extravagant compliments, and obtaining from her, the character and names of most of the company in the room. He soon perceived that she disliked the Woodbine family, particularly Mary; and it was also evident that this dislike arose from jealousy; he, therefore, exerted all his power to win her favour, flattering himself she would prove an useful ally in a scheme, which though, yet dawning in his mind, he was fully resolved to carry into effect.

The first dance being over, he begged the honour of Miss Woodbine's hand, while Lord Wilsden chose the retired Betsy as his second partner. Mary had been used to flattery, but never had her ears been assailed by such a farrago of nonsense, as that which fell from the lips of the seducing Colonel Ednor. He talked of Venus, and her doves, and Hebe, and Juno, and of Minerva, and that sly boy Cupid, till poor Mary's senses were in a whirl. As he got down lower in the dance, he however became familiar; and Mary, who had never suffered any one to approach her lips except William, and that not above once in a half year, shrunk from Ednor's daring touch, as he impertinently stroked her cheek, comparing it to "the soft down of a peach." Mary's colour rose to crimson; her bosom swelled indignantly; and her charms, heightened by this disorder, never shone with so much splendour as at this moment, when her frame, agitated by feelings so dear to woman, betrayed that Mary was after all the coquette of nature alone.

Colonel Ednor looked at her in silence for half a minute; then chucking her under the chin, he said, "Why, my pretty villager, you are not angry I hope? I was going to beg the favour of a salute; I had always thought it was the fashion among you rustics, to enliven your sports with those innocent gallantries."

The tears rose to Mary's eyes; yet still they flashed indignation; and William Meadows, who had viewed the whole scene, and whose love for Mary now fell little short of adoration, advanced towards her, and taking her willing hand, led her to her father; in a whisper advising her to take no notice of Colonel Ednor's familiarity, as it would vex the good old man in the extreme.

"He is my lord's friend," added William, "and so say nothing about the matter."

Colonel Ednor watched their approach to farmer Woodbine, and expected every moment to see Mary point him out as an object of detestation; but perceiving that she did not do so, he mentally observed "She does not tell? ha! that is a good sign.—I have made an impression."

It was true that Mary Woodbine was perhaps never better pleased than when she saw the young lads anxious for those gallantries to which the colonel alluded; but Mary

knew how to repress all attempts to gain such favours, though she could not, nor did she pretend to deny, that the marks of devotion she received on that score, were most gratifying. William indeed was favoured, but then she looked upon him as her future husband. For of Mary it might truly be said:—

> Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
> Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those;
> Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
> Oft she rejects but never once offends.
> Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
> And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
> Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
> Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide;
> If to her share some female errors fall,
> Look on her face, and you'll forget them all.

Lord Wilsden had no wish to intrude on the mirth of the party, and after some little conversation with farmer Woodbine on the state of the early crops, he took his leave amidst the profound bows and curtsies of his happy tenantry. About twelve o'clock Woodbine and his daughters prepared to return home, when the landlord entering the ballroom, "begged leave to inform the company, that agreeably to his Lordship's orders, supper was prepared in the great room below stairs."

This intelligence produced numerous encomiums on the kindness of Lord Wilsden, who more obliged the whole village by this one act, than if he had made each of its inhabitants a present individually. It was so kind, so handsome, so considerate, so polite, and so condescending in his Lordship. In short, all hands were ready to execute the dictates of their grateful hearts; and ill would he have fared, who should have dared to breathe a thought against the noble Lord of Silvershoe.

Farmer Woodbine took the head of the table; Mr. Grigs the bottom. Each lad was seated by his lass; and happiness and good humour animated every countenance. The traveller was invited to partake of the festivity, and a seat was offered to him on one side of Mary.

"Silence," said farmer Woodbine, when they were all seated, and silence ensued at the command of this much esteemed man. Having said grace, he commented on the hospitality of his Lordship, who had sent many delicacies from the Hall, besides a fine haunch and neck of venison, which were drest in the first style of excellence, for the landlord prided himself on the manner in which they cooked venison at his house.

"'Tis excellent," said he, "and well dressed, I'll warrant it.—My mistress always allows a quart of cream to a haunch, and a pint to a hare. His Lordship has given orders for as much wine and beer as you choose to call for: and he desired me to say, that if he had not feared he should have interrupted your merriment, he should have been happy to have partaken of your supper."

Murmurs of applause followed this speech, and farmer Woodbine proposed, that the lads in ale, and the girls in negus, should drink their Lord's health immediately. The happy landlord gladly obeyed this order, and each guest rising, drank his Lordship's health, in a bumper. The supper table was enlivened by many rural jokes, and much

native wit. The traveller by degrees forgot his consequence, and political discussions never entered his head, as he quaffed "the nut brown ale" and eat slice after slice of the excellent venison. When he was pressed by farmer Woodbine not to spare it, he replied, that "he really was ashamed to eat any more."

"Oh," replied the good man, "take this slice, nay, take it; tut man;—eat shame and drink after it."

The first cravings of appetite being satisfied, and the beauty of the table being spoiled, Farmer Woodbine said that he would give them a song, as an inducement to those who were younger, to play their part for the amusement of the company. "I will give you," said he, "a song that mightily struck my fancy when I was younker, and which I heard at the playhouse in London, the only time I ever was there." The farmer having drunk a glass of ale, to clear his pipes, as he said, began the following sweet old song,

Ere around the huge oak which o'ershadows yon hill,
The fond ivy had dared to entwine;
Ere the church was a ruin which stands on the hill,
Or the rook built his nest in the pine;

Could I trace back the time, a far distant date,
When my forefathers toil'd in this field;
And the farm I now hold on your honour's estate,
Was the same which my grandfather till'd.

He dying bequeath'd to his son a good name,
Which unsullied descended to me;
For my child I've reserved it unsullied with shame,
And it still from a spot shall be free.

This song was received with loud applause, and was followed by several others, from the more juvenile part of the company; and Mr. Grigs, who was as happy, as the happiest, at length entreated that Miss Mary would favour them with a song. Mary blushed, and hesitated, and excused herself; but William whispered in her ear, "Do Mary, sing my favourite."

"Come, Miss Mary," added Mr. Grigs, "Come now, do let us hear your sweet pipe—let's have

"When my Mary is nigh."

"Ay, ay," said farmer Woodbine, "let's have it my girl at once, and have done with it?"

Mary hemmed two or three times. She first of all began too high, then too low; but at length she pitched her voice in the right key, and with much sweetness, she sang the following song; a song which in those days, and in those parts, was the favourite of all.

As to its poetic merits, and harmonious numbers, we can say little; but when Mary Woodbine sang it, each ear lent its utmost aid to convey the pleasure derived from the

tones of *her* voice to the heart. Many a heart-ache had followed its conclusion, ere this evening, but it was doomed to add another laurel to Mary's brow; for the traveller was wrapt in listening admiration, as sweetly she sung,

How happy am I when my Mary is near,
There is nothing I ask, there is nothing I fear;
How delightful each minute, how it passes away;
That a calendar month seems no more than a day.

Her voice, like the dew-drops, falls so soft from her tongue,
That methinks I am hearing a nightingale's song;
Sure no lass on the green can with Mary compare;
No, not even the lass with the delicate air.

In beauty she vies with sweet love's fav'rite queen;
How delightful her air, how engaging her mien!

Here Mary made a pause, and declared she had forgotten the remainder of the verse. A general expression of disappointment followed this declaration.

"Try now, Miss Mary, do try now," said Mr. Grigs; "can't you recollect? Was it not something about her pretty hazel eyes, and dark auburn hair?"

But Mary either could not, or would not, recollect it, notwithstanding Mr. Grig's complimentary allusion to her own hazel eyes, and auburn hair; which, though partly concealed by a smart cap, placed a little on one side, (it was the fashion in those days for farmer's daughters to wear caps,) yet it played in rich luxuriance round her forehead and temples; a stray lock too had escaped from its confinement, and wantoned in her snowy neck. The most splendidly attired court belle, must have yielded the palm of victory to Mary at this moment; the small disarrangement of her head dress added to her charms; the witchery of her smiles, and playful yet positive, declarations that she could sing no more, because she had forgotten, or rather did not choose to sing the remainer—her arch coquetry, as she resisted all William's efforts to induce her to remember the lines—her appeals to the traveller, that it was very hard to be pressed so much to do what she could not accomplish; these, and all those nothings, which, in a pretty girl, are all powerful, rivetted and extended her influence over many a youthful heart.

Farmer Woodbine sighed, as he smiled at his spoiled child—and lamented in his heart, the dangers to which her youth, her beauty, and her coquetry might expose her.

Susan Cowslip, who, next to Mary, was generally admired in the village, now favoured the company with a song; and after supper, farmer Woodbine proposed that they should dance "Sir Roger de Coverley," and then retire quietly and orderly to their homes.

"After my Lord's extreme kindness," said the venerable old man, "it would be highly improper, that we should by the least excess, disgrace his liberal hospitality. Let him see, that we know how to be merry and wise. Come, lads, one more dance, and then good night to you."

"The blind fiddler was soon at his post, and the joyous maids and village swains having danced Sir Roger de Coverley, the company dispersed, and about two o'clock the village once more became the scene of quiet repose.

Not so composed was the breast of the traveller; he felt the power of Mary's eyes, and sat up the live-long night, to frame an amorous ditty, capable of piercing a heart of stone. With this in his pocket, on the following morning, he was hastening to the farm, when he was met by old Woodbine. After the usual salutations of the morning, he ventured to ask, if Miss Mary was at home.

Farmer Woodbine shook his head. "Why," said he, "what do you want with Mary Woodbine? I hope you are not silly enough to have fallen in love with my girl, though to say the truth she commits sad havock in that way. But I will be very honest with you, you must not go to the farm—Mary Woodbine can listen to nothing you have to say; for she is engaged to William Meadows, and heartily shall I rejoice when she is comfortably settled at Meadow farm."

The traveller looked very much disappointed.

"Why, man," resumed the honest farmer, "there are girls enow in the world besides my Mary.—Never look so cast down; come, come away to your home, and leave sorrowful thoughts behind ye."

At this moment, Mary appeared at a distance, "Pho! man," said the farmer, "be off; for the less you see of that silly girl, the better."

The traveller shook the good man by the hand, and without speaking a word, he directed his steps towards the inn; but his eyes involuntarily wandered in search of the object of his new passion, and in less than a quarter of an hour, he had left the village behind him, and in charity, we may hope, his troubles likewise.

CHAPTER V.

There often wanders one, whom better days,
Saw better clad, in cloaks of satin, trimm'd
With lace, and hat with splendid ribbon bound.
A serving maid was she, and fell in love.
* * * * * *
and now she roams
The dreary wastes, there spends the live-long day;
And there, unless when charity forbids,
The live-long night. COWPER.

MARY WOODBINE was early up on the following morning, and busied herself as usual, in that part of the domestic concerns of the farm, which fell to her lot, viz.:—The dairy and poultry. It was Betsy's department to take charge of the housekeeping.

Soon after breakfast, Mary took a jug of milk, and some eggs, and set off for Judy Gabriels's cottage; a kindness which she was in the habit of doing regularly, unless the weather proved too inclement for her to brave it. With a light heart and step she entered the lane in which the poor old woman lived; and quickened her pace as the light blue smoke rising over the trees from Judy's caught her eye.

"Ah!" said Mary, "is Dame Gabriel at breakfast already!"

At this moment, she was accosted in the well remembered tones of Colonel Ednor. She started, coloured, and begged he would not detain her. "Certainly not," was his reply, "no longer than to entreat your pardon for my unmannerly conduct last night."

Mary raised her eyes with a look of astonishment, and he repeated his request, "that she would *pardon* his rudeness?"

Mary was used to receive every kind of homage from the village beaux: but that a Colonel should ask her pardon, was too delightful. With a little toss of the head, and an air which convinced the Colonel he was not the first offender, our heroine said, "She would think no more of it, provided he would leave her."

Colonel Ednor bowed, and with a deep sigh, and a languishing look, "promised to offend no more;" and then bade her good morning.

The sigh and the languishing look, were not lost upon Mary, whose spirits were in a flutter, at the conquest she fancied she had made. Before she reached the cottage-door, she twice looked back, and twice received the respectful bow of Colonel Ednor.

When she entered Judy's cottage, the flush of exultation sat on her brow, her eyes sparkled with more than usual lustre.

"There, Judy," she said, putting down the pitcher of milk; "I hope I have not kept you waiting for your breakfast."

"No," replied Judy.—"But sit down, my chield, and tell me all about the ball of yesterday. You look gay this morning, did you just part from William.?"

"No," replied Mary, "I have not seen William to-day; but listen, Judy, while I tell you all that happened last night."

She then detailed the events of the preceding evening, not forgetting Colonel Ednor's rudeness.

“But,” she continued with a look of triumph, “he has made an apology this morning; and I dare say he meant no harm, for if you had but seen his look just now, when he parted from me—and he sighed so—I think him a very handsome man, although he is rather old. Then he bowed so elegantly.—Only think, how polite he was, to ask my pardon *twice*!”

Mary was so absorbed in the retrospective contemplation of the Colonel’s bow, that she did not observe the effect her description of Colonel Ednor had upon Judy’s expressive countenance and form.

At the first mention of the Colonel’s name, the cup which the old woman held, nearly fell from her hand. But Judy’s feelings were tempered by time; and though the shock she had received was great, she was so far mistress of herself as to check the impulsive repetition of Ednor’s name. In still and almost senseless agitation, she listened to the conclusion of Mary’s narrative. One arm resting on the table, supported her aged head; the other hung listless by her side. At length a sigh, amounting almost to a groan, startled the lovely girl, who had unconsciously recalled to Judy’s recollection, one of the bitterest sorrows of her early life.

Judy was seated on one side of the fire-place, Mary on the opposite one. As Judy’s raised arm concealed her face, Mary got up hastily to see what was the matter; and as she passed round the table, to be near the object of her solicitude,—the old woman rose unexpectedly, and turning round to the astonished girl, pronounced, in tones of deepest anguish, the words—“Mary Woodbine.”

Mary started, quite terrified; “Dear Judy,” said she, “what is the matter? I will run directly for Mr. Grigs.”

“Stay,” replied Judy, “I do not want Mr. Grigs. I shall be better in a few minutes. Sit down.”

There was something so very authoritative in Judy’s manner, when she chose to exert it, that Mary always bowed to her commands. Silence for a few minutes ensued, which was interrupted by Judy.

“Mary,” said she, “promise to come to me this afternoon.—Poor silly girl,” she added, “come and hear the warning voice of experienced age. Colonel Ednor!” repeated the shuddering old woman, “what is Colonel Ednor to Mary Woodbine?” Mary trembled exceedingly. “Fie, fie,” continued Judy, “I have a tale to tell, which shall chill thy cheek, and make thee loath the name of Ednor.—Leave me now,—go, go,—bring Betsy with thee; ay, and William too:—come not alone:—go, go,” she repeated, “leave me.”

Mary pressed the withered hand, which pointed so emphatically to the door, placing one arm round the old woman’s neck, she kissed her furrowed cheek; then gently withdrawing herself quitted the cottage deeply affected at Judy’s impressive manner.

No sooner had Mary left the hut, than the poor old woman gave vent to her agony; her aged frame tottered under the weight of her sorrows; she sunk into her chair, and in short ejaculatory exclamations and murmurs, heaped curses on Colonel Ednor’s head, as the base destroyer of her earthly happiness. Nature found a temporary relief in this ebullition of human frailty; but her better feelings soon checked this uncharitable impulse. She shuddered at her own depravity. “Have I not sworn to pardon him?” she cried, “ay,” she added, with deep humility, “even as I myself hope to be forgiven!”—Her aged head 'sunk upon her bosom, and tears, kind nature’s sweet and powerful balm, relieved her wo-fraught heart. She slowly rose, and with tottering steps, reached the

sacred niche, where the "Book of books" was laid. Again she took her seat, and for a time, with folded arms and upraised eyes, silently implored from heaven pardon for her sins.—The sacred volume then engrossed her whole attention.—The passing hours glided imperceptibly away; nor did she heed the playful antics of her dumb favourite, who missed that homely fare which she was accustomed to participate.

Mary, as soon as dinner was over, communicated to her father Judy's wish, that she and Betsy should take tea with her.

"She almost frightened me this morning," she added.—She says, she wants to tell us something about Colonel Ednor."

"Poor Judy," replied farmer Woodbine, sighing deeply, "I have heard a sad account of one of her daughters. Ah! my girls, attend to the story which she has to tell." Farmer Woodbine sighed again. "If the same misfortune which befel her, was to happen to me, I should indeed break my heart. Well, go, my girls, go;—William and George shall fetch you home; and stay for them; mind you do. Poor Judy!" he again exclaimed.

Betsy and Mary affectionately kissed his cheek, and promised to remember all he had ever said to them. "We shall be too late; we must go, father," said Mary, "and so good-bye."

The two sisters hastened to old Judy's cottage, marvelling much, what she could have to say, about Colonel Ednor. When they entered the hut, the old woman was seated in her armed-chair; before her was the table, on which lay the bible. She immediately put off her spectacles, and smiling languidly at the two girls, pointed to a bench, and they sat down. Betsy stirred up the embers; Mary heaped fresh fuel, and soon produced a cheering blaze; for though it was May, the weather was inclement, and the wind blew a cold and cheerless breeze. Old Judy thanked them, and after some few prefatory sighs, she thus began:

"For your sake, Mary, I will disclose that which I have hitherto concealed from you, and all the world. Four of my children sleep under the cold green sod, as I have often told you.—But one, the youngest, is gone,—a sinful wanderer on the earth!—Heaven forgive her."

The tone of deep dejection which marked the old woman's voice as she pronounced these last words, struck to the heart of the two girls, and Betsy entreated she would not tell them any thing which appeared to give her so much pain.

Judy waved her hand in token of silence, and proceeded. "'Tis now full twenty years ago, since first I heard the name of Ednor. My Mary, was then just turned seventeen, she was lovely as yourselves:—she was lively as you, Mary:—she was the delight of my heart, and the pride of my soul:—she was all that you are now. But be not you, like her.—Listen," she continued, extending her arm, and fixing her dark eye steadily on Mary, "listen to my warning voice. Colonel Ednor bowed to *her*; ay, humbled himself even to the dust!—shame on his coward soul!—he knelt to her, wooed her, vowed eternal love, honour and truth; won her,—and then 'cast her, like a loathsome weed away!'—In despair she fled his hateful home, wandered I know not whither; nor have I seen her since, save once."

Old Judy's voice trembled so much, scarcely could she proceed. But, at length, summoning all her power, she exclaimed. "But how did I see her?—Mad!—wild as the winds,—crowned with weeds, and muttering as she went. At sight of me, she started!—the sound of my voice struck upon her ear. Oh," continued the old woman, clasping her

hands, “she listened attentively; for one moment, she recollected me; then making me a low curtsy, she said, ‘’Twas all very true, she knew I was born to be queen; but I,’ she continued with a vacant smile, ‘I am empress of the waste.’”

Here old Judy’s countenance became fixed;—she seemed to see her poor distracted child before her.

“’Tis gone,” she said, after a mournful pause. “But often, Mary, do I think I see her; and but last night, methought she tapped at yon casement window, clad in rags and wretchedness.”

The two girls looked round to the spot where Judy pointed. It was now getting dark, the embers had nearly died away; and clinging close to each other, Mary and Betsy fearfully gazed on the agitated frame of Judy.

A silence of some minutes followed the old woman’s last words which she was the first to break. “My tale is told, Mary;—think of it well;—think of her fate, nor let your wayward childish folly lead you into misery like hers: and now rouse the embers, Betsy,” said she, subduing her feelings, “and Mary, fetch more wood.”

Mary in fear and silence obeyed; for Judy’s wood was piled at some little distance in a yard, into which the casement opened, where her phantasy had almost conjured up the form of Judy’s distracted daughter. The wind howled piteously, and with timid steps she crept along, looking anxiously back at the window, where the flickering of the flames, as Betsy blew the fire, partly disclosed what passed within. She then collected hastily some logs, and placing them in her apron, was joyfully returning to the hut, when her arm was gently seized by a cold thin hand. Mary’s blood turned chill, she moved not, spoke not; but remained like a statue, with closed eyes, lest the appearance of some frightful figure, should reduce her to the state of the maniac who occupied her thoughts. At length a soft voice addressed her:

“’Tis she, ’tis she.” Then gently shaking Mary, the figure repeated, “Nay, nay, ’tis she, ’tis she, and she has brought you stores of wealth; here are jewels—jewels and gewgaws, and true love-knots. Oh keep them; for ’tis she, ’tis she! Oh! listen to her.”

The voice now in wild, yet soft tones, chanted the following lines:

“’Tis Mary—’tis Mary—she’s come home at last;
She rode on the wind, she ran with the blast.
’Tis Mary—’tis Mary—Ah! what should you fear?
She has something to tell you, which you must now hear.
She has something to shew you, which you must now see,
Ah, why do you tremble, ah, why would you flee?
Look! look! ’tis the blood of a heart
Which loved her, and wooed her,
And vowed to be true;
But it won her, then scorn’d her.

“Hark! she cried interrupting her song, while Mary Woodbine fearfully unclosed her eyes and discovered an object before her, clad as Judy had described in rags and wretchedness. “Hark! hark!

“Mary must go;—he calls her away,

She dares not look back, she dares not stay."

Mary now fixed her eyes on the poor wretch before her, and her heart melted within her, at sight of so pitiful an object.

"If," thought she to herself, "I could but detain her, she seems gentle."

"Mary," said the noble girl, softly taking hold of the thin hand of the maniac, go with me—" and I will lead you where—"

"No, no," replied the poor shivering wretch.

"The wild blast Mary calls away,
She must obey, away, away;
She dare not stay, nay, nay, nay, nay."

And before Mary could resolve on further proceedings, like the blast which she feared, the poor maniac eluded her grasp; though ever and anon her voice stole upon Mary's ear, as it swept in melancholy tones along the waste.

Mary Woodbine seated herself upon the fagot of wood; how long she might have sat there, it is impossible to say. But Betsy was alarmed at her absence, though old Judy who, overcome by her late exertions, had sunk into a kind of stupor, appeared not to notice any thing that passed. Mary, on Betsy's approach, was cold and pale; her countenance too expressed both fear and sorrow.

"What has happened?" inquired her sister.

"I cannot tell you now," replied Mary; "I wish we were at home!—She looked fearfully round, as she softly whispered to Betsy; "I have seen her,—seen Judy's daughter;—hush,—do ye not hear her voice?"

Betsy was terrified, and listened eagerly, as a shrill voice in the distance was distinctly heard, singing, or rather enunciating in a kind of wild recitative:—

"Soft breeze of the South, oh! warm thy dear Mary;
Cold frost of the North, oh! chill not poor Mary;
Nipping gale of the East, oh! blow not on Mary;
Wetting rain from the West, oh! drench not mad Mary.
Houseless she wanders far over the waste,
Neither home nor its joys shall she ever taste;
Think then of your Mary, ye dark clouds of the sky,
Ye pattering hails, thick fogs, snows that fly."

"'Tis she, "said Mary," let us go into the hut."

When Mary and Betsy entered the cottage, old Judy was still absorbed in her own thoughts; the two girls busied themselves in making arrangements for tea. A tap at the window made them both start; 'twas William and George. Never perhaps had the sisters met their lovers, with so much alacrity as on the present occasion. Each, however, put her finger on her lip as she pointed to her lover to go towards Judy and speak to her, for the old woman still remained without motion. William approached her;—"Goody," said he, "we are come to drink tea with you."

The old woman lifted up her head, and clasping his hand with a smile, said; “Ah, William, is it you? Blessed be the day, when the drover’s dog attacked our Mary, for to it I owe the joy of knowing thee: come, my girls, let us make him welcome. George too! Ah well! old Judy’s griefs are now forgotten. Why, Mary,” she added, looking intently on the blanched check of the poor girl, “what makes you look so pale?”

“I am cold, Judy”, she replied: “a cup of tea will warm me.”

In vain did Mary try to rally her spirits. She started frequently, appeared to be listening, and in the piteous moaning of the wind, she thought she heard the maniac’s voice.

“’Twill be a stormy night,” said William, we must not stay late; the clouds roll heavily: ’twill be, I fear, a tempest.”

Mary caught his hand.—“Oh, do not say so,” she exclaimed, for her thoughts reverted to her who was—

“Running with the wind, and riding the blast.”

“Let us go home. I want to tell you something,” she added in a whisper to her surprised lover.

William anxious at all times to meet her wishes, bade George drink his tea, and not look at Betsy so.—“Why,” said he, “we shall not be at home before midnight if you sit, sip, sip, in that manner. Come, come, make haste, lad.”

“It does indeed look tempestuous,” said Judy, rising and going to the window, “you had better go home, my children—God bless you all, and remember, Mary, there’s a serpent in the grass; and William,” she added, taking him a little on one side, come to me to-morrow, and, I will tell you the long-promised secret about the trunk.”

“There,” said George, taking a bottle of elder wine from his pocket, “there’s a bottle of elder wine mother sent you; ’twill cheer your old heart when we are gone.”

No sooner had the cottage-door closed, than Mary told the party that she had seen Judy’s daughter. “She must be found to-night, William,” she emphatically added: “she will perish on the heath.”

“George and I will seek her,” replied William; “but you, Mary, must go home.”

“I will go home,” she replied, “to get my red cloak, but I must go with you; she will be frightened at you.”

Mary had made up her mind to this point; and when her father put an absolute negative to her requests, she burst into a flood of tears.

“Ah, well,” said he, “I see we must all go together; she may have taken to the wood, and there we shall not find her I fear.”

“To the heath first,” replied Mary, “George, you must stay with my father.” While she hastened on with William, her eyes strained forward to catch the most distant figure. They had not passed over more than quarter of the heath, when Mary clasped closely William’s arm, and made a stop. Then she whispered, “there she is, gliding by that old hawthorn bush.” The moon, emerging from behind a dark cloud, disclosed to the eye of William also, the object of their solicitude. The wind blew her tattered vestments in every direction; she tossed her hands wildly to heaven; she shrieked:—

“She loved him; he wooed her;

He held her heart fast;
But he scorn'd her, he spurn'd her
And fled her at last.
Now she rides with the wind,
And she rides on the blast."

"What shall we do?" said Mary.

"Try and echo back her song," replied William;" crazy folks are fond of music, and I will conceal myself; you are not afraid, Mary?"

"I fear nothing," replied the heroic girl, "if I can house that poor shivering creature."

She therefore summoned all her courage, and sang as she approached the maniac;—

"Though he scorn'd me, and spurn'd me
I found peace at last.
So I'll run with the wind,
And I'll ride on the blast."

The maniac listened,—advanced;—then stopped;—as Mary again and again repeated the last line, till she got close up to her.

"More, more," said the maniac. "Oh 'tis sweet, sweet,—sweet,—more,—more."

Mary now hoped she should easily accomplish her purpose, and occasionally singing scraps of any song which came into her head; she walked slowly on at the same time towards William, the maniac following her; at length taking hold of her arm; mad Mary stopped—then hurried on;—then again stopped;—till bursting into tears she said, "If you will sing to me, I will live with you all the day; ay, all the night; but a sudden gust of wind rushing by them at this moment, she started, "Hark! he calls," she exclaimed, "I must go.

For he rules o'er the wind,
And he rules o'er the blast."

Mary now endeavoured to retain her, and perceiving the poor wretch was on the point of again starting forward,—she said—

"I fear not the wind, I fear not the blast—
So now come with me; so now come with me."

Mary's agitation was now however so powerful, that it stopped her song; and the poor maniac bursting into hysteric laughter, by a sudden exertion wrested her arm from the feeble hold of Mary, and shrieking, exclaimed,

"I run with the wind, I ride on the blast."

She fled into the wood, leaving her pursuers far behind.

William had sprung forward, to Mary, who in an agony sunk upon his bosom, exclaiming, “She will perish, William, she will perish; and what can we do to save her?”

“You see, my dear Mary,” he replied, “’tis useless to attempt to catch her, she runs so swiftly, and the night is so dark, that it is impossible to overtake her. Hark! that is your father’s voice; let us hasten to him.”

Farmer Woodbine had also seen the fugitive; but he said, “it was nonsense to attempt to overtake her; and after all, my dear Mary, think how many nights, ay, and winter nights too, she has slept in the open air!”

Mary was convinced that their pursuit was hopeless, and returned home with her friends; but excessively dispirited. The events of the day had made a deep impression on her mind, and she retired with Betsy to their room, but not to rest. Many a time and oft did they start, and fancy they heard the maniac’s voice. As soon as morning dawned they arose; but they had derived little refreshment from sleep.

William was with them at breakfast, he had resumed his search at break of day, but had not discovered the miserable mortal, who had caused so much interest and anxiety. He, had however, found a rudely-twisted garland of field-flowers, and a heap of smooth pebbles under a hedge, which skirted the wood. There no doubt poor Mary had passed the night; and Mary Woodbine was obliged to relinquish all idea of discovering her, for although George and William spent the whole day in pursuit of her, their researches were in vain.

CHAPTER VI.

Slender.———and a gentleman born, Master Parson,
who writes himself *armigero*, in any bill, warrant, quittance,
or obligation, *armigero*.
Shallow. Ay that we do, and have done any time these
three hundred years.
Slendor. All his successors, gone before him, have done't;
and all his ancestors that come after him may; they may
give the dozen white luces in their coat.
Shallow. It is an old coat.
Evans. The dozen white louses do become an old coat
well; it agrees well, passant; it is a familiar beast to man,
and signifies—love.——MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

IN the evening, Mary and William repaired to Judy's cottage. The poor old woman appeared to have forgotten the events of the preceding day, for she did not allude to them in the most distant way; but welcomed the youthful pair with the affection of a parent.

"In good time are you come, for my old frame totters fast towards the grave, and I would not die without disclosing the secret of so much importance. Come, sit you down."

William and Mary did as they were desired, and the old woman, opening first the front door, and then the back door, to see that there was no listening, reclined herself in her armed-chair, and thus addressed them:

"'Tis now many years, since I dreamt a dream; listen to me, my children. I dreamt I was just come in from gathering wood, and that, as I entered the door of my hut, I saw a tall thin figure, standing in the middle of the room. It 'twas night; but the moon-beams streamed in through the casement, just where it stood, and I saw the figure as distinctly as I see you. I was frightened, Mary, but it smiled at me, and told me not to be afraid; and the figure looked so gentle, that I stopped and listened to what it had to tell me. 'Judy,' it said, 'attend!—If you will dig beneath the post of the gate which leads from the George Inn into the park, you will there find a trunk full of treasure. Mind; it is not beneath the post the gate hatches to, but under the gate itself. Do you understand this?' I said, I did; three times the figure told me this; and then vanished. Now, therefore, William, go, some moon-light night, and find this hidden treasure; It will make you rich, and, I hope, happy*."

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* This tale of Judy Gabriel is so like one told in Scotland, that the Author in justification of the originality of this, in the "Village Coquette," inserts an extract of the northern fable also.
"Gang ye your ways west the country the morn, an' spier for a place they ca' Middleholm; an' when ye come there, speer for a man they ca' John Gray. Gang ye into his garden, and ye will find thirteen apple trees in it , six at the head, and six at the foot, an' ane in the middle." "Hout friend," said John, interrupting him, "but are ye no joking? Did you really dream that?" "As sure as the sun is in heaven I did," said the cobbler; "why should you doubt it?"

"Because ye see, friend," said John, "they are here that ken, and here that dinna' ken; but let me tell you that's a very queer dream indeed." "Weel, what did the fearsome carle say mair? 'Gang ye, into

William could scarcely suppress a smile at the solemnity with which Judy urged him to proceed immediately, to search for the hidden treasure. “But,” said he, “you know, Judy, the gate has been removed, and it would have been discovered long ago.”

“I tell you,” replied Judy angrily, “’tis there; it sinks deeper and deeper, when those, who are not favoured like me, attempt to get it.”

“Oh, do,” said Mary, “seek it, William!—I am sure, Judy must know best. Only think, what a fine thing it will be.”

William avoided giving any answer to Mary’s request, and after an hour’s conversation with the poor old woman, the young people left the hut, and the door was no sooner closed upon them, than Mary again advised William to dig that very night.

William argued very coolly on the folly of listening to all the dame’s stories, at least of believing them.

At this moment, Mr. Grigs in his gay whiskey, appeared at the end of the lane; Mary eyed it with something like envy.

“You might then have a gig too,” she continued.

“A taxed cart does for me, dear Mary;” he replied, “and I am sure you said the other day, you liked a taxed cart best.”

“Ah!” she resumed, “that was only to plague Mr. Grigs, but I am sure, that whiskey is a very pretty carriage.”

The spruce Mr. Grigs was by this time near them.

“Ah, Miss Mary,” he exclaimed, “the morning air has given you fresh bloom. I suppose you would’nt honour me, by taking a ride in my gig; I am going to Clophill, pleasant drive that; and the air scented by the wild thyme, and other herbs upon those healthy hills, really quite charming. Can you spare her, Mr. Meadows?”

“Oh,” said Mary, “it is nothing to Mr. Meadows whether I go or not; and I should like the drive exceedingly. I like a gig so much!”

Mr. Grigs was out of his chaise in a moment, and with great glee he handed Miss Mary into it.

“This is quite an unexpected pleasure,” said he. “Good morning to you,” Mr. Meadows; any commands, any commissions we can execute; because if you have, we can extend our drive to Ampthill.”—William shook his head, and Mr. Grigs added “No! Well! Good morning to you. Good morning, Mr. Meadows, good morning.”

William stood a few minutes looking after the whiskey; then turning towards his own farm, he went along musing on the unaccountable coquetry of Mary.

“She is the plague of my life,” said he. “Heaven knows how she will settle as a wife; but in good truth she rules the roost now,—that she should indulge that impertinent

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that garden,’ quo’ he, ‘and begin at the auld apple tree in the middle, an’ howk deep in the yard below that tree, and ye will find an auld pan filled fu’ of money to the ee.’”

* * * * * *

“So John arose one moon-light night, while others slept, went into his garden, and removing the wet straw, he again lifted up the broad stone, and took from under it the valuable treasure, of which he had formerly made discovery.”

* * * * * *

“John now lived comfortably with his family all the days of his life, and there were no lasses had such trim and elegant cockernonies in all the Antiburgher meeting-house of Middleholm as the daughters of the lang weaver.”

HOGG’S WINTER EVENING TALES.

puppy with his gig! I am half resolved to resign all thoughts of one, who never can be steady half an hour together. Who would think her the same being, who clang to me last night for support and protection? Pshaw! Mary, you play the fool too much."

While William was thus intent on contemplating the folly of the beautiful Mary, Mr. Grigs was entertaining his companion with a full, true and particular account of the "birth and parentage" of his whiskey. This was by no means flattering to Mary; *she* admired the whiskey, it is true, but she expected Mr. Grigs would admire *her*; she resolved therefore to mortify him.

"I think, Mr. Grigs, yellow would have been prettier than this black colour."

"Black! Miss Mary!" he replied, "black! 'Tis bottle-green,—finest colour in the world for a whiskey—shews off my arms, too, which are, a field argent, and sable, parted per saltier."

"A salt ear!" said Mary "then they must be pigs' ears; but, Mr. Grigs, I dont see any ears at all in your arms."

"Indeed Miss Mary, hem! indeed Miss Mary, you do not seem to understand heraldry," resumed the offended apothecary—Parted *per saltier*, means that the shield is divided across and across; 'tis an honourable bearing: and you see in the chief and base, there is a lion passant gules-*red*, and on the dexter and sinister sides, a lion passant proper. Lions are noble beasts—perhaps you do not know, that birds and beasts of prey, are very honourable bearings."

Mr. Grigs did not explain how he came by these honourable bearings: perhaps he did not know; but a certain silversmith, delighted much in giving the particulars of these much prized arms.

The history was briefly this: Mr. Grigs's mamma, being a young widow, with a tolerable jointure, made a purchase of some plate. When it was sent home, she was surprised that no arms were engraven on it, and went to the silversmith, to inquire into the cause of this neglect. The silversmith replied, "that none had been given him for that purpose."

"No, to be sure," replied Mrs. Grigs, "I have'nt got any, but I want some; can't you show me a few?"

The silversmith emptied his drawers, and placed a number of armorial engravings before her, but there were none which immediately met her fancy. She liked wild beasts, lions, for instance, they were so grand; and bears, they looked so terrible.

The man again rummaged his drawers, and at length found some lions eagles, &c.; and from the display before her, Mrs. Grigs chose and composed the following shield, which she described in these *heraldic* words:

"I like the lions, they are so grand; and I like the arms parted across and across, *because* it reminds me of St. Andrew's cross, and *I was married* on St. Andrew's day; and the top and bottom shall be black, and the sides white, because I am a widow; and put red lions on the black ground, they will shew best; and lions in their natural colour, on the white part; because they will shew well enough: and the crest, I must have a crest; the crest shall be a lion cut in two; and my supporters shall be a lion and an unicorn, because"—

"But, ma'am," said the silversmith, I must not put a crest for you, ladies do not have crests; neither "must I put supporters, *because* they belong to nobility, and some sort of knights alone. No one else has a right to use them."

"Well then, never mind *them*," replied Mrs. Grigs, "but I do think it very odd I mayn't have supporters if I like; but mind you make haste, and get them done as soon as you can."

These arms were accordingly engraven, and Mr. Grigs bore them in right of his mother, who often told him how much she had paid for them, a sure sign they were lawfully her own, and therefore became his privilege. Mary was no herald, but Mr. Grigs fancied he was, and he therefore continued a long and learned dissertation, on the subject of heraldry, not at all observing how frequently his young companion yawned.

But as they were descending the hill, into Clophill, they were met by Lord Wilsden, and Colonel Ednor. The events of the preceding day flashed like lightning across Mary's imagination. She became faint, and though Mr. Grigs did not observe her indisposition, so much was he occupied in paying his respects to his Lordship, yet the latter expressed his fears that Miss Mary had taken cold at the ball, "for she looked" he said, "very ill."

Mr. Grigs turned hastily round. "Bless me, Miss Mary, what is the matter? Good heavens! she will faint! water, water!" continued the apothecary, as he chafed her hands.

Colonel Ednor ran down the hill, and brought water in his hat; but as he approached the whiskey, Mary seemed to shrink from her proximity to so worthless a being.

Lord Wilsden proposed, that Mr. Grigs should immediately convey her home, and said he would ride with them to the farm. Colonel Ednor also accompanied his Lordship and Mr. Grigs.

Various were the feelings of the party. Mr. Grigs's principal sensation was astonishment:—Lord Wilsden was astonished and sorrowful, for his suspicions were excited respecting his friend Colonel Ednor, who, under the appearance of the utmost *sang froid*, concealed sensations of a very different nature. He flattered himself, although nearer fifty than forty, that his fashionable person, together with his late well-timed and humble flattery, had made an impression on the unsuspicious heart of the fair villager, whom he soon discovered to possess as much vanity as any court belle in the kingdom. He was however totally mistaken in his calculations, for of all the beings upon earth whom Mary had ever seen, he was the most obnoxious and disgusting. These were the feelings of Mary, during her ride home. Just as Mr. Grigs turned his horse's head down the lane, which led to Woodbine farm, Mary discovered Sally Greenly and Susan Cowslip, in deep confabulation. The former and Colonel Ednor, exchanged significant looks, and joy, malignant joy, beamed on the expressive countenance of this country girl.

Mary's return home in such company excited Farmer Woodbine's surprise, and her indisposition called forth all his parental feelings. Betsy was sent for, and she and her sister withdrew to their own apartment, where Mary's agitation found relief, by communicating to Betsy the inconceivable horror which had seized her when she saw Colonel Ednor.

"I do think," she added, "I never will leave William again; for I never feel safe when I am alarmed, unless I am with him."

The period of Colonel Ednor's visit to the Hall was drawing at a close, and Lord Wilsden did not press him to prolong it. His Lordship was considerably younger than his military friend, and had been much mistaken as to his morality, and the general tenor of

his conduct. Ednor was, to use a strong expression, an arch hypocrite. Of him might be truly said, what Richard said of himself,

That he could smile and smile, and play the villain.

Upon one or two occasions, however, he had dropped expressions, which partly unfolded his real character to his noble host, and this discovery made Lord Wilsden regret his invitation to Silvershoe and he resolved never to repeat the indiscretion.

CHAPTER VII.

You do me wrong to take me out of the grave.
Ha! is this too a world of cruelty?
I know my privilege: think not that I will
Be us'd like a wretched mortal. No,
No more of that. KING LEAR.

COLONEL EDNOR having resolved that it would be totally impossible for him to be happy without Mary Woodbine, now framed various plans for the accomplishment of her seduction. The agitation she displayed at seeing him, led him to believe he should find no difficulty in effecting his purpose; and on the following morning he called at the farm to inquire after Miss Mary. Farmer Woodbine received him respectfully, but he showed not that urbanity towards his visiter for which he was usually famed; and, as neither Mary nor Betsy appeared, the Colonel took his leave sooner than he intended.

To stratagem, therefore, he found he must have recourse, and meeting with Susan Cowslip, on whom he had lavished a world of compliments; he asked her many particulars of the Woodbine family, occasionally varying his conversation by a due proportion of flattery. He also made her a present of a guinea, to buy her a new gown, asking in return that she would be sincere, and discreet in her communications.

Susan promised every thing, and assured the Colonel, that she and Sally Greenly would be happy to assist him in any plan, which could mortify that "proud girl, Mary Woodbine."

The Colonel's plans were as yet only half-formed; but he felt assured that Susan Cowslip and Sally Greenly, would soon be very good friends to him, and render him every possible assistance in his attempt. He made many ineffectual efforts to enter into conversation with Mary, but she so studiously avoided him on all occasions, that he began to put a different construction on the agitation she had displayed when she met him. He however hoped that during the week of the races, fortune would be more propitious to his attempts. Yet still he lingered about all the avenues leading to the farm, and on the Tuesday evening he was rejoiced to see Mary, with her little basket on her arm, departing from the house. He immediately retreated, and concealed himself behind a hedge, till she had passed.

Mary bent her steps towards the heath, and was accompanied by a fine mastiff dog. She walked briskly, and meeting her father, she told him that she was going to Goody Tomkins, who was very ill, and that she should call on Judy, before she returned home.

"I shall be back to tea," she added, "come, Captain."

The dog barked, and was close at her heels in a moment, and at a brisk pace she proceeded singing as she went:

My heart's my own, my will is free,
And so shall be my voice;
No mortal man shall wed with me.
'Till first he's made my choice.

Let parents rule, cry nature's laws,
And children still obey;
And is there then no saving clause,
Against tyrannic sway?

Colonel Ednor resolved to meet her after her visit to Goody Tomkins, and for that purpose he took his station very patiently on the borders of the heath. He waited for a considerable time; but Goody Tomkins was dying when Mary arrived at the cottage, and the village gossips, who surrounded the bed, insisted that Miss Woodbine should stay, and see the old woman draw her last breath.

Mary was detained therefore, so long, that the hour of tea drew near, and the poor girl with tearful eyes bent her steps towards home, instead of going to Judy Gabriel's. Mary's spirits had received a shock and a new sensation of fear came across her, as she looked at the heath before her: yet Captain was by her side, and with him she thought herself secure.

Colonel Ednor became impatient at her stay, and advanced on the heath a little way, to look for her. The mute and faithful attendant of Mary, now frisked before her, now behind: then he would stop, and looking up in her face, would utter a short bark.

"Poor Captain," said Mary, "keep close to me:—poor fellow," she continued, stooping to pat him; but all at once, he began to growl.

Mary seized his collar, for she was aware of his ferocity when irritated, and upon looking round, the maniac stood beside her. Mary suppressed the shriek that rose to her lips, but Captain still growled, and made very many efforts to get loose. Mary Woodbine, however, contrived to hold him in, and to pacify him as poor mad Mary approached, and presented her agitated namesake with wild flowers and pebbles, begging in return a pin.

The maniac paid no attention to the suppressed growl of Captain; but began to chant, in melancholy accents, her wild and mournful ditty; then she ran on with a marvellous account of her travels; She had been, she said, to Peru: she had crossed the great ocean and scaled perpendicular mountains. In the midst of her incoherence, she stopped suddenly, and in a low tone, chanted the following lines,

Deep, cold under ground,
It was laid without a shroud,
Under an earth-heap mound,
By misty mountains,
And greenwood fountains,
Over hills and over dales,
Over rocks and scented vales,
She has been, she has been,
She has seen, she has seen.
So now good bye, good bye;
Ere the moon is up,
Ere the moon is up
I must away;
I dare not stay;

And when the moon is up,
With him I shall sup,
From out an acorn cup.

"Hark!" she resumed, and extended the palm of her hand horizontally over her eye-brows, as if to catch with more distinctness, the appearance of some remote object, on the extremity of the heath. "Hark," she resumed.—

But Mary interrupted her, saying, "Come now, Mary, go with me, and I will sing to you all the way, and all the night and all the day."

The maniac smiled; "Sing, sing," she cried, and now sighing deeply now echoing back the song of Mary; now stopping as if listening to the wind, rushing amidst the trees that skirted the heath; she kept close to Mary, when just as they came to the entrance of the lane, Colonel Ednor emerged from his hiding-place.

A shriek from Mary Woodbine, made him start, and the dog, forcibly breaking from her hold, attacked the Colonel, who, in his own defence, laid the animal senseless at his feet, by a blow with his stick. Mary would have fled, but her companion held her so fast, that every attempt to extricate herself, was vain. Mad Mary advanced towards the Colonel, dragging Mary Woodbine with her; the former went even close to him, and pointing at him with her finger, two or three times, she perused his face, with intense, yet vague expression.

"Leave us, Colonel Ednor, for heaven's sake," said Mary Woodbine, "Oh, pray, leave us, do you not know the poor object before you?

"Hush! hush! said the maniac," smiling at him, "'Tis he, 'tis he!

He woo'd her; he won her;
He fled her at last.
Now she runs with the wind,
She runs with the blast.

Colonel Ednor, was on the point of drawing the maniac's hand from the arm of Mary, who had been stooping over Captain, and calling him, when Mary Gabriel let go her hold, and seizing the hand of Colonel Ednor, she laughed aloud; then looking eagerly in his face, she drew her hand across her eyes, sighed deeply, and pressing her heart, she said in mournful tones,

"Tis well nigh broken."

She was interrupted by the Colonel, who, impatient, and annoyed by her wild sallies, exclaimed, "Away, you mad wretch." At the sound of his voice, poor mad Mary uttered a shriek, and fell to the ground.

"Do you not know poor Mary Gabriel?" said Mary Woodbine. "Oh, fetch some water, for fear she should die."

"Who?" said Colonel Ednor, starting in his turn, "Mary Gabriel! impossible!—it cannot be. Mary Gabriel was *beautiful*." A feeling, to which he had hitherto been a stranger, shot for one instant to his heart, but the sensation was momentary; and he entreated Mary Woodbine would leave the poor wretch, and send somebody to her assistance.

Mary's bosom, swelled with indignation. "What!" she said, "leave the poor maniac thus? Oh, Colonel Ednor, for shame." Mary's dog had by this time recovered himself, and was shaking off the dirt he had acquired from his fall, and rousing all his strength, he was again growling at the Colonel; when Mary, by her voice, rather than by her strength, caught and held him. The Colonel took her hand, and was endeavouring to lead her from the spot, when she turned towards him, and desired he would release her.

"I will let go the dog," she exclaimed, "and one word of encouragement from me, would make you repent your conduct. Let me go, Colonel Ednor."

At this moment, Susan Cowslip passed.

"Susan," said Mary, "do stop, and help me to raise Mary Gabriel."

Susan passed with a sneer, as Colonel Ednor still endeavoured to remove Mary Woodbine; while the poor maniac, who had recovered her sight, and partly her reason, raised herself, and looking earnestly at the Colonel and Mary, suddenly sprung from the ground, and rushed between them; when Mary, profiting by the surprise of Colonel Ednor, fled, with the greatest rapidity, followed by the dog; nor stopped till she came within sight of the farm.

Poor mad Mary, in the mean while, detained the Colonel, for whichever way he turned, she presented herself: sometimes wildly laughing, sometimes sighing deeply; at one moment reproaching him, at another, lavishing every mark of fondness upon him; at length she caught his arm.

"Come, come," she said, "I will show you where it is laid:—

The cold, cold grave is its bed,
With a turf for its coverlet,
And a stone for its pillow;
And it sleeps, and it sleeps, in peace."

The Colonel could not extricate himself from the grasp of mad Mary, for with preternatural strength she held him, and led him till they came to a mound of earth; here poor Mary, relaxing her hold, sunk on the ground, and burst into tears.

Colonel Ednor was somewhat moved, as she pronounced his name, in tones he could not forget; he stood thoughtfully for a few moments, as the maniac chanted a few words to the memory of an infant she had somewhere buried; but every earth-heap was in her eyes its grave, over which she wept, and sang and sighed.

Her senses were evidently lucid, at particular periods: once she hid her face with her hands, and begged Colonel Ednor would leave her; then she prayed him to lead her to her mother's hut, that she might there die in peace;—then she would sigh, as if her heart would break; and the Colonel, deeply affected, had just made up his mind to lead her home, when two or three persons appeared in sight; among them he recognised William Meadows, and farmer Woodbine. Mary, too, was with them. This was a company he by no means wished to encounter, and he hastily hurried away, and was soon out of sight.

Poor mad Mary rose from the ground, as Mary Woodbine approached her, but appeared to be frightened at the sight of the men. Mary soothed the poor creature, who clung to her for protection; and, on being assured that they should not, would not, harm her, she was persuaded to accompany the party along the heath. But a deep dejection appeared to replace the wildness, which had, for several years, driven her to wander,

poor, houseless, shivering, on the dismal and solitary heath. When she approached her mother's cottage, a shivering seized her, and Mary Woodbine, was fearful that the acuteness of her feelings, might induce her to escape; but poor Mary, was quiet in the hands of her companions, and she allowed herself to be conducted into the maternal dwelling.

Judy was at the farm, whither Betsy had taken her, to prevent the sudden shock of seeing her daughter, and to communicate to the old woman that they had gained some intelligence of her child. Judy started from her seat.

"My daughter Mary!" she exclaimed, "is she then alive? oh merciful God! shall I once more hold her in my arms? but Betsy, tell me, where is she? is she—is she—right in her mind?"

Betsy told Judy that she was better, though not quite sensible, and that her father and Mary were gone to conduct her home.

Old Judy shook in every limb. "Ah," she cried, "Heaven has heard my prayer; my poor child, my long-lost wandering child! But let us go, Betsy, let us go, give me your arm, for my old limbs, totter beneath my weight."

With trembling steps, the poor woman reached her cottage, where she found farmer Woodbine, William and Mary with her daughter.

Mad Mary jumped up as her mother entered; her reason, which had by fits returned, appeared to be again forsaking her; but Judy suppressed her feelings, and addressed her afflicted child in tones of kindness:—the tears accompanied her words, and at the exclamation "my poor, poor hapless child!" her daughter flung herself into her arms, and uttered the thrilling word "mother!"

This was almost too much for the poor old woman; she feebly pressed her daughter to her bosom, but all her energy was gone. She sunk upon a chair, and her agitation was so great, that her friends trembled for the consequences. Betsy and Mary remained at the hut all the evening, and by their kind attention soothed the harassed feelings of old Judy; while poor mad Mary by fits and starts, now chanted her wild air, now wept and sighed, now evinced sparks of reason, which led them to hope, that with peace and kindness, she might be restored to the exercise of her faculties, and the enjoyments of a rational being.

At night, farmer Woodbine came to fetch home his daughters, bringing with him old Betty Glover, to pass the night with Judy and her daughter.

When Mary Woodbine went to bed, in relating the events of the day, she told her sister of Colonel Ednor's behaviour to her, and declared she would not go out alone, while he remained in the neighbourhood. Betsy approved of this resolution, blaming her sister at the same time, for having been too regardless hitherto, of rambling without a companion, to the cottages of Goody Tomkins, and old Judy.

But to return to the hut of the poor creature. Poor Mary Gabriel sunk into a listless state of body, though her mind gradually and partially recovered its tone; and old Judy saw her luckless child, sinking into the grave, a victim to the cruel perfidy of Colonel Ednor.

But even this, was a melancholy pleasure to the poor old woman; the gratification of knowing she had not come to an untimely end, and the exquisite delight she had in soothing her harassed spirit, and in profitting by the lucid moments, which marked the latter end of her days, to assure poor Mary, that she was forgiven, and to point out to her

the rest beyond the grave; these, and the exercise of those numberless maternal duties, which the situation of the poor maniac required, called forth all the energies of Judy's enthusiastic mind; and yielded a degree of happiness, that in some measure repaid her for all the miseries she had endured.

Daily did Mary Woodbine visit the hut, and with her brought consolation; for Judy was now more rejoiced than ever, to see the lovely girl who had saved her child from perishing on the waste. Without ceasing did she point out her daughter's fate to Mary, as a beacon for her future conduct.

"Shun," she would say, "the perfidious flatterer, who smiles but to ruin. Ah, Mary, my chield, when shall I see thee united to that worthy youth, William Meadows? Why do you so long defer your marriage? Let me see you settled. Foolish Mary, to prefer the nonsense of the many, to the affection of one so true, so deserving as William; look at your sister Betsy, she tells me, that next month, she and George Underwood, will be united in wedlock; and why will not you?"

"All in good time," replied the gay-hearted Mary, who supposed she could marry, whenever she pleased; "but you know, Judy, I must be grave and sober, when I marry; love no balls, not go to fairs; nobody, then, will say any pretty things to me; and besides, I am not quite sure I like him best.

Old Judy shook her head at the thoughtless girl. "Ah, Mary," she said, "marry the man, who really loves you; do not be anxious to marry the man you think you love best; marry William Meadows, and I'll answer for it, that in one month, you will love him dearly. Where is the woman, who would not dearly love the worthy man, who made it is happiness to please her?"

"Ah, well," replied Mary, "I will think upon all you say, Judy, at some future time; good-bye, for the present."

CHAPTER VIII.

A hungry lean-fac'd villain,
A meer anatomy, a mountebank,
A thread-bare juggler, and a fortune-teller,
A needy, hollow-ey'd, sharp-looking wretch,
A living dead man; this pernicious slave,
Forsooth, took on him as a conjurer;
And gazing in my eyes, feeling my pulse,
And with no face, as 'twere, outfacing me,
Cries out, I was possest.—COMEDY OF ERRORS.

ON the day following this interview with poor Mary Gabriel, Colonel Ednor left the Hall for London, and his departure, caused unfeigned delight at the farm. William Meadows did not venture to ask Mary to give up going to the races; neither did George like to make such a proposition to his gentle Betsy, for even she anticipated much pleasure in the gay doings that were to take place at Bedford. Both of the young men, however, would have preferred a quiet walk at Silvershoe; but the fates decreed otherwise, and before the sun was up, the two girls rose, and arranged those parts of the domestic concerns of the farm which demanded their early attention. About nine o'clock they set off.

William had a beautiful pony for Mary to ride, and Betsy was content to mount a pillion behind George. Mr. Grigs was in despair, at not having the "beauty of Bedfordshire" by his side, in his smart whiskey. So vexed indeed was he, that he never thought of asking Susan Cowslip, who was going to ride double, behind young Hodge, to accept the vacant seat, till George reminded him, that Susan would be happy to exchange the pillion for a seat in his beautiful whiskey.

Off the party set in high glee, accompanied by several young farmers, all envying William the privilege of being Mary's particular beau. To the surprise of the party, just as they entered the town of Bedford, they were joined by Sally Greenly, mounted on an old gardener's horse, that had taken the liberty of laying down with her in a pond, into which she had, very generously rode, to water the brute beast. Fortunately for her, a country-man was near, and ran to her assistance; but she bore upon her person, evident marks of misfortune, and the gay Mr. Grigs felt quite ashamed at entering the town with such a "dirty, vulgar, disgusting creature," in their train.

When they arrived at the inn, they were received most graciously by the landlord, who was personally known to some of the young men. Refreshments of the best kind, were placed before them, and in high spirits, they repaired to the course. Lord Wilsden was there, and Mary's heart fluttered, as he drew near, and recognised the party; but his Lordship paid Mary no more attention than he did to any of the rest. But what was the surprise, not only of the party, but even of his Lordship, when Colonel Ednor approached!

"I could not resist the inclination of meeting your Lordship here," said he. "London too, is empty, and so here I am."

He took no notice of the party from Silvershoe, who were much agitated by his presence, but rode off with Lord Wilsden, to another part of the course.

Mary was glad he was gone, yet she felt a little piqued at this perfect neglect, and her eyes wandered more than once, where the nobility and gentry were assembled in a group. William observed this, with an aching heart, and the hilarity of the party received a check, which it did not recover during the rest of the morning.

After the race was over, they went to see "the dwarf and the giant," and then Mary insisted on going to the celebrated fortune-teller. Mary was positive, and to the fortune-teller they went.

"I know my fortune," said, Betsy, "and I wish, Mary, you would not have yours told, it is such nonsense."

"Ah, but I shall though," replied her sister.

When they knocked at the door where the impostor carried on his nefarious practices, it was opened by a little boy, who ushered them into a parlour, as his master was engaged. Mary was all impatience, and when she was told the soothsayer was at leisure, she rose eagerly, and ascended the long, dark, and narrow-winding stair: day-light was totally excluded from this abode of deceit; one dim lamp was placed at the door, where the little boy tapped, and a voice which sounded very sepulchral in Mary's ear, said, "Come in." She half repented her temerity; the wish, however, to penetrate that veil which Providence has kindly thrown over futurity, urged her on; but her heart died within her, as she entered an apartment resembling a cave.

At the further end of the room sat an aged man, whose head was covered with silver hair, a long white beard flowed down to his girdle; before him was a table, on which was a lamp, which shed its imperfect rays around, and rendered darkness visible; a scull, and a book, with mystic characters, were placed beside him: in his hand he held a wand, and the spot on which he sat and where the table stood, was surrounded by a large circular line.

Mary was so terrified at this appalling apparatus, that she was on the point of leaving the room, when the fortune-teller said, "Stay, young woman, what has beauty like thine to fear?" Mary paused. "Approach," he continued, "and let me scan thy future destiny; shew me thy hand."

Mary with a beating heart extended her hand, which he gazed upon intently; then asked her the day, the hour, and the year, on which she was born; turned over the leaves of his magic book, and stopped at a page where the figures were all designed in gold and silver.

"Ah!" said he, "what do I see? Wealth without end—greatness and happiness from marriage! What a fate! And I now see in this dark mirror," he continued, turning the pages of his book till a looking glass presented itself, "I behold a lover passed the bloom of youth indeed, with aching head and heart lamenting thy hard cruelty. How is this, fair maid? What! refuse an offer splendid as this? know your happiness better; but behold a *speck*, your heart is half engaged, and to a rustic too. Beware, fair maid, you stand upon the edge of a precipice: look well before you leap; your fate will be such as you make or mar it. But there is a being who hangs upon your smiles, whom fear and delicate love make silent; nay more—, he seems to shun her whom most he means to woo. I dare not tell you more, yet this day shall not pass by, till your own eyes shall discover that a part of what I say is true."

As the magician looked up, Mary thought his bright dark eye did but ill accord with his silver locks.

"Is this all you can tell me?" she asked in a timid voice.

"What would you more," replied the man, "than a husband wealthy and adoring; such news as this deserves more than the pittance in your hand; (Mary held a shilling) but I ask no more—depart in peace."

Mary gladly obeyed, and joining her sister, she quitted the house in silence.

"Has he," said Betsy, "fixed your wedding-day with William, dear Mary?"

"Oh no," replied Mary, "he has promised more than that:" but she would not say what, for the picture drawn by the fortune-teller, too strongly resembled Colonel Ednor, for Mary to communicate on a subject, which might draw down upon her, the serious reprehension of her sister. Betsy was hurt at Mary's silence, which boded no good; but she knew it would be in vain to ask any questions, and she remained silent.

Betsy was now anxious to return home; but Mary would not give up the ball, and to the ball they went.

Here Mary was doomed to meet further mortification; Lord Wilsden did not ask her to dance, neither did Colonel Ednor; but the latter honoured Susan Cowslip with being her partner.

This excited Mr. Grigs's vanity, who, immediately followed his Lordship's example, and Susan triumphed over Mary, for the first time in her life.

Mary had declared Colonel Ednor was one of the most odious men alive; yet, she could not endure to see him distinguish Susan, in preference to herself; she disliked the *man*, but she prized even him as a *lover*. She was, however, in some degree, consoled for his apparent neglect, by recollecting the words of the fortune-teller—he had said, "he seems to shun her, whom most he means to woo."

No particle of Mary's conduct this evening was lost upon Colonel Ednor, whose eyes, while paying the most extravagant compliments to Susan, wandered in search of her, whom he destined as his prey. He was an adept in discovering the wiles and failings of a female heart; and Mary's conduct this evening, inspired him with hopes beyond his wishes.

Our rustic party did not remain late at the ball, as they had ten miles to go before they reached home; and when Mary arrived at the farm, she did not meet her father with that joyous look with which she was wont to greet him, on her return from a party of pleasure. Her spirits were, however, buoyant, and the next morning she rose with the lark, and before the day was over, she promised William to ride with him, to see his sister, who was married, and lived at the distance of about five miles.

Farmer Woodbine was never happier than when his Mary was with William, of whom he had the highest opinion, and with delight he helped her to mount the pony, and wished them a pleasant ride.

They had not been long gone, when Colonel Ednor was met by George Underwood in one of the neighbouring lanes. George was surprised to see him in deep conversation with Sally Greenly: so intently were they engaged, that they did not perceive the approach of any one, till George passed close by them. They looked confused; but young Underwood took no sort of notice of them, and passed on to Woodbine-Farm.

"I do not like that Colonel Ednor," said he, to Betsy. "We know pretty well what he is by poor Judy's daughter. I should be glad to know what he does here, prowling about like an evil spirit. I shall watch him pretty closely, I can tell him; and there is not a

more spiteful, mischievous girl in the village, than Sally Greenly. I am sorry Susan Cowslip associates so much with Sally; she will do her no good; but I am half inclined to think, they are plotting against Mary. She is so childish, and so wayward, she does not know her own mind ten minutes together. See there they are, William and she; and I am sure, to look at them at this moment, one would suppose it difficult to say, which looks the happiest; yet I would venture a wager, they do not reach the farm, before Mary's countenance will change."

At this moment, William made some observation to Mary, concluding it by saying, "they had had a most delightful ride."

"I don't think so," replied Mary, "we had nothing but green trees to look at; heigho! I wish I lived in a town! Now, make no answer, William, for by the gravity of your countenance, you are going to preach, I am sure."

So saying, she gave her pony a smart cut with her whip, and rode up to her sister full gallop; then jumping off without any assistance, she declared that she was tired to death, and she never would ride out with William again. "Not alone," she added, "he is so mopish, he never says any smart things to one, but talks of the woods, and the trees—and the hills, and the dales. Oh! dear Betsy, let us go in. La! William, what are you there? You are like a ghost, you steal so softly upon one.—You are always at my elbow."

"Where can I be happier?" replied the enamoured youth.

"Such nonsense," resumed Mary, turning quickly into the house, while William followed her with a sigh.

"It is your own fault," said George tapping William on the shoulder, "you deserve it all. You spoil her in spite of herself."

CHAPTER IX.

To hear a sweet goldfinch's sonnet,
This morning I put on my bonnet,
But scarce in the meadows, pies on it,
  When the Captain appeared in my view.
His handkerchief, la! smelt so sweetly,
He managed the manner so neatly,
He managed the matter so neatly,
   That I ne'er can be kissed by a clown.

OLD SONG.

MARY WOODBINE'S mind was exceedingly unsettled from the time she had been at Bedford races. The fortune-teller's prediction, that she should be great and wealthy by marriage, haunted her imagination, and the impossibility of its accomplishment by union with William, sometimes made her receive his marks of fondness with disgust.

One day, when he urged her to fix their wedding day, she told him very seriously, "that she had changed her mind, and did not intend to marry at all." William at first laughed at the idea; but Mary persisted in her resolution, desired him, never to mention the subject of marriage again, and left him, totally at a loss to account for this extraordinary conduct.

When Mary quitted her lover, she put on her bonnet, and resolved to visit old Judy; but instead of the light step and heart, with which she was accustomed to trip along, her pace was measured, and her countenance was expressive of fretful thought.—Every rural pleasure was indeed fled from Mary; her poultry, formerly her delight, were now fed, merely because it was necessary that fowls should eat; her dairy, previously her pride, was kept exceedingly clean, but she no longer decorated it with flowers; in short, Mary's noon-day thought, and midnight dreams, were, "wealth and greatness by marriage."

Every body observed the change in her spirits. It extended even to her temper; she became captious and impatient; her presence no longer excited mirth, her playfulness was gone; in fact, she was but the shadow of the shade, of her former self.

In this moody frame of mind, she entered the lane where Judy lived. She found "mad Mary," as usual, seated by the fire-side, while old Judy was employed in arranging her little apartment. After some brief conversation with the old woman the restless girl left the hut, and strolled towards the park.

She wandered, not knowing whither she was directing her course, and had proceeded nearly a mile, when some one took hold of her arm gently, and on turning round, Colonel Ednor, with a look of profound respect, stood before her. Her heart beat quickly; her feelings were so mingled, that she was speechless, though she made an attempt to go away.

"Oh, Miss Mary," said the Colonel, "stay but for one instant; stay and hear me confess how deeply I repent my wrongs towards poor Mary Gabriel. Yet, I was young and she was forward. Ah, Miss Mary, if you knew all the circumstances, you would not condemn me entirely. I could not marry one, who had disgraced herself and me; but I

offered to provide for her liberally. In a paroxysm of rage she fled from me, and, until the other day, I have never seen her."

Here the Colonel paused, but Mary made no reply. He thus continued: "Her rank in life I should have considered no detriment to our union, for all men are born equal, and Heaven knows," he sighed deeply as he spoke, and pressed the passive hand of Mary, "Heaven knows, I would at this moment gladly raise to a state of wealth and splendour, a being not so humbly born indeed as Mary Gabriel, but still ONE, whom fate has placed in a situation considerably beneath her deserts; but *that* being, I am aware, scorns me in her heart, and all my hopes of future happiness are lost; but I will not detain you, Miss Mary. May you be happy! may sorrow never cross your path, and may the envied William Meadows duly appreciate the bliss of calling so lovely a woman his own. Farewell," he repeated, adding in the same breath, "and when seated by his side, think sometimes of the unhappy Ednor, who would have sacrificed his life to procure a single moment's happiness for Miss Mary Woodbine." He kissed Mary's hand, then bowing respectfully, he slowly withdrew, leaving the poor girl in a maze of doubts, of hopes, and of fears.

There appeared, she thought, something like reason in Colonel Ednor's arguments. "Mary Gabriel might have been forward, and then too, *she* was *so very much* beneath him. Besides, he was older now, and of course more steady; and, at any rate, he could not say Mary Woodbine had been forward, for she had always avoided him, and if he should make her an offer of marriage, there appeared no reason why she should refuse him;—as to his making any proposal to her, that was not honourable, that was out of the question."

While these thoughts passed rapidly before the varying mind of Mary Woodbine, she quickened her pace towards home, but as she was passing through the park-gate, she was overtaken by Susan Cowslip and Sally Greenly.

"This is a pleasant evening, Mary, for a stroll," said the former. "I hope you have had an agreeable walk; the park is pleasant: to be sure it is a *little* solitary, but then Miss Mary Woodbine is so *discreet*, she need not fear any observations that could be made on her walk this evening."

Sally Greenly here burst into a laugh, in which Susan joined. "No, to be sure," said Sally, "Miss Mary Woodbine is all perfection, she never gives room for any one to talk about her; but it seems, William Meadows, though he does not talk, yet he *thinks* a little, for lately he has not been much at Woodbine-farm." Then wishing Mary a good evening, they left her in a state far from being enviable.

Mary resolved to conceal this interview with Colonel Ednor. Those, who know the human heart, need not be told her reasons; and those, who do not, will do well to remember, that *secrecy* very generally implies *guilt.*

She, however, resolved not to go again to the park alone. But, as she still preferred solitude to society, she chose the heath and the wood which bordered it for her future rambles. William she now avoided upon all occasions, and he, in deep dejection, absented himself very much from Woodbine-farm.

In her walks she was most generally met by that evil spirit, Sally, who had secretly, but busily, thrown out hints of Colonel Ednor's being still in the neighbourhood, and of his having been seen in the park with a certain person.

Mary one evening having wandered rather later than usual, was suddenly attacked by two men, who importunately demanded alms. Terrified beyond description, she stood

motionless, when one of them said, “she must either give them what money she had about her, or they must take it forcibly,” and he rudely thrust his hand into her pocket for that purpose; at this moment Colonel Ednor appeared, and the two fellows made off.

Mary’s fears now found relief in tears, and the Colonel, in the most respectful manner, soothed her, and offered to conduct her home.

“Not for worlds!” was Mary’s imprudent reply; and after many protestations, on his part, of respectful admiration, he entreated she would honour him with a meeting on the following evening, as he had something to communicate of the greatest importance, and which much concerned her peace.

Mary hesitated, but at length consented, and the Colonel, with a heavy sigh, allowed her to depart.

On the following afternoon, Mary, as usual, set off for her walk, but she was stopped by her father, who said he thought it hard that she left Betsy so much alone, especially as the latter was so soon to be married. “Old Judy engages all your attention, Mary; and I don’t think it is quite right.”

Mary blushed, and said “It should not happen another day, but that she *must* keep her promise this once.”

Farmer Woodbine let her go with reluctance, and, following her with his eyes till she was out of sight, he breathed a fervent prayer for the happiness of his spoiled and beautiful child.

Every leaf which moved startled Mary.

She *heard* “a voice in every breeze,” and fearfully pursued, with hurried steps, the path which her busy foes hoped would lead her to destruction. Colonel Ednor was waiting behind an old oak, called Beaumont’s-tree, from the circumstance of a murderer having been buried there; and the stake, which was driven through his body, having struck root, became in time a goodly tree. So said that gossip, Dame *Tradition!*

When Mary timidly advanced, Ednor came forward to meet her, joy sparkling in his eyes, and begged she would take his arm, while he disclosed to her the important communication, that William Meadows was paying his addresses to a young girl who lived about five miles from Silvershoe.

A pang shot through Mary’s heart. Until she thought *he* had forsaken her, she never knew how dear he was to her heart. A chill ran through her limbs, and a pearly tear trembled in her eyelid; yet ashamed of having betrayed so much feeling, she laughed, and said, “William was at liberty to wed whom he pleased; he was nothing to her.”

Colonel Ednor then expressed his surprise at the blind infidelity of William in throwing away a pearl of such infinite value.

Mary’s colour rose at the idea of being deserted; she, who had reigned absolute mistress over the hearts of many a rustic youth, to be *thrown away!* Colonel Ednor saw the effect which his insinuations had made on her mind, and he chose this moment for offering his hand and his heart to the silly girl.

“Certain prejudices are, I know, excited against me in the village of Silvershoe, and your worthy father might object to our union; but, dearest Mary, let but a secret tie unite us; be but once mine, and he will then receive with joy his blooming daughter to his arms.”

Mary breathed short:—all the fortune-teller had told her rapidly rushed across her imagination.—The idea of being a Colonel’s lady!—of being a visiter at the Hall, as a

friend of Lord Wilsden!—the delight of appearing in the village, and at church, in company with the great folks of the great house; these, and a thousand other dazzling prospects, induced Mary to give the Colonel a hope, that she might condescend to accept his offer. But she could not entirely relinquish the most striking feature in her character, that of coquetry; half the pleasure of her conquest would be lost, if the Colonel had no fears; therefore, Mary, who now supposed him in love, past redemption, told him, "She would *consider* of it."

"You will meet me to-morrow," replied Colonel Ednor.

"Perhaps," said Mary, as she ran lightly along the heath.

"Exquisite creature!" ejaculated the Colonel, as she now and then turned round, and waved her hand to him, in token of adieu. "Exquisite creature! she must, she shall be mine—by all that's lovely!"

Mary ran herself almost out of breath; for she wanted, for one minute, to visit old Judy's cottage, with a view of saving her credit. As she quitted the old woman's hut, she was met by Sally Greenly.

"So you have been," she said, "to pay your *usual* visit to old Judy—how very kind," she added with a sneer.

Mary was disconcerted, and coloured highly, and Sally observed, "that some people, could be as sly as their neighbours, when it suited their purpose. And now Mary," she added, addressing her with that familiarity which an equality of sentiment authorizes, "I wish you would just go with me to-morrow; I want to meet William Chip, in the wood, by the side of Beaumont's tree, and you can stand at a distance, while I have my chat with him. Won't you go? perhaps you are *afraid* to go to the wood in an evening; you will not be alone you know, and William Meadows does not seem to care where you go now. Ah, Mary, I wish you and I could be better friends! but there's George Underwood looking for *you*, I dare say:—don't be frightened, Mary, I won't tell where you have been. What is it to him, if you can meet a friend."

This was the first fruit of Mary's duplicity, and bitterly did she feel the taunts of Sally who had hitherto been afraid of her.

"Ah," said the silly girl, "she may talk as she pleases; by and by, she will think it an honour, if I chance to look at her."

Mary did not go to the wood, on the following day, but on the succeeding one, she was at her post, by Beaumont's tree, just as the clock struck four:—she saw no one; and her spirits, in these matters, always high, detained her but a few minutes;—she had no notion of dancing attendance, even on a Colonel, and she was trotting off, at a brisk pace, when Ednor called to her, entreating her to stop.

He had concealed himself purposely, to see what she would do; he had supposed that she would have waited patiently for him, or betrayed much anxiety at his absence; but he knew little of Mary, to suppose any such thing. In the present instance, her heart had no share in the direction of her actions. She was not likely, therefore, to be led into a weakness, which, under different circumstances, might have influenced her conduct. She was hurried on, not by affection, but by vanity, and the insidious prophecy of the fortune-teller, whom Ednor had bribed.

From Susan Cowslip, he had learnt that Mary talked more of the pleasure of having her fortune told, by the extraordinary clever man, who was to be at Bedford races, than any other part of the show; he had therefore cozened the conjurer to permit him to

personate his character, and accordingly, having concealed himself in the house, he watched anxiously for his victim, and when she appeared, he immediately took his seat in the necromantic chair, poured into Mary's ear the insidious prophecy, which he hoped, would induce her, the first time they met, to step into a post-chaise with him, and completely to throw herself into his power. He was however deceived, for he had many interviews with Mary, before he even ventured to make this proposal; and when he did, he met with opposition, for Mary was to be Betsy's bridemaid in the ensuing week, and made this firm declaration; "I would not for worlds disappoint my sister. You need not look so grave; the clergyman you have engaged at the next town, must wait my pleasure, as well as you."

Colonel Ednor could scarcely suppress his feelings of disappointment, at her pertinacity; he looked at Captain, and but for him, he might possibly have attempted to compel her to enter the chaise, he had in readiness. The dog was familiarized in some degree to the Colonel, from frequently seeing him, yet they were not on the best terms; and on the smallest encouragement from his young mistress he would have fastened on the Colonel: he had not entirely forgotten the blow given him by Ednor; and the latter eyed his mute adversary with suspicion. Mary listened to the arguments of her fashionable admirer with a little impatience.

"Indeed, Colonel Ednor," she replied, to his reiterated entreaties that she would consent to make him happy, "Indeed, I must have a little more time to consider of all you say: besides," she added, smiling, "do you know, I like to have my own way! therefore, for the present, you must listen to *me*, and mind what *I* say to you. When Betsy is married, I may *perhaps*,—but it is only a perhaps,—take the trip to the next town you mention; but till then, I forbid you, even to speak of it! I positively forbid it," she added playfully, yet firmly, "and now I must go, for fear I should be missed."

Colonel Ednor looked thoughtful, and Mary coming near to him, said, in drawling accents, "are you angry, Colonel Ednor?"

"Angry!" repeated the Colonel, "who could be angry with so much loveliness? Oh, dear Mary, am I always to be this slave?"

"To be sure," she replied, "always; always!"

The Colonel seized her hand, and covered it with kisses. Mary felt affronted, and in tones of resentment, desired Colonel Ednor would loose her hand and let her go.

"Go," he cried, "enchantress, go; but let me not languish for a sight of you to-morrow."

Mary said, "she should be busy on the morrow;" and wishing him a formal good evening, she hastily directed her steps towards home.

CHAPTER X.

> You triumph! do! and with gigantic pride
> Defy impending vengeance. Heaven shall wink;
> No more his arm shall roll the dreadful thunder,
> Nor send his lightnings forth: no more his justice
> Shall visit the presuming sons of men,
> But perjury like thine, shall dwell in safety.
>
> JANE SHORE.

ON the following morning, Mary paid her usual visit at Judy's cottage.

The poor old woman was seated within the large fire-place, her eyes intently fixed on her unhappy daughter, whose countenance was wan and vacant. Mary Gabriel was indeed reduced to a senseless skeleton: she never spoke, but when she was spoken to; and then her answers were short, and generally vague.

Judy endeavoured to look cheerfully at Mary Woodbine, but her spirit was broken, and tears usurped the place of smiles.

"Ah, Mary," said the old woman, "I thought you had forsaken me; but you are, I suppose," she added, pointedly, "so taken up with the preparations for Betsy's wedding, that you have no time to spare for us."

Mary blushed, and stammered out something like an excuse, which was interrupted by a gentle tap at the window. Judy and Mary both turned round, and saw one of the village children holding up a letter, and beckoning Mary, who hesitated what she should do; at length, however, she opened the cottage-door, and the boy slipped the note into her hand, and ran away.

Mary put the epistle hastily into her pocket, but not unobserved by the old woman.

"Mary," said Judy, "look there," pointing to her daughter, who at this moment was pressing her apron (which she had gathered together in a heap) to her bosom, and sat rocking her chair, and murmuring 'husha-babye.' "It is cold," she uttered, shuddering, "it is wet."

"Mary," said old Judy, addressing her child, "Mary, my child."

"Child!" repeated poor crazy Mary, "I had one, but it died, all in the cold and the dark, and no one would save it." Here she began to weep; and her mother approaching her, she rose, and said, "it was only a dream, I am better now."

Mary Woodbine's agitation was extreme; a hundred times she resolved on committing the letter, which was in her pocket to the flames.

Old Judy observed her closely, and fixing her keen dark eye on the trembling girl, she said, "All argument is useless with vanity and folly; yet, Mary," she cried, with vehemence, "I cannot see you hurrying to destruction, without stretching out a hand to save you. You are, at this moment, playing the fool with the wretch, the villain Ednor." She repeated in an under voice, "What! is not she warning enough?—is not that poor victim a beacon to you?—No.—Like yon poor moth, you are hovering over the flame, which will scorch you, ay, consume you." She added, "I'll go to your father, you heed not *me*."

Mary caught her hand, “Stay, Judy, stay,” she exclaimed, bursting into tears, “would you ruin me quite?”

“You are ruined already,” replied Judy. “Sally Greenly has whispered what I could not believe, but now I do;—where is William Meadows? has he not forsaken the farm? can you not guess for why? do you think *he* has not been told the officious tale? Oh, Mary, Mary, you have broken my heart outright!—promise me,” she cried, seizing Mary’s arm, “promise me, never to meet that villain more.”

Mary could not speak, and Judy altering her tone, said, “Oh! dear, dear Mary, why would you not believe me?”

A man passed by the window, at this moment, wrapped in a large cloak, then repassed. Mary observed his figure, and her heart palpitated to so violent a degree, that she was nearly fainting. Again he appeared, he stopped, and beckoned her, and now Judy also caught sight of him.

“Who is that?” she exclaimed.

“I don’t know,” said Mary, shaking with terror, “but I wish I was at home.”

“You must not go yet,” replied the old woman, “if you are late, they will fetch you.”

The figure did not return; and Mary, who was exceedingly anxious to leave Judy and her daughter, proposed returning home.

“Well, well,” said the old woman, “be it so; I see it’s all in vain:—go, Mary,—go, and may Heaven protect you!” with a heavy sigh, she replaced herself in her chimney corner, resting both her elbows upon her knees, her hands supporting her venerable head.

“Good-bye, Judy,” said Mary, in faltering accents, “you are not angry with me?”

“Angry!” said the old woman, looking up, and then immediately regaining her dejected posture, “oh, no; I am not angry, but I am heart-broken.”

Mary wept, as she gave Judy a solemn promise, never willingly to see Colonel Ednor more: “Do not, she said, “be frightened about me, I shall run home all the way, and shall soon reach the farm.

Notwithstanding Mary’s promise never to see Colonel Ednor more, she left the hut, determined to have one more interview with him, for the purpose of dismissing him for ever, and returning to him his letter, unread.

She looked therefore as anxiously on every side, but seeing no one near, she turned towards home. As she went along, she thought she would just peep at the letter, without breaking the seal; she therefore drew it from her pocket, and pressing the two sides, she gave it the form of a tube, and discovered, the words, “adorable, matchless Mary,” this was but half a line, and in the next half line were the words, “consent to be my wife,” and then followed something about a queen.

Mary’s curiosity was excited. There could be no harm in looking at the whole of the letter. Her fingers were just placed upon the seal, when the author of it stood beside her. Mary was now quite alone; for she had left Captain at the farm.

Colonel Ednor was delighted at seeing her thus unprotected, and he began a long rhodomontade speech, half of which Mary did not hear, and the other half she did not understand, as she was meditating an escape. The Colonel’s manner, on the present occasion, was by no means so respectful as it had formerly been, and his language was devoid of that feigned humility which had hitherto characterized his speech, when addressed to Mary Woodbine.

He at length took hold of her hand, and was proceeding to urge his suit with great vehemence; when Mary, summoning all her resolution but with trembling hand and pallid cheek, returned him his unopened letter. He looked surprised; asked what she meant? and when she told him in reply, "that she could not listen to his proposals; therefore begged he would release her," he grasped her hand more firmly; "Never by heaven, he exclaimed."

"Ah, 'tis that old hag," he continued, "'tis she has done this; but it is now too late, you have engaged yourself to me, and mine you shall be."

His violence struck terror to poor Mary's heart; but she had still spirit and courage enough to watch an opportunity for deliverance.

"Stay a minute," she cried, panting for breath, "you are so violent; I am sure," she added, "nobody ever made love to me so before. Do stop a minute."

"Not an instant," was his reply, "every moment is precious. I shall not give that old witch an opportunity of impeding my plans; nor shall I longer play the slave to your tyranny, beauteous as you are, Mary.—It is now your turn to act the suppliant."

Colonel Ednor spoke with great rapidity, and still he hurried Mary on. She found it useless to struggle with him; she therefore feigned acquiescence to his wishes; and without the least resistance, allowed herself to be led on; till at length the Colonel imagined, he might for one instant loose his hold, while he threw off the long cloak in which he was enveloped, and which he intended to wrap round Mary; he placed himself therefore before her, as he did this, but in this moment of extremity Mary's ingenuity did not forsake her. She stood still for two or three seconds, as if she had no intention of escaping, and while the Colonel was tugging and swearing at the string, which fastened the cloak round his neck, and which he had dragged into a knot by his impetuosity, she made a sudden spring, and fled with the rapidity, of Camilla, scarcely touching the ground. The Colonel pursued her, but she outran him; and soon reached Judy's hut, where she fell, rather than ran into the homely dwelling.

Judy started up, and Mary clinging to her, pointed to the door which she had left wide open; she, however, could not speak, and before she could raise herself, the Colonel, scarcely knowing where he was, entered out of breath. Judy's bent and aged frame rose apparently some inches, as she met the rude advance of the being on earth, whom most she hated. Indignation closed her lips for a moment. Mary still remained on the floor, hiding her face in Judy's homely garments, while Colonel Ednor paused. But at length resuming the boldness of iniquity; he advanced towards Mary to raise her. The poor girl shrieked, "Mercy, Colonel Ednor, mercy; tear me not from my friends. Oh mercy—mercy."

"This is downright folly," he replied, "absolute nonsense;" as he endeavoured to raise Mary. But he said no more; for Judy interrupted him.

"Monstrous villain!" she exclaimed, "never shall you effect your purpose. "Old as I am, and weak too, I will protect her; rise Mary, she continued, "and you, Colonel Ednor, dare not attempt to touch her." Her voice appalled the libertine, as she thus proceeded in solemn accents; "If you do, may the curses of the wronged and injured, haunt you in this life, and pursue you in the next!" She stooped towards her fire, which was kindled into a bright blaze, and drawing from it a flaming brand, she waved it before her, while Mary like a statue stood pale and motionless behind the extraordinary being, who assumed the authority of a superior spirit.

At this moment and as if to heighten the scene, crazy Mary entered, and stood before Colonel Ednor.

"Ah, she cried, "spare him," "what! has Heaven wreaked its vengeance on him here, and hereafter too? this is too much." The poor soul sunk into a chair; and became again the poor listless wretch, upon whom the passing events made no impression.

"Begone," said Judy fiercely;—her feelings kindled almost to madness, at the sight of her wretched child. "Begone, villain."

Colonel Ednor hesitated; but at length turned round to obey her, when she darted forwards and seized his arm. "Yet stay," she exclaimed, "see you yon fallen, fallen, blighted flower. Ah, wretch, once was she like that blooming Mary. Who reduced her to this lowest pitch of human misery? You," she continued, grasping his arm, and stamping violently; "and you, barbarian as you are, come here to insult the misery you have caused." She let go her hold, and sinking on her knees, she clasped her withered hands, and shrieked aloud; "Curse him, Heaven, curse him here, and—here—"

"Stop," said Mary Woodbine, "dear Judy, stop; not hereafter; oh do not say hereafter. Mercy and charity forbid it," repeated the terrified girl, shuddering, "Oh, not hereafter."

"Mercy to him! to him!" resumed Judy, rising, "to him who can gaze on such misery as hers?" pointing to her child, who had seated herself, and was again rocking her chair; "mercy to Colonel Ednor! Yet, O my God, pardon me," she added, after a pause, and dropping on her knees, "Oh pardon my frantic grief. Go," she continued in trembling accents, "go, villain as you are—nor for one instant more, intrude upon griefs like ours. Begone, Colonel Ednor, begone—Begone—"

The name of the Colonel roused crazy Mary. She repeated it—"Ednor!" putting her hand upon her forehead, she laughed wildly: then pressed her own heart, and again repeated "Ednor," and, pointing to herself, she said—"Mary is Ednor too."

Colonel Ednor, who had been detained by indescribable feelings, could no longer command himself, or endure the fierce reproof of Judy, but rushing out of the hut, he threw himself into the chaise which he had in waiting, and drove rapidly for London, where the recollection of the misery he had caused in Bedfordshire, was soon obliterated by fresh scenes of dissipation and infamy.

Old Judy, whose strength was entirely exhausted by her late exertion, fell to the ground as he closed the door.

All Mary's strength could not raise Judy, for she had fallen into a fit, and crazy Mary had again sunk into a kind of stupor. Fortunately she saw a boy passing the casement, she called to him, and bade him run to the farm, and send Betsy and some one else to her assistance. The boy ran quickly, and Mary was soon released from her melancholy situation. Old Betty Glover was sent for, and to her care the wretched inhabitants of the hut were committed for the night.

CHAPTER XI.

Is there a human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, insnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts, dissembling smooth!
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY-NIGHT.

THE reader has now become so much acquainted with Mary Gabriel, that it will be necessary to give the detail of those sufferings which had reduced that poor maniac to the lowest pitch of misery.

Mary Gabriel was affectionate and timid: her love for Colonel Ednor was pure as it was ardent. His very failings were virtues in her eyes, and the impetuosity of his disposition, which frequently led him to an ungenerous and fierce display of the power he had acquired over her heart, was, by the artless girl, misconstrued into that noble daring which should form the principal ingredient in a soldier's character. 'Tis true that Mary sometimes trembled at his frown, but, like the gentle Desdemona—

——"when she seem'd to shake, and fear *his* looks,
She lov'd them most."

Colonel Ednor profited by this timidity, to effect his purpose, and, in scornful terms, would oft upbraid her as cold and heartless, when she refused to quit her mother's house.

"You love me not," he would say, "or you would not doubt my honour."

"But to leave my mother," Mary would sob out in reply, "'twould kill her quite:" and once she dared to urge the impossibility of Judy's refusing to consent to their marriage—

Colonel Ednor looked at her sternly. "'Tis well," he said, "I take my leave. I do perceive you wish me gone." He went a few steps from her, then returned, and, changing his tone, he said, in accents of tenderest solicitude—"Farewell, Mary; when I am gone, think sometimes of the wretched Ednor."

Mary was speechless; and again he placed himself by her side on the green turf. "Can you be so barbarous to dismiss the man who lives but in your smiles? Oh, Mary! do not break my heart. If I must leave you, let me bear with me your forgiveness. Let me hear you say—You do not hate me."

"Hate you!" repeated Mary, bursting into tears, "Hate you! Oh no! I never hated any one; but you know too well that I——"

"Proceed," said Colonel Ednor; "proceed, dear Mary. What is it I know? That you love me—" He added, after a pause—"That look speaks yes; then why refuse to make me happy."

It would be needless to detail farther the particulars of a conversation, which terminated, however, in a solemn, though extorted promise, from the poor girl, that she would intrust her happiness to the selfish destroyer of her innocent mind. Ednor profaning the sacred name of love, hurried on his victim to the utmost destruction; then scorning the faded charms, the silent tears, and heaving bosom of the afflicted repentant Mary, he left them to be a prey to sorrow and remorse, and again wandered in search of some fresh object to gratify his lawless passions.

Why are men like him admitted into respectable society? Why are they not marked out, and shunned as monsters? whose only pleasure is—

"To raze the sanctuary—having waste ground
enough before."

Oh, barbarous, cruel man, to ruin what he loves. Loves!—Oh no! It is not love.

"Love, like Virtue, is amiable, mild, serene—
Without all beauty—and all peace within."

Poor Mary, with the most solemn assurance of marriage from the Colonel, consented to barter peace of mind, not for splendour, but for *love*. Indeed they were, as she supposed, married at the first town they stopped at. Yet Mary was not happy. A twelvemonth had elapsed, and she had had no tidings of her mother, and she anxiously requested they might visit Silvershoe, but Colonel Ednor refused to go to Silvershoe. Mary then again wrote to her mother, praying for an answer to her letter. This epistle escaped the eye of the Colonel; and old Judy, who had wept the loss of her child, with tears of deepest anguish, sat for some time the picture of despair, after its perusal. To her discerning mind, every word betrayed the treachery of her unsuspicious girl's seducer. On the following day she wrote to her child, desiring she would instantly quit the house of Colonel Ednor, and return to her native village, where she would find that peace which could never be attained while she remained under the roof of the deceitful, treacherous Ednor.

This cheering epistle, however, never reached Mary. Colonel Ednor saw it delivered at the door, read it, and then very deliberately burnt it.

The object of his repeated treachery waited anxiously for an answer to her letter, and her spirits sunk under the dreadful idea that her mother had forsaken her. Colonel Ednor too now absented himself for some days, and as her confinement drew near, her troubles and terrors increased. At length the awful moment arrived, when the first cries of her infant broke upon her ear. Who can paint the ecstasies of this moment to such a heart as Mary's? All was forgotten. Every unkindness of Colonel Ednor was obliterated: he was the father of her child. Impatiently she awaited his return. Two days passed, and yet he came not—and the flush of hope fled Mary's cheek, and was succeeded by the pale chill of disappointment. A week elapsed—another and another passed—a fourth—at length he came. Mary's heart was well nigh leaping from her bosom, as she heard his

step. Seizing her beauteous boy, she advanced to meet him, but her feelings were too much for her, and before she reached the door, she fell into a chair.

Colonel Ednor entered the room with a degree of coldness, which shook poor Mary's frame, already weakened by "that hope deferred, which maketh the heart sick." Yet still she smiled, and, pointing to her blooming babe, she said, "Oh, dear Ednor, how I have longed to see you. Is it not a cherub?" she continued.

But no sympathetic smile met hers. The Colonel seated himself; and, after coldly asking her how she did? he said he thought the boy had better be put out to nurse immediately.

Mary clasped her infant to her bosom, and, bursting into tears, she said, "Put out to nurse! Oh do not kill me quite—I cannot live without my child—Never," she cried emphatically, "will I voluntarily resign it!"

Mary had never spoken positively before to the Colonel. He looked surprised; but replied, that "he must insist on its being sent away, for he disliked children of all things—besides Mary," he added, "I do not understand this opposition to my will."

"Oh 'tis the first time I ever opposed you," said Mary, sobbing, "but my child, it is—pardon me, dear Ednor—but this babe is the last hold of comfort I have left. I have long thought that you had ceased to love me, now I know it, or you would not, could not, threaten to deprive me of my infant. For mercy's sake, leave me my child!—He never shall molest you—you shall never see him."

Colonel Ednor looked impatient, as Mary proceeded thus—"Let me return to my mother—your friends know nothing of me—I shall soon be forgotten—I will relinquish your name; only let me retain my child and yours."

"Mary," resumed the villain, "it is high time to inform you, that you have no legal claim to the name of Ednor—none whatever. Relinquish, therefore, either your child, or me."

The fixed look of Mary, as he spoke, rather alarmed him, and he approached to soothe her; but, starting from her seat, and clasping her infant in her arms, she sprang by him, and entering an adjoining room, she closed and locked the door, then threw herself on the bed, in an agony which no language can describe.

In vain did the Colonel desire she would open the door—she persisted in total silence—and he at length left her, threatening that if she refused to admit him, when he returned, he would force the door.

Still Mary made no reply, but when assured he was gone, she rose eagerly from her bed, undressed herself, put on her russet gown, her modest cap, bonnet, and cloak, and flinging with disdain the more costly vestments of Colonel Ednor's perfidy aside, she made up a small parcel of baby clothes; this done, she wrapped her child up well, and, with a beating heart, pressed it to her bosom and recommended herself to heaven.

Her servants, for she had a small establishment, were all merrily amusing themselves in the kitchen, as, with timid steps, she glided softly down the stairs; and, with a few shillings in her pocket, she left a house, now in her eyes the abode of infamy and sin.

She had laid no plan for her future conduct, but the desperate one of quitting the mansion she had lately thought her own; she therefore wandered from street to street, fearing at every turn to meet *him* whose presence had formerly caused all her joy; at length she found herself in Smithfield, when she suddenly recollected hearing that the

stage, which went to Ampthill, put up in St. John's-street. But how could she venture to take a seat in that coach, the driver of which would immediately recognise her?

What was to be done in this dilemma? Night was advancing; gradually the busy hum of men ceased, till nought broke the stillness around her, save the solemn tones of nightly watchmen; here and there indeed the forced laugh, breaking from an aching bosom, met her ear, and struck terror to her sensitive heart. She walked up one street, then down another, fearing alike the rude encounter of the surly guardians of the night, or the more dangerous attack of the drunken reveller. In a solitary court she at length sat down to rest her weary limbs, but she had not long occupied her flinty seat, when she was accosted by a watchman, who bade her rise, tremblingly she obeyed, and was hastening on, when he stopped her. The decency of her attire attracted his notice, she was, he thought, a proper subject for committal, as he supposed she would readily bribe him, rather than mix with the company the watch-house generally contained. He therefore seized her by the arm, while poor Mary made many ineffectual efforts to articulate. Her voice, however, was gone*. Colonel Ednor's communication had so palsied all her nerves and muscles, that her tongue refused its office. Her silence was construed into hardened effrontery, and she was thrust into the wretched abode of guilt and misery. Mary's heart sickened at the scene before her; yet her principal anxiety was respecting her infant. She trembled when any one approached her, lest they should be going to deprive her of this treasure, and she shrunk from the unhallowed language which met her ear from every quarter. The morning at length came, and Mary observing, that several of the persons confined gave different sums of money to the Constable of the night, and were allowed to depart, she also tendered a crown, and was permitted to quit an abode, where villany usurps authority, and where vice finds acquittal or punishment, according to the wealth or poverty of its subject.

Mary's little stock of money was now reduced to five shillings and sixpence, forming her whole treasure. She hastily quitted the neighbourhood of her late confinement, and having purchased a small loaf and a piece of cheese, she set off she knew not whither, resolving, however, to seek shelter under her mother's roof. Night, however, again approached and found her a wanderer, far from her native village; indeed every step she took led her further from the object she had in view. She herself began to feel the effects of being exposed to the night air, and the unceasing moaning of her child, who was affected by its mother's indisposition, was too much for her exhausted frame and spirits. Her reason began to totter under the weight of her calamity, and she passed the early part of this night, now accusing Colonel Ednor and herself, now madly turning her eyes to heaven, with looks of indignation, as if to reproach the supreme Disposer of events with cruelty, for sufferings unjustly heaped upon her defenceless head.

Alas! poor Mary forgot that one false step on her part, one single act of disobedience, had brought all this misery upon her!

Are there no off'rings to atone,
For but a single error? None!

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* The above effect actually took place, on a communication of the same overwhelming tidings, nor did the unhappy victim of such cruel treachery recover her voice till the third day. She was, at the time alluded to, exceedingly beautiful, young, and surrounded by respectful admirers, being received every where, and moving in the first circles, as the wife, she supposed herself to be, of the villain who had thus deceived her.

Pity may mourn, but not restore;
And woman falls—to rise no more!

Mary on quitting London, found shelter the first night in a small outhouse, which was at a short distance from the road; with break of day, she quitted this spot and advanced into the country. She had recovered her voice a little, but could only whisper; the hope, however, of being sheltered under the maternal roof, gave her courage, and she still walked on, seating herself occasionally under a hedge to rest her weary limbs. She never quitted the high road, nor did she ever think of inquiring where she was. Her mind was bent on two objects, from which it never deviated; and as it was weakened to an alarming degree, those ideas, which, in a sane mind, would have naturally arisen relative to those two objects, never intruded themselves. The third night advanced, and still Mary kept on, supposing that the direct road *must* lead to the parish of Silvershoe. Her mother's hut was continually before her mind's eye, but the reality was far away, and her tired limbs began to refuse their office. A farm-yard, and the shelter of a hay-stack, invited her to repose, but the sudden barking of a watch-dog alarmed her, and she fled with precipitation, nor stopped till exhausted nature yielded to the pressure of calamity, and she sunk on the ground. Her lovely boy had already lost somewhat of his bloom, she saw him fade, like the early primrose, nipped by a wintry blast.

"'Twill die," said she, "'twill die, and I have no where to shelter it."

A flood of tears relieved her, and, as she gazed upon her babe, it seemed, she *thought*, to smile. She clasped it to her bosom, with a hope that it might yet recover. Alas! the smile was but indicative of its long repose; it was the effect of a convulsive movement, and the varied expression of its pallid countenance soon betrayed stronger symptoms of its inability to resist its luckless fate.

"Great God!" she exclaimed, "save it!—Oh, merciful Heaven! spare my child!"—Mary fixed her eyes intently upon her infant—

"Ah!" she cried with delight, "'tis sunk into a sweet sleep—my babe will live! Oh, for my mother's hut! one look from her would cure us both!"

Mary pressed her hand to her beating temples—"I know not," she added, "where I am, but I feel I cannot walk much longer."

At this moment a travelling woman passed by; 'twas break of day, and seeing a decently dressed young woman, apparently in deep distress, she approached, and kindly inquired if she could assist her. Poor Mary pointed to her child; but when the woman offered to take the infant from her, she pressed it closely, and sobbed out—"No—no—be not so barbarous!—I cannot, cannot part with it."

"Nay," said the woman, " I was only going to see if I could do any thing for you—poor baby, it looks very ill—Where are you going, young woman?"

"Home," was the reply.

"Where is your home?"

"In Bedfordshire," replied poor Mary.

"Lord love thee!" said the woman, "why thou art quite in the wrong road for it!—God help thee!" she added, "there's sixpence for thee—'tis all I can do for thee."

Mary dashed the tear from her eyelid—"Are you then going to leave me?" said she, with a melancholy tone "what will become of my poor child?"

The woman paused—her compassion got the better of her prudence, and she promised Mary to put her in a place of shelter, provided she would accompany her.

Mary passively followed her conductress, till they arrived at one of those huts, begun at night and finished ere the morning, with which many of the wastes of England are speckled.

Here they knocked, and, for a small pittance, received shelter. The compassionate travelling woman was so much interested in the fate of Mary and her infant, that she would not leave her. Mary's gentle spirit, which seemed to cling to her, as to a being who could and would protect her, had excited feelings in the poor woman's breast, which induced her to delay her journey for two or three days, and, at the end of that period, Mary's baby gradually sunk beneath the calamities which had assailed its mother, and, on the third day after their arrival, at the hut it expired.

Mary's grief admitted of no consolation—she wept and laughed by turns, and it was with difficulty the corpse could be extricated from her grasp. In silence and solitude it was committed, without funeral rites, to its earthly bed, there to sleep in peace, till roused by the last trump, it should, with the rest of the innocent of mankind, be recognised by the Judge of all.

The travelling woman did all she could to console Mary, in this her overwhelming affliction. Her compassionate heart endeavoured to rouse the poor creature, from the deep dejection into which she had sunk. Mary was not insensible to her kindness, and she evinced this, by obedience to the wishes of her humble friend; she went and came as she was bidden. At length they left the hut together, Mary pursuing her way, apparently without any motive for so doing; her companion thought she was very odd at times, but it was not till the end of the first week, that she saw any cause for real alarm. At this period, they began to retrace their steps towards the capital; and the woman imprudently stopped at the very hut, where they had before found shelter.

Mary eagerly entered it, looked on every side most anxiously, no place escaped her; she then went out of doors, and began to mutter something about "justice, and the murderers of an infant;" but the faint cry of a child from a neighbouring cot, stealing on her ears, she uttered a shriek, and before any one could stop, or overtake her, she was gone beyond all pursuit, leaving the poor woman in the utmost astonishment and distress.

From that time forward, Mary travelled about from place to place; a poor senseless, houseless wanderer. Once she had strayed to her mother's door; had passed through her native village, unnoticed, except by the children, who, pointed her out to each other, as the poor crazy Betty, who, smiling, begged a pin from all she met.

Her first interview with her mother, Judy described to Betsy and Mary; and from that time, till the circumstances we have recorded took place, they had never met. The remainder of her days, were few and torpid; and gradually she sunk into the silent tomb.

Poor Judy Gabriel in the mean while had impatiently expected an answer to her letter, but receiving no tidings of her daughter, she went to London, and directed her steps to the street, where Colonel Ednor and her daughter lived.

Just as she reached the door of the house, Colonel Ednor advanced from it, followed by a dashing lady; they quickly seated themselves in a curricle, which was in waiting for them, and then drove off at full speed. Old Judy was so astonished at what she saw, that she remained motionless for some little time; but as her agitation increased, her sensation returned; she would have fallen to the ground, had not the footman, who still

remained standing at the door, caught hold of her, he would have led her into the passage. But all her energy now revived; she shook off the hold of the man, as though it were a viper's grasp which detained her.

"Support! shelter under his roof!" she exclaimed, "no—no—where is my child? my Mary?—Where is she? let me see her."

Again, her feelings were too much for her, and she leaned against the iron railings of the area, for support.

"If," said the man, "by your child, you mean the last Mrs. Ednor, she is gone from hence, she and my master tiffed, as we suppose, for she left the house about a month ago, and we know nothing more about her."

So saying, the man shut the door, and poor Judy, who began to attract much observation, with a courage produced by despair, walked steadily on, till she came to St. John's-street, Smithfield, when she got on the top of an Ampthill coach, and from that time, till she had the cursory interview with her daughter, near her native village, she never heard of her, nor made any inquiries about her.

We have anticipated poor Mary's death, that the thread of her melancholy story might be neither interrupted nor incomplete.

CHAPTER XII.

Her trumpet slander raised on high,
And told the tidings to the sky;
Contempt discharged a living dart,
A side-long viper to her heart;
Reproach breath'd poison o'er her face,
And soil'd and blasted every grace;
Officious shame, her handmaid now,
Still turn'd the mirror to her view,
While those in crimes the deepest dy'd,
Approach'd to whiten at her side.

FABLE—THE FEMALE SEDUCERS.

WHEN Mary Woodbine and Betsy were returning home on the eventful evening of Colonel Ednor's departure, they were met by Sally Greenly, who burst into a loud laugh, and asked the former when she had last walked to the wood? adding, "No offence, Miss Mary; only recollect, 'Beaumont's tree,' when you talk of other folks; I wonder what there was so amusing near that old tree, I always thought it was haunted."

"So it was," replied Susan Cowslip, who had joined her comrade. "So it was, to be sure; but it was by a living colonel. The ghost has vanished however now, and I dare say, that Judy will be visited again, as she was before the fair; never mind, Mary; I won't tell."

As Susan said this, she and Sally laughed again, and then ran away, leaving Mary confounded at their ill-natured impertinence.

"What do they mean," said Betsy, "about Beaumont's tree and the colonel?"

Mary did not reply, and Betsy repeated her question; but at this instant William Meadows joined them. He appeared much agitated as he spoke to Betsy, but said not a word to Mary. Indeed, after the ordinary salutation of common acquaintance, he was leaving them; but Betsy putting her hand upon his arm, stopped him. "Are you in such a great hurry, William? do not leave us yet."

"I have an appointment," he replied, "at seven o'clock, and I fear I shall be too late."

"Well," rejoined Betsy, "I have no right to keep you, to be sure, so you had better go. Only, my father said this morning, that he had not seen you so long, he was afraid something was the matter; but I am sure he would not wish you to come, if it were disagreeable."

"Once," said William, his voice faltering as he spoke, "once I had no happiness on earth equal to that I experienced at Woodbine-farm; but times are altered. I do not speak from hearsay, but from what I have seen and felt. My visits there have been unwelcome for some time; and as my mother and myself have lost all hopes of being related to its inhabitants, I have resolved on seeking elsewhere a companion, who will not receive my affection with disdain."

Having said this, William left the two sisters, the one overwhelmed with astonishment, the other with grief and shame. They, however, spoke not to each other on

the subject of their different feelings that night, but on the following day Betsy again questioned poor Mary. The latter, however, refused to give any explanation; and the cherub, PEACE, which had for many years taken up its abode at Woodbine-farm, was replaced by the canker, CARE.

The fact was simply this. Sally Greenly having discovered that Mary met Colonel Ednor at Beaumont's-tree, wrote to William Meadows, communicating to him the perfidy of Mary. The conduct of the latter towards him, seconded Sally's insinuations, and he concealed himself in the wood: there he heard Mary give the indefinite promise of accompanying the Colonel to the next town, so soon as Betsy was married; he also found, near this spot, a letter addressed to Colonel Ednor, containing such expressions of love and affection, as he could never have supposed Mary would use to any one. It also made mention of him in terms most offensive; for the writer of the epistle declared, "that she would not have William Meadows if there was not another man in the world."

This letter he carefully preserved; intending, at some future period, to shew it to farmer Woodbine, for his own justification, if it should be necessary.

His mother and sisters, who imagined the world did not contain a being equal to their William, were indignant at Mary's behaviour, and advised him to absent himself from Woodbine-farm. They also proposed that he should visit farmer Primrose, who had a most amiable daughter.

"And though," said his mother, "she is not so pretty as Mary Woodbine, yet, William, she is not so vain—and handsome is as handsome does—do, William, call on the farmer, and see if Phœbe Primrose is not a pretty girl."

William did so; but Phœbe Primrose would not admit of a comparison with Mary Woodbine. Yet, he called again, and a third time he visited the house, and he had begun to fancy that she was a sweet girl, when he met Mary and her sister.

This was unlucky for Phœbe, for he kept not his appointment that evening, but bent his steps to the wood. The sight of Beaumont's tree, the letter even from Mary to the Colonel, could not counteract the witchery of her presence.

She had been silent and dejected. The pensive expression of her countenance, an expression which was totally new to her, melted his affectionate heart. She might be vain and fickle, but he could not think her so guilty as she appeared.

On the following afternoon he called at Woodbine-farm, and had a long conversation with Betsy, to whom, in confidence, he shewed the letter. Betsy was startled at its contents; the hand-writing was plainly that of her sister, but the sentiments it contained were in direct opposition to those which Mary had always professed.

Yet how were they to disbelieve the evidence of their own senses. William's visit was but little satisfactory either to himself or Mary. He would not trust the odious letter from his own hands, and Betsy did not like to call Mary and shew it to her before William, and they parted each but indifferently gratified with this interview, yet William promised not to be precipitate.

"I see your father crossing the orchard," said William, "I will wait till he comes in; I cannot meet him now. Poor man," he added, "I love him as if he were my own father."

William waited some little time, and then said, "I had almost forgotten, Betsy, you are to be married to-morrow; I shall be with you early—I promised George to be at his wedding—I was in hopes—but that is all gone by—God bless you, Betsy," he added,

shaking her by the hand, and then rushing out of the house at the back door, he repaired to old Judy's cottage.

When farmer Woodbine entered the farm-yard, his hands were clasped behind him, his step was slow, and his eyes fixed on the ground. He heaved a deep sigh, as he entered his own house, then walked to his usual seat, within the large fire-place, before which Mary sat spinning, but her rustic-song no longer chimed in with the music of the wheel.

She was alarmed at her father's look. Conscience, that silent, yet powerful, monitor, closed the poor girl's lips. She dared not ask what occasioned his anxiety, lest a reproving glance should point *her* out as the cause of it.

She, therefore, pursued her employment diligently, stealing now and then a glance at her thoughtful father, whose head rested on his right hand, which was supported by the arm of the chair, while the left was hanging listlessly over the other.

In vain Captain put up first one paw, then the other; in vain puss, indulged in such liberties, walked round from the back part of the chair to his knees, rubbing her head against his hand. Farmer Woodbine appeared to hear nothing, to see nothing, except the fire.

This painful state of suspensive intercourse continued a quarter of an hour, a period of time which, under such circumstances, appears an age.

Mary, unable any longer to contain herself, said, in a trembling voice, "Father." Farmer Woodbine did not reply to this timid exclamation, and Mary, fearful of offending, forbore to repeat it.

Betsy's voice, as she entered the kitchen, roused the old man from his reverie; he turned his head, smiled on her, and opening his arms as if to embrace her, the lovely girl was soon encircled by her fond father, who, bursting into tears, repeatedly kissed her cheek, calling her at the same time "*My* child, *my* good child, *my* comfort, *my* all, *my* every thing. To-morrow, I shall be deprived of thy sweet company, and yet I rejoice in it," he continued, "for George Underwood is a worthy lad, who will treat thee well."

"But Mary will be with you, father," replied the lovely girl, her tears mingling with his, "and I shall be so near you, that I can see you every day. It is not my marriage which makes you so sad, dear father, is it? Oh! I hope not; for dearly as I love George, I would not"—

"Oh, my child," replied the fond father, "Mary has stuck a dagger to my heart!"—He paused, and Betsy became pale as death,—the old man continued; "would you believe it, Betsy? her conduct is the common talk of the public-house!—Sally Greenly has told such things, which she defies Mary to contradict. That villanous Colonel has corrupted her heart, and the wilful girl has sacrificed all our happiness to her absurd and vain coquetry. Oh, Betsy, I shall never raise my head again. She was my pride, and God, in his wise, unsearchable decrees, has permitted that my pride should be chastised by its object. When we thought she was so taken up with Judy, she was meeting the Colonel at Beaumont's tree, and had promised to go away with him, and would have done it, had it not been for that poor old soul, Judy. Oh, Betsy, what can we do?"

Betsy was incapable of giving any advice, but offered the tenderest consolations to her afflicted father. Indeed she had nothing to say in Mary's defence, for her late interview with William had confirmed all her father said, and even more; for the letter her father knew nothing about.

Mary did not stay to hear the conclusion of this speech; the impression which Betsy's entrance had made on her father, who had remained insensible to her presence, and who had not even deigned to answer her, when she spoke to him, conveyed to her guilty mind, that her conduct, with respect to Colonel Ednor, which was already known, and canvassed in the village, had reached his ears. This supposition shot through her heart, and she left the kitchen silently, and went to her bed-room, where she bitterly lamented her folly.

Betsy went to fetch Mary, when the hour of tea drew near; she found her in tears, and so unwell, that she declined going down stairs.

This circumstance affected farmer Woodbine, and he desired Betsy to say "she must come; I cannot be happy without her," said he brushing a tear from his eye.

Mary obeyed the summons with a beating heart, though she dried her tears, and with forced composure took her usual seat. Farmer Woodbine did not notice her; until she presented him with his tea, then his eyes met hers. Her pallid countenance alarmed him, the cup dropped from his hand, and he sunk back in his chair, exclaiming "My dear, dear child, my own Mary, do not look so wretched:—you break my heart!"

Poor Mary rose hastily and threw herself into his arms, and clasping his neck, became almost convulsed:—she could not shed a tear, and her agitation was so great, that at last she was taken to her chamber.

The next morning she was unable to rise, and Mr. Grigs was sent for. Mr. Grigs loved Mary; he had but lately heard the reports respecting her; he had even spoken on the subject to William Meadows, and endeavoured to persuade him, that he must be mistaken.

"Why, William," said he. "have you not known Mary long enough to be convinced that she has always been fond of admiration; and you have helped to spoil her."

William was half inclined to shew the letter, but a feeling of delicacy, prevented him. When Mr. Grigs therefore heard that Mary was ill, he went without delay to the farm, in his medical capacity. He had been invited to Betsy's wedding, which she wished to postpone; but Mary declared she should die, if her sister did not consent to give George her hand, on the day she had promised it to him. George, with his usual good nature, seconded Betsy's wishes; but Mary would not hear of it; and to church they went, with melancholy countenances, where farmer Woodbine, with considerable agitation, gave his beloved child to her faithful George.

William Meadows was in despair, when he heard of Mary's serious indisposition.

"There now," said Mr. Grigs, "there now, I told you how it would be; you are so credulous, William."

"But with my own eyes I saw,—with my own ears, I heard such things," replied William; and now he drew from his pocket the letter which he always carried about him.

"She did not write that letter," said Mr. Grigs; "bless me, William, how can you suspect it for one moment? is it possible for her to change her nature? and besides, though these are her very Cs, her Us, her Ts, and thus makes she her great Ps, yet, I do not believe that Mary Woodbine wrote this letter. Did you ever read Shakspeare, Mr. Meadows? I suppose not. You have a pleasure to come;—but, to the point. Sally Greenly, though an ugly puss, is a shrewd, clever girl; and I'll lay a wager she penned this

infamous epistle. I think you told me that she gave you the first intimation of Mary's proceedings. Ah, I see through it all. Have you ever shown the letter to Mary?"

"No," was the reply.

"Then give it me, and I will," said Mr. Grigs; "and I'll answer for it, she will firmly deny it. If she does, I shall believe her. Mary never, as a child told an untruth, and though I grant she may have been very silly, and, perhaps, did believe all that villain said to her, yet, William, we are none of us, without faults. And if you give her up, I know what I shall think. Why did you leave the farm so much? and why did not you give her father some hint of what was going on? you ought to have done so. Poor girl," continued he "I wish I had known more of this affair;—I don't know what will be the end of it. She is very ill, she has a low fever!"

"Good God!" said William, "do you think her in danger?"

Mr. Grigs shook his head, and with the fatal letter in his pocket, he set off to visit his patient, leaving young Meadows in a state of anxiety, scarcely to be endured.

There was much truth in Mr. Grigs's observations; William felt he had done wrong, in not informing the farmer of the danger of his thoughtless child; he loitered about the farm all day, yet had not resolution enough to enter it; but when he saw Mr. Grigs approaching at dinner-time, he hastily met him, and made him promise to come to his farm in the evening, and tell him the result of his second visit to poor Mary.

Mary had a warm and affectionate disposition, and in the happiness of her sister, she forgot her own troubles. In the evening, she joined the party assembled in the little parlour, and Mr. Grigs, who was a benevolent creature, exerted his lively good humour with so much effect, that more than one lovely smile repaid his kind efforts. When he took leave for the night, he whispered to Mary, that he wanted to have a little gossip with her in the morning, and he then hastened to William, to say, he thought Mary a little better.

CHAPTER XIII.

——————Now for a will
To sting my thoughtless rival to the heart;
To blast her fatal beauties, and divide her
For ever from my perjur'd Hastings' eyes.
JANE SHORE.

Try her again; women commonly love
According to the circumstances they are in.
ISABELLA.

ABOUT ten o'clock on the following day, Mr. Grigs claimed Mary's promise to grant him an audience. After many general observations, and awkward attempts to open a subject, which was likely to offend her, he did at last venture to ask, whether she had written any letters very lately?

"No," said Mary; "but why do you ask that question?"

Mr. Grigs hemmed and coughed; "Because, Miss Mary, I was told—that is to say, I heard—hem!—that, that—you had writen one to him! to Colonel Ednor."

"Then you heard a falsity," answered Mary, with her usual quickness. "It is a great falsehood, and I wonder, Mr. Grigs, that you should dare to ask me such a question." Then recollecting, that she had no longer any right to be offended at the reports, whatever they might be, which were in circulation, she burst into tears.

Mr. Grigs was affected; "Dear me, Miss Mary,—I beg, I entreat you will not distress yourself so—you will be quite laid up.—Bless me! how fast your pulse beats:—Be composed—I do not accuse you; I did not mean to hurt your feelings, for I did not believe you had done such a thing, although I have the letter in my pocket."

"It's a forgery, and a vile forgery to injure me," exclaimed Mary.—"But let me see it; I must see it, to convince you I could never have written it."

Mr. Grigs then opened the letter and gave it to Mary, whose pale check soon became suffused with the glow of indignation, before she had read half a dozen lines.

"I shall not read any more; I deserve to be punished; but that such a letter as *that*, should be said to be written by me, is more than I can bear. Indeed, Mr. Grigs, I never wrote to Colonel Ednor, though to my shame be it spoken, I met him several times at Beaumont's tree."

She then with streaming eyes, gave all the particulars of the Colonel's behaviour; of her own conduct, and subsequent remorse; and concluded by repeating, that the letter was a base forgery, to ruin her in the eyes of her friends.

"Oh how silly I have been," she resumed! "Susan Cowslip and Sally Greenly have spread all these reports; and now as I cannot, will not, deny what is true, my reputation and peace are gone for ever."

"No, no, Miss Mary, said Mr. Grigs, "no, no, not so; but I am sorry to say, that unless we can prove this letter to be the work of Sally Greenly, it will be rather an awkward business. Let me see—let me see—what can we do. Ah! I have hit upon a thought, and we will try if we cannot make it diamond cut diamond. Cheer up, Miss

Mary, I have a lucky thought; good bye to ye; in two more days I hope I shall be able to congratulate you on the restoration of your peace of mind."

Mr. Grigs immediately repaired to William, and proposed to him, that he should feign the loss of this letter; "and I will contrive," said the ingenious apothecary, "to let Sally Greenly know of this—if she wrote this letter, she will replace it, depend upon't. In the mean time, I shall call on the rector and deposit in his hands this infamous epistle; and I hope we shall soon sift this affair to the bottom."

Very fortunately Mr. Grigs met Sally that same evening, and entered into a long conversation with her, about Betsy Woodbine's melancholy wedding, and Mary's indisposition; and then he adroitly turned the conversation upon William Meadows.

"I met William," said he, "quite in an agitation just now, and he was ferreting about in every direction, and at last I found out that he had lost a letter, which he said was of the greatest importance."

Sally's countenance expressed a malicious smile: this did not pass unnoticed. "I joked with him on the subject," resumed the apothecary, "and said it was some love letter I supposed; which he denied at first, and then said with a deep sigh, it was a love letter indeed! Well, good bye, Sally, I am in a great hurry. Good bye to you."

The following day at noon, William Meadows called upon Mr. Grigs, and a few minutes after seating himself, he answered his host's impatient; "Well! Well!" by presenting to him a letter, which was couched in the following words:—

My dearest Colonel,

I am impatient for Betsy's wedding, since I have fully made up my mind to trust my happiness to your keeping; as I every day grow more weary of the farm. I have dismissed William Meadows, and I hope we shall be off before my cousin comes; so the sooner we set off, the better, as the love I bear you is so great, that I cannot be happy without you. I long for the day of our marriage: as for that odious William, he is my aversion, and I wonder how I could ever allow him to own himself my lover.

"At Beaumont's tree, we shall meet to-morrow: do not keep me waiting, I shall be sure to be there in time, and I would not lose a meeting with you, my dear Colonel, for all the world.—I am ever your most loving and affectionate sweetheart,

MARY WOODBINE.

"Are you convinced now, William?" said Mr. Grigs.

"Quite," replied William; "but it will be necessary to convince others beside myself, my mother and sisters."

"Pshaw, nonsense," ejaculated Mr. Grigs; "I tell you what, William, you don't deserve her; and it is all your own fault; but let us go to the rector and compare the two letters."

They did so, and found a considerable alteration in many of the material expressions.

But it will be necessary to make a retrograde movement, in illustration of our story before we proceed.

When Sally Greenly had ascertained that Mary did actually meet Colonel Ednor at Beaumont's tree, she informed William of that circumstance; and she then resolved on completing that destructive work, which Mary's vain coquetry had begun. In order the

better to effect this, she formed the design of throwing a letter in William's way, written as if from Mary to the Colonel; which she accordingly wrote. When it was finished, it was conned and reconned, and at length Sally thought it would be better to scratch out Benjamin's name, and write *cousin* over it, "because," said the artful girl to herself, by saying *cousin*, William may think that Mary likes her Norfolk cousin who is coming to Silvershoe, better than she does him."

This alteration she made, but in the second epistle she totally omitted this sentence, and, instead of saying, "that if there was not another man in the world she would not have William," she put that phrase, commencing, "I wonder how," &c. Liars should have extraordinarily good memories.

This was proof, strong as Holy Writ, to the mind of Mr. Grigs and the rector, who begged the second letter might be also intrusted to his care.

In the course of the day, the clergyman called at Dame Greenly's, and, taking out a newspaper, he asked the old woman if she had heard of the melancholy fate of two poor deluded women who had been hanged for forgery?

He then descanted long upon the danger of deceit, and the certainty of its discovery in the course of time.

"I have," he said, "at this moment, an awkward business to transact in this parish; for information has been laid against certain persons for defamation, accompanied by a species of, *forgery*, I may call it; and I am now endeavouring to discover the authors of this wicked conspiracy. I have," he continued, looking steadfastly at Sally, "got a clue to unravel the mystery, and the only way for the parties concerned in it to escape the punishment of standing in a white sheet, in the middle of the church, is the confession of their guilt before I proceed."

Sally's countenance changed from white to red, and from red to white again, and at length she sunk on her knees, and entreated the rector to be merciful.

"What does the girl mean?" said her mother, as her daughter, with clasped hands, knelt, quaking and shaking, before the rector.

"She means," replied the clergyman, "to do an act of justice, without being compelled to it. Speak, Sally, what have you done that makes you tremble? No evasion; the plain truth alone can save you. Do you know these two letters?" he continued, as he displayed them to the terrified girl.

"Yes, yes," she replied, "I wrote them and put them in William's way."

"You must say as much at the bottom of each," rejoined the rector sternly. "Fetch pen and ink, and do it instantly; you must also confess what else you have said or done to the prejudice of Mary Woodbine, who never injured you. You have, I understand, spread various reports, some of which, I am sorry to say, are too true; but these form only a small part of the villanous slanders which are the tap-room jest, and which originate in your malice and envy."

Sally was overwhelmed with dismay at the accusations of the rector, who thus continued:

"My great regard for farmer Woodbine induced me to inquire into the causes of the grief on his countenance, when Betsy was married. Mary too was absent. What have you to say for yourself, for causing so much misery.?"

Sally now confessed, that the only part of the calumnies which were true, and which she had reported of Mary, was the fact of her meeting Colonel Ednor at Beaumont's-tree, and once in the park.

The rector wrote all this down, and then made Sally sign it; after which he gave her a severe reprimand, and left her.

On the following Sunday, not one of the Woodbine family was at church, and after the service, the clerk read from the desk Sally Greenly's confession.

A general expression of indignation followed this disclosure. Though the morality of Silvershoe was of that sober steady cast, that Mary's conduct did not pass without many severe animadversions; still the greater part of the community were too fond of the lovely misled girl, not to find excuses, which in some degree mitigated her fault. Now they could find in their hearts to forgive her all.

From this day forward, Sally Greenly was shunned in the village, as a person with whom it was dangerous to associate, and Sally and her mother were so completely shut out of all society, that they left Silvershoe, and settled a few miles off, in a retired house, where the keen eye of speculation was not likely to scrutinize their actions, nor the tongue of reproof to blame their misconduct.

Susan Cowslip, although she had joined Sally in teasing Mary, was not admitted into her iniquitous plot, for Sally knew Susan would not join her in a scheme which was calculated completely to ruin Mary in the eyes of her friends. Susan, therefore, called on Mary on the Monday following this eventful Sunday, and candidly confessed she had been wrong, but that she never meant more then to laugh at her.

"I am very sorry," she added, "I ever kept up an acquaintance with Sally, but I hope you will forgive me, Mary?"

Mary Woodbine willingly shook hands with Susan, but the punishment of the latter was to arise from a quarter she least expected. The malignant Sally, disappointed in marring the happiness of Mary, resolved on ruining Susan. She, therefore, went to the young man to whom the latter was going to be married, and told him a number of gross falsehoods, intermixed with some slight portion of truth. Without taking any trouble to investigate the matter, Master Elkanah Hodge sent Susan a letter, declaring, "that when he married, he should marry an honest woman, not one who was fond of flirting with other men."

Susan was thunderstruck at the receipt of this letter. Not so much, perhaps, at the loss of "Mr. Hodge," but at the consequences which would result from his absence at Cowslip-farm. Her apprehensions were but too fatally verified, for the farmer and his wife, both harsh in their nature, reproached her in the bitterest language, and were unceasingly taunting her with her folly.

Thus did Susan, by keeping bad company, and by allowing herself to dwell with envy on the charms of Mary Woodbine, lay the foundation of a world of trouble, which, as the reader shall soon learn, marked her future life.

Mary Woodbine, as was natural at the publicity of this affair, felt a degree of anguish which preyed upon her health, and deprived her of that gaiety she was wont to evince. Her chief delight was to steal to Judy Gabriel, and to pour forth her boundless thanks to the old woman for having saved her from destruction.

William renewed his visits at the farm, but Mary humbled, by her own folly, studiously shunned all advances towards his former intimacy; the bond of confidence was broken, and she declared that she never intended to leave her father's roof.

Mr. Grigs was among the foremost to congratulate William and Mary, upon the elucidation of Sally's treacherous conduct, and he was very anxious that the latter should have some change of scene; but Mary was obstinate, and would not quit the paternal roof.

In the course of the following twelvemonth, Mrs. Underwood became a mother. Mary's time and happiness were divided between old Judy, and nursing her little niece; and in one of those moments, when her heart was softened to extreme tenderness at the contemplation of the beautiful and innocent loveliness of the little Mary, William Meadows joined her.

She would have left him, but the tone of deep distress with which he entreated she would stop, made her hesitate: he profited by this moment of returning sympathy, and earnestly entreated she would consider well before she persisted in a system of cruelty, which was, every day, hastening him to the grave.

Mary looked up, and fancied she saw a great alteration in young Meadows; his constancy and persevering love pierced her heart, and unable either to stay, go, or speak, she sat silently, as if she knew not how to act. William now urged his suit with redoubled ardour, and Mary's heart had received a lesson, not easily forgotten: still, however, Mary was herself, and in yielding at last to his entreaties, she told him, "she would consider of it." This was, however, sufficient for the delighted William, and he hastened to Mr. Grigs, to communicate to him his future prospects.

Mary returned home with a smile upon her countenance, and on the following day, Meadows told farmer Woodbine, that as his sister was on the point of marriage with young Primrose, he meant to relinquish his own farm-house to them, and take up his abode at Woodbine farm. Old Woodbine's joy found vent in tears, and the following Monday was fixed on as Mary's wedding day.

Mary's marriage was celebrated with true English hospitality. Mr. Grigs was one of the chief guests, and it was a matter of doubt, which appeared the happier, he or William Meadows. Farmer Woodbine's feelings were almost too much for him, as he consigned his beautiful child, to the hand of her future husband, while old Judy, who had, at Mary's particular request, consented to accompany her to church, was persuaded afterward, to join the festive board at Woodbine farm. Clad in a complete new dress, her expressive countenance irradiated by smiles, old Judy would not have been recognised as the same being whom the superstition of the villagers was hurrying to the ducking pond. She was pressed to stay all night, farmer Woodbine having fitted up a room for her entire use, but the old woman firmly declined this hospitable offer.

"Sixty and odd years have I inhabited my solitary dwelling," replied poor Judy energetically, "nor will I now, when the world is about to close on me, leave the spot which I have so long called *home*. Yet I am thankful for your offer; farmer Woodbine, when I stand in need of your assistance I will willingly request it. Mary," continued the old woman, turning round to the lovely bride, "Mary, let discretion guide your future conduct. Remember the misery you have already endured:—Remember, too, 'twas the effect of your own folly. Love your husband, for he is deserving love; obey him, for you have sworn it. Oh, my child, blast not your happiness by wayward folly; look at the happy Betsy, she is a pattern for you. God bless you," she continued, as she clasped the

trembling Mary in her arms, “God bless you. Heaven has heard my prayer, I see you settled comfortably; and if not happily ’twill be your own fault. Sorrows you must expect, but those are the chastenings of a wise Providence, who when it inflicts, points out the remedy. Great and numerous have been my griefs, yet I have reached a good old age. The human heart is tough, it is not easily broken, or else mine would long ago have been rest asunder. But Heaven is merciful, thou and thy worthy family, have replaced those, whom it pleased the almighty Disposer of events to take from me. I have now no wish on earth but to die in peace. Dearest Mary,” continued the old woman, wringing Mary’s hand, rather than shaking it, “Heaven preserve you.”

Mary was affected, even to tears, and promised to remember all Judy said to her, declaring that she had received a lesson, never to be forgotten, in all she had lately suffered, which was, indeed, she added, but “the just punishment of my folly.”

In the quiet enjoyment of domestic happiness, we shall for a time leave the inhabitants of Woodbine farm, while we trace the peregrinations of Susan Cowslip, in the next volume of our “Village Coquette.”

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Northumberland-court.

THE

VILLAGE COQUETTE;

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUCH IS THE WORLD."

VOL. II.

Women, like princes, find no real friends:
All who approach them their own ends pursue:
Lovers and ministers are never true.
Hence oft from reason heedless beauty strays,
And the most trusted guide the most betrays:
Hence by fond dreams of fancy'd pow'r amus'd,
When most you tyrannize, you're most abus'd.—LITTLETON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. AND W. B. WHITTAKER,
AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MDCCCXXII.

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Northumberland-court.

THE

VILLAGE COQUETTE.

CHAPTER I.

"Yes, Sir," reply'd the flattering dame,
"This form confesses whence it came;
But dear variety, you know,
Can make us pomp and pride forego.
My name is VANITY; I sway
The utmost islands of the sea;
Within my court all honour centres;
I raise the meanest soul that enters;
Endow with latent gifts and graces,
And model fools for posts and places.
As VANITY appoints at pleasure,
The world receives its weight and measure;
Hence all the grand concerns of life,
Joys, care, plagues, passions, peace, and strife."

FABLE OF LOVE AND VANITY.

COLONEL Ednor, during his journey to London, was a prey to disappointment and rage. That a little village rustic should refuse his splendid offer, was mortifying beyond endurance. He had even ventured a bet upon his success with Mary. As to the old hag, Judy, as he called her, he was astonished at the power she had displayed in dismissing him from her hut. Once or twice he thought of returning to Silvershoe; but he at length resolved on consoling himself with Susan Cowslip, instead of Mary. She, he thought, would gladly embrace an opportunity of seeing London.

To her, therefore, he wrote one of those unmeaning tinsel epistles, which he so well knew how to pen, and by means of which he had captivated more than one female heart.

Susan very willingly obeyed his summons, for the life she had lately led at home was enough to wear out a more placid spirit than hers; besides, she liked Colonel Ednor, and had flattered herself he was equally attached to her. The discovery, therefore, of his plans with regard to Mary, and the assistance she gave, which was indeed but small, being confined to mere verbal communications as to Mary's flirtation, arose from jealousy, and the disappointment of her own hopes in that quarter.

To London, therefore, she went immediately on the eve of Mary's wedding, and for a time she revelled it bravely as the best; but Colonel Ednor was inconstancy itself. Before one year had elapsed he began to devise means of getting rid of her *genteelly*. Of all the amusements in which Susan found most delight, a play was the first in her estimation. Colonel Ednor had indulged this propensity, and taken her to one or other of the theatres three or four times a-week, till at last poor Susan, who had a susceptible

heart, became quite enamoured of plays and actors, and she often declared that she thought a player's life must be one of the happiest in existence.

Her conversation and reading were now entirely devoted to dramatic subjects, and Colonel Ednor seconded this inclination and taste upon all occasions, more particularly as he observed a growing attachment in his mistress, which she by no means attempted to conceal, for one of the principal performers, who then nightly trod the boards of Drury.

The performer in question being a bachelor, Susan's love for him was not singular, as many boarding-school and other misses had often been heard to speak of him with rapture, and to protest "they would give the world to be his wife;" and this gentleman, not entirely unconscious of his wonderful attractions, performed a principal part in the sleeping and waking dreams of at least a hundred love-sick damsels.

Colonel Ednor listened with pleasure to Susan's unqualified praises of the personal beauty and professional excellence of this theatrical hero, as he thereby thought she might by some means be induced to change her protector, and an opportunity soon occurred, which appeared to favour his unworthy intentions.

One morning at breakfast, after Susan had lavished her usual praises on the favoured performer, she suddenly broke out in the following lines of a song, which her Thespian Adonis, as Inkle, had sung the night before, in company with the fond and unsuspecting Yarico:

> I'll journey with thee, love, to where the land
> narrows,
> And fling all my cares at my back with my
> arrows.

As she sung these beautiful lines with considerable pathos, Ednor thought he had now an opportunity of sounding the state of her mind as to future prospects, and this opportunity he did not neglect.

"Susan, my dear," said he, "you sing well, and seem to have a great *penchant* for the stage; how would you like to be a performer?"

Susan blushed at the compliment, but answered, "I should like it of all things."

"Well," replied Ednor, "you have talents, and I doubt not but I shall be able to introduce you to one of the managers; what do you think of it?"

Susan's heart went pit-a-pat at the idea of being "caressed, fondled, and admired" by her Drury enamorato, and she quickly answered, "If you do apply, I hope it will be at Drury-Lane; I should so like to come out in the character of Juliet to Mr. Rock's Romeo, he is such a charming man."

"Don't trot so fast, my dear," said Ednor, "you must first learn to walk before you attempt to run; it will never do to think of performing so high a character, until you are accustomed to the stage."

Ednor's opinion of Susan's abilities was a damper to her feelings; but after a considerable pause, during which she sadly surveyed the ruin of her air-built castle, so suddenly blown to atoms by the breath of her lover, she recovered her serenity, and was still cheered by the idea of sitting in the same green-room, and breathing the same air with the new object of her adoration.

She was at length conscious of the justice of the Colonel's remarks, though rather displeased at his depreciation of her talents, and she mournfully replied, "Well, do as you please, but be sure to apply at Drury-lane."

"I will, my dear," said Ednor, quite delighted at the prospect of so honourably disposing of poor Susan; "and as soon as my curricle is ready, I will drive thither. I shall not dine at home today, but Thomas shall bring you a note of my success. You can amuse yourself till the evening in turning over some of those plays, and when I return you can inform me how far you think yourself capable of supporting some of your favourite characters."

We shall leave Susan to her studies, or rather meditations, on the new scenes she was about to enter. During the day many of the best dramatic works were opened, and almost as soon shut, for her mind was too intent on the dazzling figure she should cut on her first appearance, to overburthen her memory with love speeches, ever so pathetic or moving on other occasions. Accordingly the whole day was spent alternately at her toilette, and hastily glancing over lists of *Dramatis Personæ*.

Meantime Colonel Ednor drove to that spot which a certain *Dramatic Buffettière* has celebrated as the "luxuriant garden, where flourish abundance of cabbages and comedians."

Having alighted at the stage-door of one of those unwieldy buildings whose clumsy exterior reminds the foreigner of high-walled nunneries, rather than the magnificent temples of Apollo and the Muses, Colonel Ednor told a messenger to carry his card and compliments to Mr. Flexible, the manager, desiring to be admitted immediately.

The manager, who was busily engaged in the rehearsal of one of those *instructive* lessons which are prepared with so much cost and skill for the amusement of holiday urchins,—a Christmas pantomime,—was not in the best humour at being disturbed in his occupation; but having some recollection of seeing the name on the card presented to him in the annals of box visiters, he thought it probable that an application for a private box, for the remainder of the season, might be the cause of the Colonel's visit.

With this idea, having smoothed the wrinkles of his displeasure, and put on "the copy of a countenance," he entered the ante-room where Ednor sat, bowing and smirking as he advanced. After exchanging mutual compliments of health and opinions regarding the state of the weather, Ednor opened his business to the theatrical autocrat, whose countenance now became for a moment unmasked; when he perceived that, instead of increasing the company before the curtain, Ednor was disposed to add to the already too numerous one behind it.

Flexible was, however, too much a man of the world, to be long in doubt as to his future mode of conduct: the muscles of his face soon regained their usual placidity, and he smirked as before. Having heard his visiter to an end, he professed his "extreme readiness to oblige, by instantly enlisting in his corps a lady of Colonel Ednor's recommendation, but he was exceedingly sorry to say that, at the present moment, his company was so entirely full that he really had it not in his power to avail himself of talents which, he was sure, from the quarter whence they were recommended, must, in the highest degree, prove lucrative to whatever establishment had the honour of exhibiting them. However, during the next recess, if Colonel Ednor would do him the honour of communicating on the subject, he had no doubt of being able to provide some

opening for the fair debutante; in the mean time, it was absolutely impossible to do honour to one half of the recommendations which he was daily in the habit of receiving from *many of his friends among the nobility and gentry*."

Colonel Ednor's countenance now fell in its turn, and he began to reflect, like the dairy-maid who had counted her chickens before they were hatched; with an air of chagrin he therefore rose to depart, when Mr. Flexible, unwilling to disoblige a gentleman who might at some future time oblige in return, asked him, whether he had applied at the other house.

On receiving an answer in the negative, he replied, bowing at the same time, "I feel myself greatly honoured by the preference you have been pleased to give our establishment, but I would certainly advise you to make an application at the other house; they are not so full as we are, and I think the young lady would stand a great chance of an engagement."

Ednor expressed his thanks for Mr. Flexible's politeness, and took his leave.

No sooner had Colonel Ednor disappeared than the suppressed rage of the manager broke forth upon the unfortunate messenger, for permitting him to be at home to Colonel Ednor, threatening, in the most abusive language, to dismiss him from the theatre if he again admitted a stranger during the hours of rehearsal.

Colonel Ednor, in the mean time, soon introduced himself to the manager of the other house. He found him seated in his armed chair on the stage, listening with deep attention to the actors, who were then rehearsing the fourth act of a new tragedy.

When this was over Colonel Ednor announced his business, hinting at the same time, as he had done to Mr. Flexible, that "Miss Susan Cowslip, whose person and talents were far beyond mediocrity, was at present *under his protection*, and that he wished to dispose of her as genteelly as possible."

Mr. Sternhold patiently heard him to an end; and then pushing back his chair, in order to have a proper survey of Ednor's person; he looked him full in the face, and mildly said—"And so, Sir, you wish her to come upon the stage?"

"I do, Sir," replied the Colonel, "and as her inclination is so bent upon it, I think she would succeed."

"You do," resumed Sternhold, "then tell Miss Susan Cowslip, from me, that she is a fool, and *her protector*, as you call yourself, a scoundrel. Prompter! begin the fifth act."

Colonel Ednor was thunderstruck at this abrupt and apparently rude termination of the conference; but having recovered himself a little, and being unwilling to put up with so glaring an affront before so many spectators as were there present, and who must have overheard the epithets which Sternhold had applied to himself and his mistress, asked for an explanation of the manager's words.

Sternhold replied—"Sir, you are not the first villain whom I have known, to seduce from her parents' roof a foolish unsuspecting girl; and when your diabolical passion has been satiated, to abandon her to complete ruin: for that you are amenable to God and the laws, and to them I leave you, hoping they will do you ample justice. But for insulting me, in requiring my connivance to disgrace the profession to which I belong, by admitting a cast-off-mistress among its members, the only apology you can make is to betake yourself instantly to the street. Holla, two of you, scene-shifters, descend and show this gentleman the door."

Colonel Ednor now offered to exchange cards, saying, “I must have some *further* explanation on this subject, Sir, and you will repent this insulting rudeness to a gentleman, depend upon’t.”

“What! you mean to challenge me, do you? Ladies and gentlemen, I call you all to witness; and you, John, run to Bow-street, and give my compliments to the sitting magistrate, tell him to send two of his stoutest thief-catchers here directly. You will find, Sir,” continued Sternhold, turning to Colonel Ednor, “that I always fight duels by deputy.”

Ednor now saw that it was time for him to make his exit; accordingly, bowing to the performers, who had crowded round, he said to the manager, “I will save you any further trouble, Sir, *for the present*.”

Overcome with chagrin and vexation, not so much on being disappointed in disposing of Susan, as enraged at Sternhold’s reception of him; he muttered vengeance as he traversed the corridors; and, on his arrival in the open air, he bounded at one spring from the pavement, and seated himself in his curricle.

His groom, who saw the flush of rage and disappointment mantle on his master’s cheek, humbly ventured to ask if any thing were the matter, as he shrunk to one side to make room for him. “Silence, rascal!” said Colonel Ednor, “give me the reins.”

Thomas, in silence, handed the whip and reins to his master, who instantly began flogging the poor horses at such a rate as to excite the indignation of the passengers. The noble animals, who were thus abused, became restive; and, at last, they darted forwards with such velocity as to render it impossible to curb them. Ednor now saw that he had too far tried the dangerous experiment of wreaking the rage due to a fellow mortal upon animals naturally gentle, but which, when treated with cruelty, take the only method of revenge in their power, that of breaking their driver’s neck.

Colonel Ednor’s efforts to check them did but accelerate their speed, and they continued their course as if they had been borne on the wings of the wind. The danger every instant became greater, and, in despair, the Colonel threw up the reins, and gave himself up to the contemplation of inevitable destruction.

Meantime the high-blooded animals, reckless of the feelings of their master, still continued to dash along on their portentous course, till arriving at the corner of a narrow street, they, as if by previous consent, suddenly rushed against one of those metallic posts, which are every where seen in London, to imitate cannon placed perpendicularly on the verge of the pavements. The curricle was splintered into atoms, and its contents thrown by the shock to a distance of several yards. The horses, as if they were conscious of having sufficiently punished their tyrant, now stopped, and quietly suffered themselves to be unharnessed.

The populace crowded round Colonel Ednor and his groom; and though many of them had witnessed the cruelty of the unfortunate Ednor, yet, with that national humanity which is always ready to assist even the greatest malefactors in distress, they eagerly pressed forward to raise the senseless victim of his own ungovernable passions. The groom was at first stunned by his fall, but, except a sprain, his limbs were sound, for his master fell under him. Colonel Ednor, however, presented a most melancholy spectacle, for he bled profusely, and was to all appearance lifeless. He was placed upon a shutter belonging to an adjoining shop-window, and in that state was conveyed to his home.

Susan's feelings may be more easily imagined than described; her grief was, indeed, most clamorous, and the surgeon was obliged to compel her to quit the room, before he commenced those painful operations which the mangled state of his patient required.

Susan being obliged to withdraw, like many other mortals, whose feelings are strongly excited by the sudden exhibition of distress, gradually became calm, when she was removed from a contemplation of the cause of her affliction; and when she retired to rest, she sunk into a slumber, in which the cares and delights of this world were equally forgotten. It was not till the following morning that she was again roused, when the catastrophe of the preceding day presented itself to her imagination; but the extent of her misfortune (if the loss of Colonel Ednor could be called a misfortune) she had yet to learn.

The woman servant who waited on poor Susan had a most dismal tale to relate, in doing which she worked on the unfortunate girl's feelings till she became delirious at the recital. The sum total of it was this: Colonel Ednor was dangerously ill, and had been removed in a chair from his furnished lodgings, (for such was the residence he occupied with Susan), to the house of his brother, in another part of London. Thither Susan was told she could not follow him; but she might keep herself perfectly at ease, as the gentleman would certainly provide for her. Next day the brother called, and having summoned the Colonel's servants to his presence, paid them what arrears of wages were due; adding, "that as the Colonel would in future live with him their services were unnecessary."

Susan being also summoned, obeyed, and appeared in great affliction; she was speedily told, she must depart like the others; but this dreadful mandate was softened by a present of twenty guineas, and permission to take with her whatever property she possessed, with a promise of protection till she was comfortably settled.

Accordingly poor Susan prepared her baggage with all speed, and removed to a lodging in her neighbourhood, which her maid had prepared for her.

On the third day after this interview, as Susan sat musing on her present and future life, the past fraught with acts of disobedience towards her afflicted parents, and the future loaded with unknown ills, Colonel Ednor's brother was announced. Having made inquiries concerning her health and future views, he apologized for being unable to advance them further, than by presenting her with fifty guineas. He told her, that he was sorry his brother's affairs were in great disorder, and many of his creditors clamorous in consequence of the injury he had done them; and, therefore, that she must consider the sum he now presented her with, as the last she must expect to receive.

There was a time when the possession of fifty guineas would have appeared, in Susan's eyes, an inexhaustible fund; but her ideas had been greatly enlarged, since she accepted Colonel Ednor's splendid offering of a guinea to buy her a gown.

She sighed deeply as she contemplated her future destiny, and then ventured to mention her predilection for a theatrical life.

Mr. Ednor shook his head, but he said it would not be his business to discourage her; he would always be glad to hear of her welfare; and then, after some remarks irrelevant to the subject of the stage, he took his leave.

Susan's reflections after his departure were not of the most agreeable cast; she saw her hopes of fame suddenly nipped in the bud, and her air-built theatrical castles

vanish into airy nothing. She still held the money in her hand, at which ever and anon she looked, when apprehensions of another kind assailed her.

What would become of her when that should fail? Cowslip-farm presented itself to her imagination. But dared she return to her native village? A tear accompanied the fervent wish that she had never listened to the unfortunate Ednor.

To return to Silvershoe was impossible; her father was a stern man, and her mother a punctilious advocate for *honest* women. And wo betide the luckless wight who came within her jurisdiction, that had forfeited that title, in her acceptation of the words, *honest woman*.

Susan in a moment glanced the reception she would experience, and, with a shudder, resolved to remain in London, and try to procure an engagement at one of the theatres. In short, any alternative was better than braving the wrath of her parents, and the contempt of her former companions.

Again she looked at her money, and, with another sigh, calculated on the length of time it would provide for her wants. Her present abode was expensive, and she prudently resolved on seeking a more humble dwelling. There was also another curtailment she deemed necessary, in order to complete her plan of economy, namely, the dismissal of her maid-servant. With much frankness, therefore, she acquainted the girl, that she must in future dispense with her services; and having made her a small present, in addition to her wages, they parted with mutual regret, the girl at quitting so kind a mistress, and Susan at being now left by the only person in London to whom she could open her heart.

This important affair being settled, Susan's next thought was the choice of a name, under which to appear at her new lodging; and, after ransacking the Dramatis Personæ of all the popular plays of the day, she fixed upon that of Beverley; and that very evening removed to a second floor, on the Surrey side of Westminster Bridge, under the assumed name of Miss Susan Amelia Beverley.

CHAPTER II.

’Tis a strange species of madness;
Probably she’s play mad.
ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE.

IN the first floor of Susan’s new abode lived a gentleman and his wife, who were employed at one of the minor theatres in the metropolis. Susan now fancied that she was in a fair way to gratify the first wish of her heart, namely, that of commencing a theatrical life; and soon after her arrival, through the medium of the landlady, she invited Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap to dine and sup with her, on the following Sunday,

For Sunday shone no sabbath-day to her.

Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap were pleased with *Miss Beverley’s* conversation, and they encouraged her in her favourite pursuit. This circumstance won poor Susan’s heart, and her expressions of friendship and cordiality towards her new friends, were warm and sincere. They, on their part, were no less friendly in their protestations, and in the course of *half an hour* they vowed reciprocal attachment and perpetual amity.

During the evening Mrs. Claptrap sung a few songs, which, however agreeably executed, Susan wished at an end, that she herself might have an opportunity of *shewing off*. But unconscious of Miss Beverley’s desire to shine, Mrs. Claptrap contrived to keep up the *harmony* of the evening by a succession of songs, and Susan’s efforts to put a stop to this unceasing melody did but prolong it; for when, by way of interruption, she asked if the gentlewoman knew such a song, Mrs. Claptrap replied, “Oh, yes! I was encored in it last Monday night, by such an audience. Let me see,—La, la, la—Ah! I have it now.” And off she went for another quarter of an hour in grand style.

This was exceedingly provoking, more particularly as Mrs. Claptrap did not seem the least fatigued by her exertions to please the company, but returned to the charge with renewed vigour and spirits.

At length Mr. Claptrap interposed, and entreated Miss Beverley would, in her turn, favour them with a song. Mrs. Claptrap could do no less than second this request; but Susan, who had longed for this opportunity of displaying her musical talents, was now so agitated, that before she reached the end of the first line of

Is there a heart that never lov’d?

she stopped, and blushed, overwhelmed with confusion. In vain she looked towards Mrs. Claptrap for assistance; that lady had a most profound contempt for all who were not professional singers, and indeed for many who were so. She therefore, was not in the humour to sympathize with the timidity of Susan, or to dispel her tremors by one look of encouragement.

Her husband, however, possessing less envy, and more of the milk of human kindness, gave Susan the next word, and by a little well-timed flattery, restored her fluttering spirits to their usual tone. Her voice was exceedingly sweet, and in her native

village, next to Mary Woodbine, she had been esteemed the best singer; but she found from many of Mr. Claptrap's observations, that much was still to be learned. He, however, assured her, that with a little practice she would undoubtedly excel, and he encouraged her to cultivate that peculiar talent with diligence. His praises of her execution excited the envy of Mrs. Claptrap, though she apparently joined in the encomiums her husband so lavishly bestowed on the silly country girl, who was so anxious to become a stage-struck heroine.

Mr. Claptrap now asked Susan, if she had studied any of the tragic characters, and received an answer in the affirmative.

"Juliet," she said, "was her favourite," and Mr. Claptrap offered to stand up for Romeo, if she would recite the pensive speeches of the passionate Juliet in the garden scene.

With a beating heart Susan obeyed, and acquitted herself far beyond his expectation; but his wife, his *better* half, and better judge, saw many points which could be improved—many attitudes which were not theatrical, and many looks that were not sufficiently expressive.

"If, Miss Beverley, you will do me the favour to become a spectator," she added, "you will better perceive where you are defective; besides, I shall be very happy to assist you in this, or in any other character; for, from my experience and success, I consider myself bound to assist those who are beginning their theatrical career. Juliet, too, was always my favourite character. The attitudes and intonations of that lovely Italian have been my peculiar study."

Susan thanked Mrs. Claptrap for her disinterested offer, and prepared to listen with profound attention to the intonations of the lovely and delicate Juliet, personated by a veteran performer of five-and-forty. The lady Juliet was anxious to give the character of the Italian nymph every possible advantage, which a

Chair-lumber'd closet full six feet by nine,

could bestow; and, to heighten the *tout ensemble*, she placed a high chair upon a table, behind an old fashioned folding screen, which was to serve as a balcony. She then mounted the chair, and leaning her elbow upon the edge of the screen, and her cheek upon her elbow,

Sighed and look'd unutterable things.

Claptrap could not help smiling at his wife's vanity, but paid his address, and expressed his affections with all possible decorum to so antiquated a representative of the impassioned Juliet.

The reader, who doubtless considers the garden scene in the play as one of the *chef d'œuvres* of Shakespeare's powerful pen, will not be surprised that Mrs. Claptrap should be so far inspired by the sentiments of the author as to forget her years, and imagine that she was performing a part in one of those waking dreams peculiar to blooming youth.

The scene proceeded with considerable effect, and silence reigned around; save and except the simmering of the tea-kettle in the chimney-corner, and the snoring of Mrs. Claptrap's lap-dog, which was basking on the hearth-rug before the fire.

Susan was all attention, though she saw many things to be blamed, and few to be praised, in her instructress's enaction of Juliet; yet she contrived to compose her risible muscles, and for a length of time she chased the smile of criticism, by biting her lips most unmercifully. But, alas! the short cough, the averted eye, and the never-failing resort to a handkerchief, were of no avail, when Juliet, with much pains, contorted her features into what she deemed a pantomimic or dumb show expression of responsive sympathy to Romeo's tender passion. To Susan's imagination, however, the pathetic was supplanted by the ridiculous, and she construed Mrs. Claptrap's tender glance into a preparation for a hearty sneeze. At this eventful moment big with the fate and reputation of the inimitable Mrs. Claptrap, Susan's eyes met those of the kneeling Romeo. They spoke what he dared not further evince, through fear of certain connubial consequences; but the effect of this short visual communication between him and Susan was electric, the long suppressed titter burst forth, and Mr. Claptrap in vain endeavoured to avoid the same appalling misfortune. Like death, "it would come when it would come," and for one instant he allowed himself the indulgence of a smile.

This transitory pleasure was, indeed, *but* transitory, for again fixing his eyes on his *cara sposa*, he there saw the angry flash of indignation, that was a sort of "I promise to pay," which Romeo knew by experience would be "amply honoured" at a future opportunity.

On Susan Mrs. Claptrap cast a look of disdain, while she proceeded to enact her part with the utmost coolness, resolving to convince her audience that she was equally insensible to their applause and ridicule.

She soon, however, became absorbed in the character, and with increasing *energy* and *force*, recited the *tender* lines of Shakespeare, endeavouring to follow the rules of her great master, of "suiting the action to the word" in so marvellous a degree, that, as she repeated the following lines,

And all my fortunes at *thy foot* I'll lay,
And follow thee, my love, throughout the world,

the screen gave way, and Juliet still leaning on it, tumbled down upon the tea-table, with a most tremendous crash.

The uproar occasioned by this *fracas* was general: for Susan shrieked, Juliet screamed, Romeo groaned, and the lap-dog being par-boiled by the contents of the tea-kettle, (by the skreen coming into contact with its spout) ran round the room, howling in the most piteous *counter tenor*.

Poor Romeo, who lay buried under the ruins of the balcony, the tea-table, and the fortunes of his wife, which she had thus laid at his feet, entreated in piteous accents that she would relieve him, by lightening his load, and removing her beauteous person from the screen, upon which she lay for a few seconds, astounded by her fall.

The room was soon filled by all the other inmates of the house, who were drawn to the scene of action, and gave such assistance as the exigencies of the circumstances demanded; but in vain they made inquiries as to the cause of the disaster, until the

prostrate Romeo, rescued from his premature tomb, whaggishly replied, looking archly at his wife, “It is only my Juliet, who, in her raptures, has taken a lover’s leap from the balcony.”

All things being restored to their former state (except the crockery), the remainder of the evening was spent in mutual accusation, apology, and forgiveness, whilst all contributed their assistance to alleviate the pain of the poor scalded *Pizarro’s* sufferings, by alternately applying oil and vinegar, and scraped potatoes.

Mrs. Claptrap, whose bosom was too much filled with vanity, to leave room for the nourishment of almost any other passion, beyond the short period of its excitement, was soon reconciled to Susan, who appeased her wrath by listening with deference to her opinion about plays and players.

In short, this happy company separated at night with good humour, and Susan’s heart bounded with joy when she received an invitation to accompany Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap to a rehearsal, on the following morning.

Early was she up, and with indescribable sensations entered the precincts of the Circus or theatre, with her Thespian neighbours; but what words can paint her awe, when she entered on the stage just before rehearsal. She felt as if she was treading upon sacred ground, and was almost afraid to direct her eyes towards the vacant expanse appropriated to the audience.

“If,” thought she to herself, “I feel thus when there is nobody present, how could I endure to act before an audience?”

The *reality* of acting appeared tremendous, and her courage almost failed as she rapidly considered the difficulties, anxieties, and terrors of a theatrical life.

From this reverie she was suddenly roused by the prompter’s whistle, which summoned the performers, who were to begin the rehearsal.

The piece rehearsed was a grand melo-drama, but the enchantment of scenery and dresses being absent, the show appeared trivial in Susan’s eyes, and her heart ached when three sisters came forward to dance a *pas de trois*, one of whom was enveloped in a thick shawl, in consequence of a violent cold she had caught the night before, from being over-heated by dancing.

This poor girl had a stiff neck, and with her utmost exertions could not give her head the variety and ease of motion which, as Euphrosyne, she was bound to represent. Her failure drew forth many intemperate reproofs from the stage-manager, who, insensible to the misery she appeared to endure, accused her unfeelingly of inattention to her duty. The tears rose to her eyes, and when her part was over she quickly left the stage, drew her shawl over her head, and wept in silence.

Ah! thought Susan, could I but regain my own home; could I but recall the last two years. But the wish was soon repressed. The impossibility of returning to Cowslip-farm struck as cold on her heart, as did the wind by which she was assailed from all quarters of the theatre upon her shivering frame.

It was a sharp frosty morning, and, during four hours, she was compelled to wait patiently while Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap enacted their several parts, which were to be repeated on the same evening. Yet still Susan looked forward to futurity. If she was obliged to endure the cold, fatigue, and tyranny of a theatrical life, in the course of a little time all would be well; many of the London performers kept their carriages, visited and were visited;—why not *she* as well as *they*? Vanity led her on, and in the bright prospect

of future years Susan saw a reward for all the probationary trials she might be doomed to undergo, forgetting that a fair name and unsullied reputation were necessary to what she most desired,—admission into *great* company.

Yet when the manager approached her in the train of Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap, her heart beat quickly, and the dread of what was to follow deprived her of speech.

When therefore Mr. Playwright, after his first salutation of a bow, asked what characters she had been accustomed to perform, she wished herself any where, but where she was; for the expression of the great man's countenance, on hearing that she had not entered her novitiate, convinced her that she should not like Mr. Playwright for a *master*.

He told her that a *debutante* could not commit a greater error, than to think of attempting the London boards, before she was well schooled by country practice. "I would advise you," he continued, "to attach yourself to some provincial company, to be *industrious*, economical, and prudent. I shall rejoice to hear of your success, and at some future time I may perhaps admit you into *my* company. Time, however, and practice are required for the attainment of excellence; and you must study hard if you wish to acquire reputation in the theatrical line. You look young enough to give five or six years at least to provincial performance, before you make your appearance among the performers in a London theatre."

Mrs. Claptrap secretly rejoiced that Susan was not be admitted into the dramatic corps to which she belonged; for she was aware that a young, pretty, and new performer, though not in fact so competent an actress as herself, might be excused some errors, for the sake of those qualifications which are so pre-eminently valuable in the eyes of all the admirers of the votaries of Thespis. She, therefore, seconded Mr. Playwright's observations, and proposed that Mr. Claptrap should accompany Susan to Mr. Vendible, a *Theatrical Agent*, who lived in the vicinity of both the Theatres Royal.

When they arrived at Mr. Vendible's lodgings, they were shewn into a front room up two pairs of stairs, where the great man, with spectacles on his nose, was listening with a supercilious air to a male petitioner, who was earnestly entreating to be recommended as a tragic performer.

The Thespian aspirant was the prototype of Murphy's celebrated Dick the Apprentice, and with breathless impatience he listened to Mr. Vendible's directions to his clerk of the closet to write a letter to a provincial manager, respecting the qualifications of the young man in question. The letter was neither more nor less than a *bill of parcels* for goods (*viz.* the said Dick,) to be sent by the coach to South Wales (not *New* South Wales) on the following morning. Whether the profits of poor Dick's expedition amounted to half the sum necessary to discharge the expenses of his *transportation*; or the air on the Welch mountains afforded to his stomach the consolation and relief, which his slender salary of *seven shillings a-week* (and find himself in *jewels* and *wardrobe*,) denied him, the author not knowing cannot depone, the folio of Mr. Vendible's Thespian ledger containing these matters not being exposed to vulgar eyes.

The youth, however, seemed fired, as he heard himself announced as "an actor of merit, who was likely to prove a great acquisition to the company which he was about to join." Starting into a theatrical attitude, he exclaimed, "Thanks, most mighty Vendible, thanks."

But a look from Mr. Vendible convinced him his rhapsody was ill-timed, and with a look of profound humility he left the room.

Whilst Mr. Vendible's attention was occupied by other crack-brained applicants to personate the parts of Othello, Richard, and Hamlet (for to these altitudes all stage-struck heroes aspire the outset,) Susan occupied herself in turning over several files of play-bills which lay upon the table.

These files were so many journals of the persevering folly of many infatuated strolling players, who are in love with poverty and wretchedness all day, in order to have the pleasure of caricaturing Shakespeare in a cold barn at night; for, as Lord Gardestone observes,

> Some give their nights, and wish to give their days,
> To hear unletter'd vagrants mangle plays;
> Deform the scene pathetic Otway drew,
> And spout in Shakespeare's name the trash he
> never knew;
> From galleries and pit applause is roar'd,
> While common sense turns pale at every word.

Having despatched *Dick*, Mr. Vendible was accosted by Claptrap, who, after a word in the agent's ear, beckoned Susan to advance. Vendible bowed, lifted his spectacles upon his brow, eyed the young woman for the space of a few seconds, then turned to his friend, Claptrap, and exclaimed, "A matchless fine figure!" But with that dexterity which his avocation had taught him, he as suddenly accosted Susan, saying, "And so, Miss, you wish to have an engagement?"

Susan replied in the affirmative, and Vendible then, with an air of much friendship, interrogated her as to the plays she had studied, and the parts she would like to take, assigning as his reasons for this minute inquiry, "the diversity of talent to be encountered among provincial companies, and the great desire he felt in forming a judgment of the young *lady's* abilities, so as to discharge, by an act of friendship towards Miss Beverley, a portion of that debt of gratitude he owed to Mr. Claptrap."

Ignorant of Vendible's motives in this unmerited profession of friendship, and unsuspicious of Claptrap's design in coming all the way from Lambeth-marsh to Bridges-street, Covent-garden, Susan very readily paid "seven shillings and sixpence for entering her name in the *ledger*," and descended the stairs covered with prayer upon prayer for "God's blessing," and with promise upon promise of a situation from Vendible. Claptrap handed her into a hackney-coach at the street-door.

On her return home, Susan spread all her theatrical library before her on the table, dipped into one play, then into another; and finally, brought from her trunks several dresses, which she threw over the backs of the chairs in her room, with a view of preparing a wardrobe for those characters which she had resolved on undertaking.

In the midst of all this preparation, she was agreeably interrupted by Mrs. Claptrap, who, having learned the reception her protegée had met with, augured well of Susan's future fame.

Among the trinkets displayed on the table was a set of handsome cornelians, which Mrs. Claptrap greatly admired, and Susan immediately felt a strong impulse to present them to that lady. Accordingly, after depreciating the envied baubles, she insisted on Mrs. Claptrap's acceptance of them.

The veteran Juliet, on her part, as highly extolled them, adding, “They will indeed be a keepsake, which shall always remind me of your first step in the walks of Thespis.”

Susan’s heart swelled with pride at this speech, and by way of evincing her profound respect for Mrs. Claptrap’s judgment, she begged that lady “would advise her how to proceed in the affair with Vendible, for she had a shrewd suspicion that it might be greatly accelerated by a present to him.”

To this proposition Mrs. Claptrap made strong and weighty objections, alleging that “Vendible could not create vacancies among the provincial companies, though he was certainly the man to fill them up.” But there was one thing *Miss* Beverley should do, “Study hard, and prepare your dresses;” besides, added Mrs. Claptrap, “I will instruct you in the intonations and the graces of delivery and action.”

Delighted with this evening’s conversation, Susan laid her head on her pillow, but not to rest. With all her passion for the stage, the “amiable Ednor” appeared to her fancy. She reflected and wept alternately on “his past kindness towards her, and the unfortunate accident which had befallen him, out of love for her prosperity in life;” for it had not occurred to her thoughtless mind that Ednor was her ruin, and that her present pursuit was the consequence of her own folly.

Next morning she arose with renewed zeal for the stage, and learning from Mrs. Claptrap, at breakfast, that there was a “famous shop for cheap plays in Russell-court, Drury-lane,” she repaired thither, and purchased above two hundred wretchedly printed cheap plays, at the rate of four-pence a piece. On her return home with this ponderous library for a strolling player, she received the praises of Mrs. Claptrap, for being so provident in securing “the tools of her trade before she commenced her apprenticeship,” and several pretty compliments on her “taste in making the selection,” which Mr. Claptrap acknowledged to have been done “with much skill.”

In about a week’s time a letter arrived for Miss Beverley, by the two-penny post, from old Vendible, requesting “her attendance at *his office*, as soon as she could make it convenient, as there was an engagement open, which he was persuaded she could fill with eclat.”

Next morning, accompanied by Mr. Claptrap, Susan set off for Vendible’s “office,” and was told that “she must prepare to go to Coventry.”

“This letter,” said Vendible, “will introduce you to the manager, Mr. Tramp, who is my particular friend. There is a pound to pay for the agency, Miss Beverley.”

Susan, with that promptitude which honour and honesty alike dictate, pulled out her purse, and presented Vendible with a guinea, instead of twenty shillings. The venerable agent made her a low bow, wished her much success, and bidding her a good morning, opened the door of his sanctum for Claptrap and Susan to find their way down stairs.

As soon as Susan and Claptrap had gained the pavement, the latter proposed they should go to the Bull and Mouth Inn, and secure a place in the coach for Coventry for the next day. This was easily done, and they returned home just in time for Claptrap to eat a hasty dinner, and run away to dress for the character he was that evening to perform. Mrs. Claptrap, who was to appear in the afterpiece only that night, had of course full two hours to devote to Susan in making preparations for her journey.

On the return of Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap from the performance, which was late in the evening, they were agreeably surprised to find that Susan had, during their absence,

prepared a very costly supper at her own expense. The table was set out with cold fowl, cold tongue, oysters in various preparations, a very fine jelly, fruit, and a couple of bottles of wine. “This was indeed a feast of good things,” and the Claptraps did ample honour to the whole range of the dishes, and especially to the liquids. Songs were sung, the diversions of provincial actors told over and over again, and numerous toasts given in honour of the profession.

CHAPTER III.

She has a daughter too, that deals in lace,
And sings “O Ponder Well,” and “Chevy Chase.”
And fain would fill the fair Ophelia’s place.
And in her cock’d-up hat, and gown of camlet,
Presumes on something—touching the Lord Hamlet.
EPILOGUE TO THE APPRENTICE.

NEXT morning Susan, after taking leave of Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap, was carefully deposited in a hackney-coach, with all her luggage, for the Angel Inn, at Islington, where she awaited the Coventry stage-coach, in which she at length took her seat. The day was cold and the road appeared dreary, after the coach had passed through Highgate; but the horrors, which the chilliness of the weather, and the loneliness of the way, were so well calculated to occasion, were dispelled by the vivacity and good humour of a gentleman passenger, who very openly told both his lineage and occupation to the company, he was travelling with. This man, whether out of sheer wit or affectation, pretended to trace his descent from Peeping Tom, and in confirmation thereof, he mentioned his craft, which was that of a ribbon-weaver; but he afterwards changed the epithet into “manufacturer,” to regain that consequence, of which his frankness had bereft him.

The conversation of this man, who was the life and soul of the passengers, turned alternately on politics and religion. But he evinced, in the judgment of Susan, some taste for the fine arts, by an elaborate critique on a new tragedy, which the author had very wisely printed and published, because neither Flexible nor Sternhold would bring it out at either of the “Theatres Royal.”

This was the key, which, without being aware of its virtues, he accidentally stumbled on to unlock all the secrets of poor Susan’s heart.

Before the coach had reached St. Alban’s, the “manufacturer” and *Miss* Beverley, for by that name Susan was booked, were friends in all that constitutes friendship, formed without a knowledge of character, but upon that more noble basis, an agreement in opinion, where the most opposite difference could prove no disadvantage. Without going into the details of this journey, we briefly inform the reader, that “Peeping Tom’s” descendant, having ascertained the object of Susan’s travels, promised very generously “to patronise her, as far as the influence of a freeman, and member of the corporation, could patronise a young person of Miss Beverley’s intelligence;” and, in testimony of his good intentions, he would not allow her to pay one farthing for refreshments during the journey. Besides, before their arrival in Coventry, he recommended Susan to a lodging, in which, to her great joy, she learned her favourite Inkle had taken up his abode, when, about nine months before that time, he figured as a star of the first magnitude in Tramp’s company.

About eight o’clock at night the coach arrived at its destination, and Susan was conducted to her new residence, where she soon experienced all that friendship and concern for her comfort, which the landlady of a common lodging-house never fails to shew her guests on their first entrance into her caravansary.

Next morning Susan made inquiries for the manager, but he was no where to be found; a circumstance which was very likely, as the company had not yet arrived in Coventry, and Tramp, like all other actors on this stage of existence, “could only be in one place at a time.” This was a disappointment, with which Susan was rather pleased than chagrined; as it gave her time to study several characters, which Mrs. Claptrap assured her, “she would infallibly have to support, if Mr. Tramp had sense enough to cast performances to his advantage.”

In a few days the company were announced, and Susan waited on the manager with her letter of introduction. Tramp took the letter, broke open the seal, and immediately expressed the utmost surprise at this accession to his company, using, at the same time, certain expressions, which indicated that “old Vendible had acted rather by his own discretion than from any order for a fresh supply at that time.”

Susan was struck dumb by this observation, and knew not what to say; but she was soon relieved from her embarrassment, by Tramp inviting her “to stop, if she chose, and share like the rest.”

With this invitation the unfortunate girl complied very promptly, and soon forgot the momentary anxiety she had felt, by a request from Mrs. Tramp “to take tea with them that evening.” During tea Mrs. Tramp and Susan entered into a long dialogue on fashions and dress. Poor Susan, whose habits had never taught her one idea of economy or foresight, with great simplicity revealed the contents of her wardrobe to Mrs. Tramp. This was precisely what that wily dame was aiming at.

Her next subject of discourse was jewels, that is to say, such jewels as are usually worn by the itinerant sons and daughters of Thespis. In these too she supposed that Susan was rich, “if she might judge from the handsome broach which *Miss* Beverly wore in her bosom.”

Susan made no mystery of her jewels, and to show how little she valued them, begged Mrs. Tramp’s acceptance of the broach, which she had admired. After a faint attempt at a refusal, the covetous actress condescended to accept the bauble, which without further ceremony she placed in her own dress.

Tramp, who appeared to be about fifty years of age, at length commenced operations on a play-bill for next Monday evening. As soon as he had written it out, he handed it over to Susan, who found her name set down for the part of Desdemona, in the tragedy of Othello. She blushed deeply at seeing herself extolled “as a young lady of great personal and mental accomplishments, who should on that night make her first appearance on any stage.”

Next morning she received a visit from all the Tramps, comprising the father, mother, and a son and daughter. At the moment, when they were announced by her landlady, Susan was engaged in preparing some part of her dress, and the contents of her wardrobe were displayed on the bed and chairs of the apartment.

Mrs. Tramp now censured Susan for undervaluing her dresses, one of which she took up, observing, as she extended her arm with it, that it would just suit her daughter.

“Dear me!” ejaculated Susan, “I’m so glad of that! and I beg you will allow me to present it to Miss Tramp.”

Mrs. Tramp said, that “Miss Beverley could, of course, do with her own whatever she liked;” adding, as she handed the dress to her daughter, “My dear, make your best curtsy to the young lady for her kindness.”

Miss Tramp did so, wondering, as the expression of gratitude died on her lips, “what Miss Beverley could do with so many winter clothes?”

“That I myself wonder at,” said Tramp; “four shawls, two pelisses, a muff, and tippet.”

“You’ve reckoned enough,” interrupted Mrs. Tramp; “as you’re n’t able at present, my dear, to buy me a shawl like any of these, nor your daughter a pelisse, don’t set our teeth on edge by counting as many as might keep all the ladies of the company warm at rehearsal in these cold frosty mornings.”

The simple idea of enjoying comforts herself, whilst her companions were destitute of them, was quite enough for Susan. She took up one of her very best shawls, and threw it over Mrs. Tramp’s shoulders, saying, “If you, Ma’am, put it off again, I will go naked myself all my days sooner than wear it.”

“That would, indeed, be a pity,” rejoined Mrs. Tramp, “and rather than you should do so, I’ll wear it to my grave.”

This declaration was made with much apparent sincerity, which Mrs. Tramp further vouched for, by swearing “eternal gratitude and friendship to the fair donor.”

The Tramps shortly after took their leave, enjoining Susan to study hard till next morning, when the company was to meet for rehearsal.

Susan, who had felt excessively fatigued, threw herself upon the bed, where she fell asleep, with the tragedy of Othello in her hand. As misfortune would have it, the curtains caught fire, and poor Susan was roused just in time to escape the most terrible death; for the conflagration was extinguished with great difficulty. The landlady, whose property was not insured, next day insisted on Susan making good the loss of the bed-furniture, and other damage which the room had sustained, by her lodger’s neglect. To this Susan very reluctantly agreed, and the Tramps, who declared “she had been shamefully imposed on, invited her to board and lodge with them, at the rate of twenty-five shillings a week.”

With this invitation Susan very readily complied, for under an air of simplicity, which we have of late observed in her conduct, she hoped to create a favourable impression as to her character. Her mode of life with Colonel Ednor had bereft her of that lovely quality which she displayed in Silvershoe; and being once more left to the exercise of her wits, she found it necessary to borrow the externals of modesty, even if she could not recover its innate habitude.

She, therefore resolved, for the sake of eventually succeeding in her new profession, to make what sacrifices she could, with a firm resolution to be even with the Tramps for the part which they had acted the night before. As to the Claptraps, there was no chance of ever encountering them again, and she bit her lip as she reflected on the manner she had been taken in by them; but she consoled herself under this chagrin, that what she had wasted on them must have been otherwise expended to have placed her in her present situation.

Accordingly, on her arrival at the lodgings of the Tramps, she offered to pay her first week’s board in advance, which was readily accepted. Next morning, being Saturday, Susan went to rehearsal, but was surprised to find the theatre an old malt-house, in which the seats were ranged one above another, those in the front being denominated the boxes, while the more remote were called the gallery. But before the rehearsal commenced, the actresses were invited to assist in the reparation of the scenes,

some of which required darning, and some painting. When the rehearsal began, Susan felt much difficulty to recollect her part, but was greatly assisted by a young man who had lately joined the company, and who added to a goodly person more of the *gentleman* than was observable in the other men. The attentions of this young man, whose name was Bounce, made a sensible impression on Susan's heart, and in return for his kindness she had the pleasure of making tea for him that evening at Tramp's lodgings. On the following day, which was Sunday, this company of strollers assembled again at the old malt-house, and in the evening Mr. Bounce again drank tea at the Tramps'.

After the equipage of this scothing beverage had been removed, Bounce became talkative, and Susan very soon learned the following particulars of his apprenticeship in the profession of an actor.

CHAPTER IV.

My hero is a youth, by fate design'd,
For culling simples,—but whose stage-struck mind
No fate could rule, nor his indentures bind.
A place there is, where such young quixottes meet,
'Tis called the Spouting Club—a glorious treat!
Where 'prentic'd kings alarm the gaping street;
There Brutus starts and stares by midnight taper,
Who all the day enacts—a woollen-draper
There Hamlet's ghost stalks forth, with doubled fist,
Cries out with hollow voice, "List, list, O list!"
And frightens Denmark's prince,—a young tobacconist.
The spirit, too, clear'd from his deadly white,
Rises—a haberdasher to the sight!
Not young attorneys have this rage withstood,
But chang'd their pens for truncheons;—ink for blood,
And (strange reverse) died for—their country's good.

PROLOGUE TO THE APPRENTICE.

BOUNCE was the son of respectable parents, who resided in Lincolnshire, who had apprenticed him to an attorney in Serjeants' Inn, Fleet-street. Here he studied hard for three years, but at the expiration of that period he became a frequenter of a billiard-room in Chancery-lane; and there he met with some young men of his own age, who divided their leisure alternately between the billiard-table and a private theatre in Bury-street, Bloomsbury.

From repeatedly visiting both these recreations, young Bounce conceived an excessive desire to shine as a man of fashion and an actor; but the latter predominated, and he soon improved so much in Thespian tactics, as to merit the approbation of his friends, who never let slip an opportunity of applauding the several beauties which he nightly elicited.

One of his friends having presented a ticket of admission to a "Star" of Covent Garden, Mr. Bounce was one evening agreeably surprised, after the performance of Hamlet, by the appearance of this gentleman behind the scenes, and was no less delighted by the compliments bestowed on the occasion. Much gratified by the approbation of a brother, young Bounce ruminated during the remaining part of the night on his present and future prospects. He had experienced the tedium of quill-driving, and foresaw, or fancied he foresaw, the difficulties and delays attendant on the precarious practice of the law.

"Besides," thought Jack, for that was the abbreviation of his Christian name, "I shall be forty years of age before I can obtain even a decent livelihood, and ten more before I can presume to marry; and I shall by that time be an old man, and must still drag on in business, when I should think of retiring to enjoy the harvest of my fortune. Whereas, if I prosecute the bent of my genius, I shall at all events pass a merry life, and doubtless, if I succeed, I shall be able at an early period to enjoy the vacation of old age

with a competent fortune to make my society worth courting; Garrick did this, and why not Jack Bounce? Parchments, bonds, writs, and testaments vanish! Come hither, Shakspeare, thou soul of human nature! Let me hug thee to my bosom, as the future arbiter of my fate! To thee do I feel inspired to devote my life, to dedicate my days and nights! If there is a destiny in the lives of mortals, thy sublime sentiments are prophetic of my future success.

> There is a tide in the affairs of men,
> Which, taken at the full, lead on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyages of their lives
> Are bound in shallows and in miseries.

With this exclamation Jack jumped out of bed, struck a light, and commenced a hard study of the character he had that evening personated.

The pleasure which Jack Bounce felt in his favourite pursuit, became a spur to his ardour, and was reciprocally augmented by the augmentation of the former. The best proof of this may be gathered from the fact, that during the remaining period of the time he was articled, his master's business was often neglected for the study of Shakspeare.

Mr. Capias, who was totally ignorant of Jack's passion for the drama, could with difficulty account for the particular object which divided his young man's attention; but he resolved on counselling by times, and an opportunity soon offered itself for putting in practice this determination.

One day when Mr. Capias returned home from Westminster-hall sooner than usual, with his blue bag under his arm, he was surprised at hearing a remarkable noise, as he ascended the stairs of the building in which his chambers were situated. Like a prudent man, he paused, and could distinctly hear some one in high debate. Astonished at this extraordinary circumstance, he rushed into his office, and there beheld Jack Bounce equipped as Hamlet the Dane, after the costume of the immortal Kemble, while by his side sat the daughter of the laundress, as the Queen. No language can paint the dismay of the actors, and no artist can depict the passion of rage, so strongly as it was shewn in the countenance and attitude of Mr. Capias. The wench fell on her knees, Jack stood like a criminal about to receive sentence of death, and the enraged attorney denounced the one as a fool, and the other as a rogue.

But this was only one part of the affair; in the inner chamber of the house Mr. Capias found a volume of Shakspeare on the desk of Mr. Bounce, in place of a brief which it was expedient should be copied before the Court of King's Bench met the next morning, when an important cause, in which Capias was solicitor for the defendant, stood in the peremptory paper of the Lord Chief Justice.

This neglect of his business drew from Mr. Capias a lecture, which Jack either did not listen to, or which he contemned as beneath his notice. Be that as it may, Mr. Capias insisted forcibly on the following heads:

"In the first place," said the worthy man, "my dear young friend, though I have been in a shocking passion, I have your interest too much at heart to neglect it, and forfeit my title to responsibility. Life is a lottery, I grant you, but the prizes are often at our own disposal. In no profession is this more obvious than our own. Consider the expense you have cost your father, and what you have cost him I cost my father. Well then, in a

profession where twenty fail for one that succeeds, I have been successful, and I now reap the whole that might have been gained by the unsuccessful twenty. So will you, if you follow my example; for do not our clients trust their fortunes, and sometimes their lives, to us? Such confidence can only be placed in steady and honourable men. Their reward must, therefore, be such as to give that rank in society which so important a trust requires. Besides, the length of time consumed in our education does, for a period of years, make our annual gains bear but small proportion to our annual expense; but then, my dear Jack, at forty years of age you will begin to make something by your profession."

"The conclusion to which I came myself," said Jack, laughing. "The lottery of law is far from being a fair lottery."

"Very true, Jack, very true, I grant you; but you are not such a dunce as not to know that we must, and will be, paid by our clients. Here in our practice of the King's Bench and Common Pleas, does not the plaintiff pretend that the defendant is not doing him justice, has been guilty of some trespass or misdemeanor? Well then, we are defendants to-morrow, and say, 'No, we've been guilty of no trespass or misdemeanor;' and if it should go against us, and the plaintiff gets a verdict, our expenses are as sure of being paid as the damages. Now, to-day we were plaintiff, and got our verdict, with damages and costs. In either case we must be paid. We have always the body of our client."

At this moment, to Jack's great pleasure, the "defendant" of "to-morrow" knocked at Mr. Capias's exterior chamber-door, and our amateur of the sock and buskin, who had disrobed the habiliments of Hamlet during his master's lecture, went to open it. The discourse of Mr. Capias was cut short, and Jack pursued his favourite pastime, neglecting alike *Blackstone's Commentaries* and Mr. Capias's business.

The plodding attorney foresaw the ruin in which his clerk would involve himself, if he suffered him to go on the stage, and, with the best intention, he wrote to Jack's father on the subject. Like a prudent man, Mr. Bounce, senior, came to town from Lincolnshire, on pretence of business, and, having sounded Jack, learned to his mortification that the young man was "play mad."

After repeated exhortations, the fond father and faithful master believed they had wrought a reformation on Jack, who gave his honour not to quit Mr. Capias's service till his clerkship was expired, of which only nine months remained.

Jack had two motives in making this promise; in the first place, to use his own language, he wanted "to bleed the old boy," in order to procure, with the "life-drops of his heart," or, in other words, the guineas he could draw from his father's purse, an entire equipment of dress for the characters of Macbeth and Brutus; and, in the second place, he was resolved "to punish Capias for his meddling disposition." But punishment was with Jack an equivocal term, for in this acceptation it meant no more than that he would fulfil the term of his clerkship, so that Capias might not come on his sureties for the penalty expressed in his indenture, if, by running away, he should forfeit that penalty.

His father, seeing, as he thought, amendment in Jack, gave him twenty guineas as pocket-money, an order upon a tailor for two new suits of clothes; and on his return home set his wife and daughters to work, "to make the lad two dozen of new shirts," which, with an equal number of pairs of stockings and neckerchiefs, were forwarded by the Boston coach.

From the tailor Jack had one of the suits of clothes, and, in lieu of the other, the dress of a Roman patrician, making an agreement with the worthy man who supplied him, that the difference should be charged under the name of “a great coat,” which, though not specified in the order, the parties were certain would not be disputed by the paymaster, seeing the “winter of our days” was fast approaching, for such were the identical words Jack used when, by letter, he informed his “honoured father” that he had “exceeded his paternal order.”

In the mean time Jack's clerkship drew to a close, and no prisoner ever sighed more to escape from the hands of justice, than our hero did to throw off the trammels of law. When the eventful day arrived, Jack wrote to his father the following epistle:

Sergeants’ Inn, Fleet-street.

“MY DEAR AND HONOURED FATHER.—As you no doubt know that on this day my clerkship with Mr. Capias expires, I have great pleasure in informing you that I am truly rejoiced at it, for I really do not like the profession. My medical attendant (a person, by-the-by, of whom the father had never heard before,) has assured me that it is injurious to my health; indeed I have long felt it so myself.

“But there is another circumstance, which has contributed more than the preceding to this change in my sentiments,—a circumstance which, I dare say you anticipate,—that is, my love for the profession of the stage, and which has been much strengthened by the approbation of my friends, and frequent successful trials on the boards of a private theatre.

“Though you perhaps anticipated this news, you may nevertheless be surprised at it, after the assurance I gave you when you was in London.

“But, my dear father, if you will only charge your memory with the promise I then made, you will recollect that it did not extend beyond the term of my apprenticeship, as I did not choose to saddle my sureties with the penalty of my indenture, to benefit old Capias, and rob you.

“I hope, when you consider the difficulties I should have to encounter, before I could possibly succeed as an attorney, and the advantages which my genius for the stage holds forth, you will be pleased to contribute that consent and support which you have never withheld from me in any reasonable request.

“With best love to my mother and sisters, I am, my honoured father, your dutiful and affectionate son,

“JOHN WELDON.”

And here it may not be improper to observe, that Mr. Weldon, junior, who sought to rise on the boards of a provincial stage, like most other young folks who put into the lottery of Thespis, changed his name the moment he embarked on this sea of troubles; and having assumed the extraordinary designation of “Jack Bounce,” we have copied the original most literally. But to return to the letter addressed to his worthy father, we have briefly to notice that, in the course of the next post, Jack received the following answer:

“Boston, Lincolnshire.

“DEAR JACK,—Your letter has thrown me into a passion, and brought on a fit of the gout; it has also thrown your poor mother into fits, and your sisters have cried their eyes out.

“A fine confusion you have caused, you dog! Leave law, the making of you, and go a gipsying through the country, like a ragamuffin, as you are! What do you mean? What’s to become of my 300 guineas of premium to old Capias? Tell me that.

“A fine use you have been making of the many pounds I have sent you, and the many presents which your foolish mother made to you, though she thinks I know nothing of it. I suppose all is gone in play-books and whirligig dresses. Very well,—go on and prosper; be a beggar if you like, when I wished to make a gentleman of you. No matter, I shall have one satisfaction,—I shall cut you off with a shilling, you villain! This is then to be the comfort of my grey hairs. But take care you don’t shew your face in Lincolnshire, you rascal. If you do, I shall lay you, you rogue and vagabond, by the heels, and keep you in quod for a twelvemonth, as by law authorized so to do. I’m not to be bamboozled by such a jackanapes as you.

“Dear Jack, take the advice of a kind father,—stick to law; your business lies in that direction, and in no other. Get qualified as soon as possible, and leave the stage. Hoping that you will mend your ways, and return to your duty, I am, your affectionate father,

J. WELDON.

“P.S.—Your mother and sisters send their kind love to you, and they are very angry with you for bringing the gout into both my feet.

N.B.—Be so good as to send me, since you are about to turn player, all the volumes of my handsome copy of the *Statutes at Large*, that I may consult them whenever I may have occasion to commit to the county gaol all vagrants and other strollers that may come in my way*.

* Mr. Weldon’s opinion is that of many an honest and good man; but the stage will have supporters as long as vice and folly are found on earth. I am happy in being able, however, in confirmation of the moral I would inculcate in this volume, to subjoin the following extract from Dr. Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. The author, it is true, is speaking of the lighter pieces of the drama, and those principally which conduce to the correction of manners. “Farce,” says the Doctor, “which has for its peculiar object *manners*, in the limited and distinctive sense of that word, may, with propriety, admit many things which directly conduce to the advancement of morals, and ought never to admit any thing which has a contrary tendency. Virtue is of primary importance, both for the happiness of individuals, and for the well-being of society; an external polish is at best but a secondary accomplishment, ornamental indeed when it adds a lustre to virtue, pernicious when it serves only to embellish profligacy, and in itself comparatively of but little consequence, either to private or to public felicity.”

In a note, which this very judicious writer makes on his own language, occurs the observations that I meant chiefly to direct the reader to. They are these: “Whether this attention has been always given to morals, particularly in comedy, must be left to the determination of those who are most conversant in that species of scenic representations. One may, however, venture to prognosticate, that if in any period it shall become fashionable to show no regard to virtue iu such entertainments; if the hero of the piece, a fine gentleman to be sure, adorned as usual with all the superficial and exterior graces which the poet can confer, and crowned with success in the end, shall be an unprincipled libertine, a man of more spirit, forsooth, than to be checked in his pursuits by the restraints of religion, by a regard to the common rights of mankind, or by the laws of hospitality and private friendship, which were accounted sacred among pagans and those whom we denominate barbarians; then, indeed, the stage will become merely the school of gallantry and intrigue; thither the youth of both sexes will

To this affectionate letter young Weldon, *alias* Bounce, returned a most dutiful

reply, in which he lamented that his father's ideas of Thespian pursuits were not congenial with his own; still as genius and fortune called him, although he was sorry to commit a breach of filial duty, he believed that fame and riches were not to be spurned; adding, that Garrick and others had acquired both.

As for the copy of the "Statutes at large," he had truly to regret that his father had not advised him sooner, seeing that only two months before, he had exchanged them with a fellow student for a copy of Boydell's Shakspeare.

However, if his dear father wished much to have this book, he would undertake to buy it very cheap for him, that is to say, for forty guineas, at a Bookseller's in High Holborn.

He concluded with begging pardon for the step he was about to take, but hoped his father would think more favourably of the affair at a future period; when, as he had been assured would be the case, he should have attained the envied eminence of leading tragedian in a metropolitan theatre royal.

Hoping that Heaven would shower down on all the family every earthly blessing, he bade them farewell for a season, as he was about to take his departure for York, where he had determined to commence his theatrical career.

We shall, therefore, leave the Lincolnshire magistrate to nurse the gout and chew the cud of paternal disappointment, at the turn which his son's fortune was about to take, and follow our stage-struck hero in his dramatic progress. This necessarily brings us back a few days in his history, for the scenes in which he is presently to appear were antecedent to the close of his clerkship, but they approximated so nearly to it as to hasten his departure for York, agreeably to the information which he had communicated to his father. And another reason which induced us to transpose these matters is our wish to have but one object in view at one time, and Jack being the chief subject of our consideration at present, we have despatched the father to wait upon the son.

We return, therefore, to that notable scene of action, known already to the reader, as the private theatre in Bury-street, Bloomsbury, where our friend Jack formed an acquaintance with several young men, who were ambitious that the public should have an opportunity of appreciating their abilities, in contradistinction to the "monotony of performers," by whom the public were nightly bored at the "patent theatres."

These young gentlemen were so satisfied that their powers far eclipsed all that shone in any furnace of thunder, ycleped a "minor theatre," that they formed the laudable plan of entering into a subscription to exhibit immediately at the old theatre in the Haymarket. A night was accordingly fixed, a play and farce selected, and the parts were appropriated to the several performers.

The play was Richard the Third, and the house was respectably filled. Jack enacted Richard, and really acquitted himself well. Many of his friends discovered sparks

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resort, and will not resort in vain, in order to get rid of that troublesome companion, modesty, intended by Providence as a guard to virtue, and a check against licentiousness; there vice will soon learn to provide herself in a proper stock of effrontery, and a suitable address for effecting her designs, and triumphing over innocence; then, in fine, if religion, virtue, principle, equity, gratitude, and good faith, are not empty sounds, the stage will prove the greatest of nuisances, and deserve to be styled the principal corrupter of the age. Whether such an era hath ever happened in the history of the theatre, in this or any other country, or is likely to happen, I do not take upon me to decide."

of genius, which promised, one day, to burst forth in cometic blaze upon the admiring world.

At the end of the third act, where there is a change of dress, a ludicrous circumstance occurred, which considerably damped the spirits of the performers, and nearly robbed them of the laurels they had won. This was no less than a forcible detention of Richard's second dress, until the rent, and other expenses of the house for the evening, should be paid. This was particularly galling to the amateurs, who had conscientiously paid the inexorable proprietor every shilling taken at the doors; and who did not, consequently, anticipate the mortification to which their dignity was to be subjected, by laying down the sword and truncheon in so awkward a manner. The audience became very noisy, as is usual when their pleasures are delayed. In vain the musicians continued between the acts to strive to amuse; they were repeatedly hissed, and Richard was called to appear.

Jack, at last, came forward to claim the protection of the house.

Cries of "shame! shame!" immediately resounded on all sides; for an English audience is never backward to protect an injured actor.

Some even threatened to demolish the seats, if the gentlemen were not allowed to go on; and the proprietor, who became alarmed, gave up the key of the wardrobe, on condition that Jack should make up the deficit of six pounds and odd shillings sterling, on the following day.

In the hurry and agitation of the moment Jack consented, and in a few seconds

Richard was himself again.

The applause he now received, in some measure, compensated for the responsibility he had taken. But his spirits were so much discomposed by the unexpected insolence of the proprietor, that he found it exceedingly difficult to finish the representation of his character in the same style as his efforts in the former acts had promised.

To retrieve the reputation he had so nearly lost, Jack gratified the audience by the personation of the *Three Singles* in the *Three and the Deuce*.

But here also an unlucky accident befel him. For in the rapid changes which an actor, in this master-piece, is obliged to make from the fool to the fop, and from the fop to the gentleman, and *vice versâ*, it is really surprising how he can always preserve each so distinct, and so individual, as not to allow one character to run into another; and nothing, we believe, in the whole compass of the drama is so difficult.

Poor Jack found it so; for in coming in as the studious brother, and being addressed by Mac Floggan as Percival, he lost sight of Pertinax, and drivelled as the simpleton through several sentences.

The audience laughed immoderately, and some more ignorant hissed, while a few, who had wit enough to enjoy the mistake, shouted "Go on, go on!"

Mac Floggan was disconcerted, and Jack discovering his mistake, attempted an apology, but stopping short at "Ladies and Gentlemen," clapped his hand passionately to his forehead, cursed his ill luck, and hastily made his exit.

Notwithstanding the clapping of the audience, and their encouraging cries of "Go on! go on!" from every quarter, the unlucky Jack, who began to think that law was

exempt from such disagreeables, could not, for a length of time, be prevailed on to resume the *Singles*.

At last, however, by the repeated invitations of the audience, and the persuasion of his brother actors, he went on, and supported the characters he had undertaken, with the respectability of an experienced performer.

Jack was waited upon next day by Mr. Fleeceall, the proprietor, for the money, which, now that he had time for reflection, he deemed his brethren to be answerable for as well as himself.

Accordingly he offered to consult his brother heroes of Bosworth Field, and to give Mr. Fleeceall an answer on the morrow.

The proprietor, who was not to be so easily put off, insisted on the immediate payment of the money, and even threatened to expose Jack to his master, Capias.

Of all the disputes on earth which Jack wished to avoid, was that with the attorney, and he, therefore, endeavoured to pacify his angry and clamorous creditor as well as he could. Words, however, had no effect on Fleeceall, who added, to his other warnings, that of an action for the debt.

Jack was secure on this score, for he was not of age; but he consented, at length, to give the proprietor his note, at ten days, for the six pounds.

In the mean time his clerkship expired, and perfectly aware of his inability to honour his signature, but by depriving himself of the means of prosecuting his new profession, Jack applied at several of the theatres in the metropolis for an engagement.

In these applications he was unsuccessful, and turned his thoughts towards the provinces. To reach these in his new character, he bent his steps to old Vendible's, and was fortunate enough to meet with an engagement that very day.

The intermediate part of his progress is of little importance, as his engagement was for the company in which we find him at tea with Susan Cowslip. But we have been thus circumstantial, as it is one of the greatest privileges of society to pry into the history of every new comer.

Now, however, being perfectly acquainted with the life of our friend Jack Bounce, before he came into our neighbourhood, we will pay our respects to poor Susan.

CHAPTER V.

"The play was performed much better than was expected, and their company soon became more numerous, being joined by others that looked more to profit than pleasure; for *these* lovers of the drama could play heroes, and heroines without eating. Love for the sublime was enough for them.

CHETWOOD'S HISTORY OF THE STAGE.

ON the day of that eventful evening, when Tramp was to exhibit his "Desdemona by a young lady, being her first appearance on any stage," Susan swallowed a hasty dinner, and sipped her tea with a palpitating heart.

As she walked from her lodging to the malt-house now consecrated to the muses, many qualms crossed her breast, and her tremour was excessive during the short space allowed her to dress; but as soon as the two fiddles, a hautboy, and a French horn, commenced to please the palate of the audience with a preparatory meal of music, her heart sunk within her; however, being equipped, she received much comfort from "Squire Bounce," for that was the designation of our friend Jack among his strolling companions.

At length the prompter's bell rang, the curtain slowly rose, and discovered the Venetian Senators.

Poor Susan was quite bewildered, she heard a rustling, saw nobody; and as Iago came to fetch her, her knees tottered as if she was palsied in both limbs. The reception of the audience banished for a moment her fears, but when she should have spoken, silence ensued; and though she caught the first word from the prompter and actually pronounced it, she was instantly again at fault.

In this dilemma Jack was her friend, and having summoned up all her resolution she enacted her part to the entire approbation of her critical judges. She then sat down to collect herself, and thought all was not so bad.

When it came to her turn to appear on the stage again, she succeeded much better, and continued to improve during the remainder of the performance. The play went off with great eclat, and Susan received the compliments of her companions, upon her great and unparalleled success.

Calista was the next character in which Susan appeared, and the play of the *Fair Penitent*, (than which there cannot be one more improperly misnamed,) went off with considerable applause, till the middle of the fifth act, when the following circumstance quickly transformed the *sighs* and *tears* of the *audience* into shouts of laughter.

Jack had played Lothario, but after his death, he had transferred his part of the dead Lothario, to Master Roger Alonzo Augustus Tramp. The said Alonzo had as yet, attained no further pre-eminence in the theatrical line, than that which he had acquired by repeating "Yes, Sir" or "Very well, Sir," in the character of a foot-boy. But his ambitious and aspiring genius led him to more daring deeds; and as he had heard Squire Bounce say, that he wished his part was over, for he felt tired, the boy earnestly entreated he might personate *Lothario dead*, promising to do his utmost; and that he would indeed act dead to the best advantage, only entreating his father might not be informed of his presumption, lest he should foolishly suppose him incapable of playing his arduous part with proper effect.

Having therefore received his instructions from Mr. Bounce who went home, he got Susan to engage his father in *deep* conversation during his installation to the funeral honours of Lothario.

So far all went on very well, and Susan, who with a pathos, which drew tears from the spectators, was rending their hearts as well as their ears, proceeded to repeat the passionate speeches of the mis-named heroine, when Mr. Tramp's voice was heard calling for, "Roger Alonzo Augustus."

The youthful Lothario made a slight start at these particular sounds, but soon again was still; but when Mr. Tramp repeated his call, he half-raised himself, exclaiming, "Here, father."

"Here, father," replied Tramp, "Why don't you come when I call you, you young dog, do you come hither directly, or I'll break every bone in your skin."

Master Roger Alonzo Augustus Tramp well knew his father was not more prompt to threaten, than to perform; he therefore without further reply, jumped up with all his sables about him; these were, however, unfortunately fast tied to the handles of the bier, and completely impeded all his movements.

But this was not all; the laugh and roar of the audience frightened Lothario so much, that dragging the bier after him he threw down poor Susan, and overwhelmed her with the table, the lamp, book, bones, &c. &c. &c.

By indefatigable efforts to free himself, he at length got rid of his own trammels and made his escape, leaving the ill-fated Calista to extricate herself from her dilemma as well as she could, amidst the cries of bravo, and reiterated shouts of laughter, in which she herself very heartily joined, and procured more real applause by her good humour under such mortifying circumstances, than by her performance, *excellent* as it was, of the stormy heroine.

When she made her exit, she saved poor Roger from the up-lifted hand of his enraged father, by stepping between them, taking much of the blame to herself and Mr. Bounce. And in order to put him in good humour, she promised to go on the stage with the servants in the farce, which was, the "Devil to Pay." Peeping Tom recognised her, and having set the *house* a clapping, her spirits began to recover their usual buoyancy, and she returned home pleased with her entré.

Next morning she took a long walk in the fields with Jack, where they studied hard their respective characters for "Blue Beard," on Wednesday evening. As Fatima, Susan sung well, and was much applauded. In the after-piece too, which was the "Miller and his Men," she played the part of Claudine, to the entire satisfaction of the audience.

On Saturday morning, old Tramp assembled his company to pay them their salaries, or rather their "shares" of the profits of the week.

Susan's share amounted to twenty-three shillings; Jack's was the same, and the rest, averaged a guinea a piece.

The manager fared better, for he enjoyed seven shares; two shares for himself, one for the scenery, one for the wardrobe, one for his trouble, one for his wife, one for his daughter, Miss Cora Angela Clementina, and one for his son, Master Roger Augustus Alonzo Tramp, who was a boy about nine years old, but a strong lumping lad of his age.

Susan seemed cast into a revery, by this amazing disparity in the division of the spoil, and Mrs. Tramp guessing what was the matter, gave many cogent reasons for the seven shares, which amounted to ten pounds, one shilling.

Susan then appeared satisfied, but she had secret motives for seeming pleased with what all the world would have pronounced an imposition.

Next day she walked abroad with Jack. In this promenade they were met by the young ribbon weaver, who accosted her with the air of an old acquaintance, to the surprise and discomposure of Squire Bounce, who, to his paramount folly of becoming an actor, superadded that of a profound veneration for Susan's person. He was, therefore not much pleased when Susan took the offered arm of her stage-coach beau, and with a tolerable share of coquetry, flirted away the time, which should, in fact, have been devoted to study. His spirit, however, prevented his making any observation, save that his attentions to his fair companion of the buskin, relaxed into the ordinary formalities of life.

Susan saw this, and she resolved to be more watchful for the future, for she also professed a profound veneration for Squire Bounce. Indeed, she flattered herself that by a little dexterous management, she should secure one or other of her two admirers, and that she should wind up her journey to Coventry with a matrimonial trip to the hymeneal altar.

She therefore endeavoured by the most skilful *acting*, to convince Mr. Bounce, that he had been mistaken, when he supposed she lent a favourable ear to the soft speeches of Mr. Silk, the ribbon weaver, while on the following morning, she contrived to impress upon the latter, how deeply she was flattered by his condescension, in noticing so humble a being, as a provincial actress.

Mr. Silk saw Susan's drift, but it flattered his vanity, and he made many professions of kindness to "the young lady, who had never appeared on any stage before."

In the evening, there was a chamber rehearsal, of the "Honey Moon," to ascertain Susan's capability to support the character of Juliana.

It happened, however, that there was but one copy of the play in Tramp's library, and Susan, of course, brought forth hers, to select the play for her own use.

The sight of her immense store of dramas, compelled Mrs. Tramp, to break the tenth commandment.

Susan took the hint, and offered this disinterested woman whatever she liked.

To this proposal, the covetous wretch barely replied, "Certainly, if Miss Beverly would be so good as to spare a few plays, Mr. Tramp would feel greatly obliged."

On the Friday, an amateur, who had that week joined the company from Warwickshire, made his debut. The play was the "Castle Spectre," and the after-piece, "High life below stairs." Susan played Angela, and the amateur undertook the part of Osmond.

This "Warwickshire blade" had managed a ribbon warehouse for his father, and his dialect was pure *Warwick*. The audience were so greatly delighted, that they laughed outright, to the great annoyance of the amateur, who, though chagrined, was by no means intimidated.

His delivery of the celebrated dream, was truly ridiculous, particularly the following passage.

"Methowt I weandered thraugh the low breawed keauvurns where repoase the relicks ov my eancestors, &c." And it is almost unnecessary to inform the reader, that the piece went off with much merriment before the curtain; but when Osmond delivered himself as follows:

“Beest thou theare Hassan, and Seab too heare?” The whole company, Tramp, Jack, Susan and all, joined the audience in a loud burst of laughter.

Osmond, indignant at this affront offered to his endeavours to please, walked forward, and addressed the audience something after the fashion of Homer, who, in the opinion of certain pugnacious critics, has adopted a very ragamuffin way of putting challenges into the mouths of his heroes.

Osmond, who seems to have been as primitive a champion as any of those blustering knights, who figured before the walls of Troy, said to the people, “What do yeau me-an by laughing so? Be ye laughing at I? be ye laughing at I? if ye be, tuarn eaut an’ I’ll give it ‘e.” And they only cried “off, off.” Whereupon he said to them again, “What dost me-an by hoff, hoff? can eany o’ ye skeamps hact better nor I? if ye kean, whay doant ye try?

But the audience now hissed, and Peeping Tom called his Warwickshire neighbour “Stupid the fifth,” which set the house in a roar, till some one’s voice drowned all the rest with the unceremonious command, “Turn him out.”

Osmond, who kept his ground, in his turn spoke, calling aloud, “Whoa says tuarn eaut?

And old Tramp now made his appearance, entreating Osmond would come off.

“Noa, I woant, I’ll ha justice done afore I go. Who says tuarn out? I say tuarn yeau eaut; an if any o’ yeau think he can tuarn me out, I’ll fight him and the best o’ yeau for a farden a piece.”

The curtain at this instant dropped, and put an end to the scuffle; but Osmond (who ever after went by that name) was in high dudgeon, and rushing among the gentlemen in the pit, he was very soon taken neck and heels, and laid down in the street.

On Saturday the company shared fifteen shillings and sixpence a piece, Tramp reserving as before, seven shares for himself.

On Monday they played the “Provoked Husband,” and the “Turnpike Gate;” and as *Lady Townley*, Susan was highly complimented by Mrs. Tramp, who swore by all the powers of acting, that she would soon rival the first London actresses. And after declaring that the young woman looked like an angel, Mrs. Tramp launched forth in rapturous praises of an elegant plume of feathers, which Susan wore in her head-dress. “But heaven forbid she should covet such a thing; only it would be the very thing for her dress next evening, when she was to enact the part of *Lady Teazle*.”

Susan, who was by this attack diverted from her necessary contemplation between the acts, in her confusion happened to say, that “After the play, the feathers would be very much at Mrs. Tramp’s service.”

And Mrs. Tramp, chuckling with joy, begged of Susan to wear a (paste) ring for her sake.

Susan now saw that Mrs. Tramp, by this manœuvre, had resolved to be quits with her for the feathers; but the prompter’s bell rang, and she was obliged to quit the corner of the malt-house, ycleped the green-room, and appear on the stage. Susan had many admirers in Coventry, and she seldom left her lodgings without being met by some one of those beaux who were favoured by being admitted behind the scenes. Still, however, no one proposed the trip she was so anxious to take; and the ribbon weaver who overwhelmed her with fine speeches and occasionally presented her with a piece of

ribbon, made no further advances, although Susan sighed and looked, and sighed and looked again.

Osmond indeed, often talked of the advantage of a married life in their mode of existing; he often poured forth his tender vows in broad Warwickshire dialect, but he never asked Susan to take him "for better, for worse."

As to Squire Bounce, his judgment which had failed him upon the most material crisis of his life, did save him at least, from completely ruining his future hopes, by finally uniting himself to the coquetting Susan. Yet he still offered her every assistance which lay in his power, and had given her some useful hints as to her conduct towards the rapacious Tramps: and Susan, who saw her hopes from this quarter gradually decay, would frequently lament in solitude, her journey to London, and the villany of Colonel Ednor, which had deprived her of home, of friends, of comfort.

She was, however, *successful* in her theatrical attempts, and where few would approach mediocrity, she shone like a bright star. Her person was attractive, and her voice very sweet, though it possessed little power, and laboured under the disadvantage of uncultivation by a master.

These were passing qualifications, and Susan, with all her provincial success, was not likely to attain that excellence, which would introduce her to the favour of a London audience. But we must proceed with her present successful appearance, among the citizens of Coventry.

On Tuesday, our heroes of the sock and buskin, entertained the good people of Coventry, with "Jane Shore," and "Peeping Tom." The former of these plays, always excites a large share of the sympathies of human nature in a polished audience; how much more it operates on one in the country, we may guess from the following circumstance.

When poor Jane Shore was turned from Alicia's door, a little boy in an upper seat rose, and with streaming eyes and violent gesture, blubbered out, "Doant thee turn her out; now doant thee, doant, I say; what harm has she done thee? Han't the got all the poor thing's money, and what has she to do?"

The audience who had felt sufficiently for Jane Shore, discovered they had no feeling for the poor boy, for they became convulsed with laughter, and even the representative of the unfortunate citizen's wife, ran laughing off the stage.

One person hissed, and the audience, who looked upon this expression of displeasure as directed at themselves, rather than at the provincial actress, set upon him most furiously in his own way. But their hissing was soon again changed into laughter, on Peeping Tom pronouncing the object of vengeance to be a methodist parson, who had been railing at the poor players in his tabernacle every week since their arrival in Coventry.

The unfortunate preacher now wished to make a speedy and secret retreat, but the rogues around him blocked up the exit, and he was doomed to endure the most unmerciful bantering that was ever exercised in punishing a needless curiosity. For it seems that this good man went to see the players, not from any desire to share in the heinous crime of his townsmen, but "from a principle of curiosity, to gain a knowledge of the pastime in which so many thoughtless beings amused themselves, when they might be more profitably employed in devotional duties." Such was the apology he made to his friends, and as such we record it; but they considered him from that time incapable of

exercising the pastoral functions, and as a warning to others, cut him off from the body of the church militant, as do we also from ever appearing among Tramp's audience at Coventry.

CHAPTER VI.

As some poor squire, to country quarters sent,
His credit gone, and all his money spent;
A swarm of duns, each morn attend his door,
Crying out, MONEY! *faith we're very poor*.
"Why ay!" the squire replies; "But pray have patience,
Six months' arrears comes with my next acquaintance,
Just so I've told my duns, this many a day,
They'd all have money when I got my play.

CHETWOOD'S HISTORY OF THE STAGE.

SHORTLY after this eventful night, the "Benefits" of the company were advertised, and Coventry becoming a bare field for our heroes, who had gone over their best performances, Tramp and his assistants prepared to journey towards Sollihull.

Susan had very regularly paid the Tramps twenty-five shillings a week for her board, though her shares never amounted to more than ten shillings, after the last reckoning which we have recorded; the consequence was, that her funds became low. Of this circumstance the Tramps were well aware, but so long as Susan had a shilling, she was doomed to be the prey of these harpies. Accordingly when "Note of preparation" sounded on Susan's ear, Mrs. Tramp invited her "to ride in the flying landau, (the scene-cart,) with the family and properties."

After six weeks' performance at Sollihull, Susan's benefit was announced, and our old friend Jack Bounce in his zeal to "make a house," headed the play-bill as follows:—

"Let none be afraid from the country to come,
For the moon is engaged to light them all home.
Doors open at six, begin about seven,
At home safe in bed, between ten and eleven."

And this doggrel had a wonderful effect on the country-folks, who crowded into the town to see the performance of Miss Beverley. But when we say the town, we speak topographically, for a batch of houses and an immense barn about half a mile from Sollihull, were also within its jurisdiction, and hence arises the correctness of our expression.

The barn was the theatre, and it was crammed on Susan's benefit; the "receipts of the house" amounted to eleven pounds sterling, but the expenses came to four pounds; and Tramp as is usual in strolling companies, had half the remainder, so that poor Susan's share netted three pounds ten shillings. Her finances were now nearly exhausted, and she had been obliged for some weeks past to run a little in Mrs. Tramp's debt. Out of the *balance* of her benefit, she paid the veteran stroller a small bill of one pound seventeen shillings, and the necessities of Squire Bounce induced her to divide with him the remaining pound and odd shillings, till his benefit should take place.

Susan now began to see her error, and in the bitterness of her heart, reproached Colonel Ednor as the cause of all her misery, blamed her own folly, and detested the cupidity of Mrs. Tramp. Bounce was the only person to whom she could reveal her discontent, and after they had conferred on their theatrical progress, it was resolved that as soon as they could better their situation, they should return to London, and endeavour to obtain an engagement at one of the minor theatres, or at all events club their talents with the Claptraps for a new provincial company.

A few nights more brought round "Squire" Bounce's benefit, and he exercised his poetic talents in the following stanza, hoping that this additional spark of his genius, would bring him a "bumper," that is to say in the language of common life, a "full house."

To the ladies I bow, with respectful submission,
To the gentlemen too, I present my petition;
My request I do hope they will not now slight,
When they think of the cause, 'tis my benefit
night.
And if your kind favours I'm so happy to gain,
The public at large I'm in hopes to obtain,
If with them I prevail, to be kind to our wishes,
We then may partake of the loaves and the
fishes;
And your int'rest being gain'd, I will then
conclude,
And discharge my vast debt with prompt gra-
titude."

"Squire" Bounce was however very greatly disappointed, for, to use his own definition of this harvest, to which he had looked forward with as much appetite as a hungry ass does to a clover field, "It was an Irish benefit, by which had had gained a loss of nineteen shillings and seven pence." Mr. Bounce was not prepared for this result of his theatrical exertions for the amusement of the public. His situation was indeed pitiable; he was in debt to Susan to the amount of one pound seven shillings and six-pence, and he had not a single penny left in the world; he had occasionally parted with those articles of worth that could relieve his pressing necessities; but all was now gone, save his beloved Shakspeare. And must he part with that book, for which he had exchanged Blackstone's Commentaries, and incurred his father's severe displeasure, must it go? Alas! Yes, Mr. Tramp was anxious for the discharge of his vast debt of sixteen shillings and seven pence, and Squire Bounce with a heavy sigh raised the much prized volumes, and with measured step and slow, he pursued his way to the only bookseller's shop in the town.

The surprise of this gentleman at the sum demanded, was inconceivable; it was more than he sometimes expended in the purchase of books during the whole year. He therefore refused to make the purchase, and Jack was disconsolately retracing his steps, when the *Bookseller* called him back, saying, that a gentleman wished to inspect the volumes.

Jack had not observed that there was any one in the shop besides himself and the owner, but behind him had stood a gentleman who lived a few miles from the town. Struck with the air of dejection which immediately suffused the face of the Thespian votary, at the bookseller's refusal to take the books, he resolved on purchasing them, if they were perfect and in tolerable repair. They were in high condition, for Jack had concealed them from vulgar eyes with the most scrupulous care, and only opened them, when he was quite sure of being alone. The gentleman was surprised to see so handsome and valuable an edition in the hands of a strolling player; but having offered Jack thirty guineas, the bargain was soon struck, though not without a pang from the heart of poor Squire Bounce.

He had no sooner obtained the money, than he hastened to acquit himself of his debt to Tramp, and then repaired to Susan upon the same errand, presenting her with two pounds, assuring her, that by the sale of a few books he had raised a sum which was more than adequate to supply his present wants.

Susan and Jack were upon excellent terms, for although he condemned her coquetry, yet he with good nature placed it to the score of her anxiety to get an establishment, which would relieve her from her present uncomfortable and precarious subsistence: he had never questioned her of her family, and she had as studiously avoided the subject, and her conduct was in other respects correct, for she never allowed any one to take any undue liberties.

Jack therefore felt much commiseration for her situation, and acted towards her in all respects as a brother; frequently giving her advice, and cautioning her against the designs of many, who professed a great admiration for her personal charms.

Susan had suffered much, and was doomed to suffer more, from her first false step in life; and not the least of her troubles, was, her anxiety lest any unforeseen event should disclose her former connexion with Colonel Ednor. The caution and advice Mr. Bounce was so repeatedly giving, convinced her that such an exposure would prove most injurious both to her peace and her credit.

But to return to the strollers at large.

On the Sunday following, the company struck their tents, and the flying landau was again put in requisition.

Susan, who began to be heartily tired of Tramp and his wife, demurred to proceed with them.

Mrs. Tramp, "could not comprehend why Miss Beverley should hesitate:—the flying-landau was at her service, and Mr. Tramp himself, had been out of pocket in Sollihull, but it would not be so at Walsal, whither they were going."

Susan, by means of this, and many other weighty arguments, at length, consented to accompany "her friends;" but on her arrival at Walsal, she hired a room for herself, separately from the Tramps.

The theatre was the club-room of a public house; and the actors averaged *seven shillings!* Susan's cash was all gone, and the scanty pittance, of a shilling a day, preyed on her body as well as her mind.

Squire Bounce, who had ere this time, expended either in the discharge of debts, the procurement of a more suitable wardrobe, or a few of the pleasures of this life, the greater part of his thirty pounds, now shut his hand, and held fast what yet remained of the price of Shakspeare. He was not, therefore, in a better condition than the rest of the

gentlemen; and as their finances were not splendid, they contracted the greatest intimacy, and actually commenced a species of Spartan fellowship.

To save the expense of lodging, Bounce and other two, agreed to live together, and by occupying only one apartment, which served the multifarious purposes of bed-chamber, dressing room, study and parlour, they had ample opportunity to mourn over the sad destiny, which compelled them to labour so hard for the wretched pittance which the insatiate manager distributed to them.

Still they were better circumstanced than others of the company, because, in clubbing their mites together, though on the nights when there was no performance, they endured a sort of purgatory in alternately studying and transcribing their appropriated parts, they contrived to make both ends meet, for they were too high-minded to spend their time in the tap-room.

But at length, they became tired of the inconstancy of fortune; who seemed dealing by them, as the Frenchman dealt with his horse, which in the end, could live on a straw a day.

The whole company, therefore, came to the resolution of "remonstrating stoutly with their tyrant," on the impossibility of existing on seven shillings a week, while they had, at the same time to find their own wardrobe; and it was proposed to ask him for an advance of five shillings a week, with which, if he complied, they would continue in his service, till fortune smiled more kindly on them; if not, they were determined to strike at once, and depart on foot for the metropolis.

At rehearsal next day, Jack, who was appointed spokesman, presented a petition, or rather memorial, to the manager, communicating their grievances, and praying for redress.

Tramp, who belonged to the long-headed family, did not much relish this mode of procedure, and seeing that this "turn out," as he termed it, would ruin his benefit, which was approaching, he resolved to smother his resentment for the present, and have his revenge at a more convenient season. In the mean time, he agreed to the demand, and contented himself with verbal abuse, which included the simple denunciation of a "pack of rebellious rascals."

Matters were now mended, and cheerfulness prevailed both in the theatre and the stroller's lodgings; but its continuance was certified by no security, and they soon found that co-partnership, was, as the civilians say, the mother of discord. Tramp, who, since his arrival in the town, had been using all his endeavours to make his benefit, at length announced it in a broadside, a placard headed by another effusion from the muse of Squire Bounce, saying:

To gain your favour for this night,
To us would be a grateful sight;
And if the ladies please to come,
The gentlemen won't stay at home.
On public favour we depend;
Your bounty is our only friend;
Your patronage dispos'd this night,
Will either make or mar us quite.

The play was “Othello,” and the after-piece “The Miller and his Men.” Susan played Desdemona remarkably well; our expression of praise or censure of these performers, being always by comparison of their equals; and she had great hopes of softening the displeasure of Mrs. Tramp, who, since the unfortunate girl had ceased to board with them, had become her enemy, and opposed her wishes on every occasion.

But what was the surprise, not only of Susan, but of the whole company, nay, even of the audience, who had hoped to spend a few more shillings among these “R.V.S.,” when Tramp at the conclusion of the piece, stepped forward to thank the audience, in his own and the company’s names, for the patronage and indulgence they had met with. Then, after making this dutiful and appropriate speech, he informed the ladies and gentlemen present, “that this was the last night of the company’s performance in that town.”

The whole company were thunderstruck when they heard this speech, and as soon as Tramp came off the stage, they pressed him closely for an explanation of conduct so extraordinary. His only reply was, “I’ll teach you to rebel, you rascals; you forced me to give you five shillings a piece last week, but now we are even. I expect my friend, Mr. Claptrap, here to-morrow, to purchase my *properties*, and so you may all go to old Harry if you like.”

While all stood dumb, one of the performers, experienced in these matters, saw that no time was to be lost, and stepped before the curtain to deliver a counter address to those of the audience, who still remained in the theatre. In a speech which was equally remarkable for its brevity and perspicuity he pathetically set forth the “grievances of the company, and the villany of their ruler.”

Those in the front seats immediately set up a shout of “Manager, Manager;” but Tramp deigned not to listen, and appear before his patrons of Walsal.

During the performance, his spouse had collected all the cash, and having with the assistance of Miss Clementina, and Master Alonzo, packed into the flying-landau, whatever moveables could be spared from the after-piece, the whole family of the Tramps bade “good night to all,” and bent their steps for the Metropolis, that hiding place of virtue and vice, of genius and ignorance.

As neither the reader nor ourselves belong to that family, but make part and parcel of the performers and audience of Walsal, we hear the incessant cries of “Manager, Manager!”

The Manager was no where to be found, and when the curtain was raised the audience accordingly joined in close debate with the “Venetian Senators.”

If Hogarth had formed one of the audience, he would doubtless have pulled out his pencil, for never was there such an assemblage of figures as on the present occasion; and we, who are compelled to do in words what the painter could so effectually do in colours, can give less expression to the interior of Walsal theatre. The imagination of the reader must fill up our outline.

The audience, who were on the eve of departure, and who, of course had closely wrapped themselves up in cloaks and shawls and tippets, to protect their delicate persons from the coldness of the night air, unanimously stepped on the stage, and mingled with the motley group, who there exhibited the most grotesque, but pitiable pictures of despair and passion.

Behind, lay the mill in ruins, and before, stood the poor actors, lamenting their misery, and upbraiding Tramp's name and their own simplicity. The millers, whom the manager's address had awakened from the dead, and whose shattered limbs had been restored and united by the pressing necessity of putting them in action, were still clad, or partly so, in their robbers' garbs; but some of them who had been preparing for home, wore a part of their costume, and still retained symptoms of ferocity in the magnitude of their mustachios, and the uncouthness of the lower part of their dress. These poor fellows finding they had ground their corn to little purpose, loudly exclaimed against Tramp's treachery, and individually explained its cause to the numerous spectators who surrounded them.

It was now evident to all, that the wily manager had built his own temporary prosperity, on the ruins of twelve "meritorious performers." But the general hub-bub being in some measure appeased, a being more attractive by the oddity of his appearance, as far as regarded the outward man, than all the other actors put together, stepped forward to address the assembly. This was no other than the sable general of the Venetian troops. The gentleman who personated Othello, was rather advanced in years, and had lost that covering of the pate, which serves in a great degree to give ornament and grace to the human figure. Whilst in acting the Moorish chief, he had worn a black frizzled wig belonging to the manager, but which being a *property*, the said manager had sent for, when about to pack up. During the day economy had accustomed Othello to perfect nakedness of scalp, and, on the present occasion, it was no wonder, that the juvenile and female part of the auditory should be rather terrified at beholding the anomalous coincidence of a bald head, white as "unsunned snow," and a face and neck black as soot. In addition to this, to give perfection to the character, Othello had tied up his upper lip by a black horsehair, so as completely to resemble that African feature; and this being the first night of his performing the character, he (not playing in the after-piece) had been so satisfied with his performance as to permit its characteristics to remain in their original appearance and form during the remainder of the evening. To the terror of the ladies, succeeded their hearty laughter, as they, on every side, made way for the cork-stained spokesman.

Othello recapitulated the circumstances which had been given piecemeal by the "Venetian Senators," and the resuscitated millers. He then begged the support of those who had been witnesses of their disaster; and pledged himself, that if the good people of Walsal would but patronise the company for a few nights, their finances would be so recruited that they should be able thereby to join some standard more propitious to their profession.

In the mean time he would take possession of the key of the theatre, with the landlord's leave, for the benefit of the company, and thus would the biter find himself bit, when he came next day to remove the scenery.

This last observation, which was made in total ignorance of Tramp's rapid flight, was quite unnecessary. But the orator with much eloquence, insisted that "necessity was the first law of nature," and they were fully justified in this measure by the fraudulent conduct of Tramp.

These various parcels of a speech and resolutions, propounded for acceptance or rejection, were received with acclamation, and one of Susan's admirers, a Mr. Amberly, stepped forward to offer the company not only protection, but every assistance which his

influence in the town could exert in their favour. He further advised the performers not to separate till, in full council, they had settled a plan for their future conduct; and the performances which he should take care would be abundantly patronised.

This however was but the beginning of his favour, for with much of that feeling which our religion recommends, as to be exercised towards *all* mankind, but which a hard-hearted world bids us cast to the dogs, he invited the whole company to dine with him next day, when they might communicate the result of their deliberations. Others of the audience now also promised their patronage, and the actors and their "best friends," separated for the night, in high satisfaction with each other.

On the following day, drest in their best bibs and tuckers, the children of Thespis paid their respects to Mr. Amberly, and were most hospitably entertained.

After the cloth was removed and the company had drank one glass of wine to the health of their hostess and another to that of their host, Mr. Amberly picked out two of the best scribes from among the actors, and while the others cracked their nuts, or peeled and eat their apples, he, and these men of learning, manufactured, without much expense, a sufficient number of admission tickets for the rest of the season.

These Mr. Amberly sealed in all due form, and with his own hand, impressed upon them, a very beautiful likeness of Shakspeare, that our host had purchased at Stratford-upon-Avon, as he passed through that noted town, some years before.

The price of each ticket was fixed at half-a-crown, and Mr. Amberly advanced the amount of eight tickets to each of the performers before they left his house that evening.

The disinterested hospitality of this generous man, roused the dormant energies of the actors, and as their tickets were sought after, to a larger number than the club-room could rightly accommodate, they soon found themselves "living in clover," under the united management of "Othello," and Squire Bounce.

In the mean time, Claptrap, who had been informed by Susan of Tramp's "moon-light flitting," and of the extraordinary success which the "forsaken covey" had met with, resolved to take them under his special care, and he accordingly visited Walsal, on the very day the "birds were to take their flight." Some of the performers very willingly closed with Claptrap's terms, but a few stood out, determined to become an "independent company," for their late gains, which left them in possession of fifteen pounds a piece, clear of all expenses, seemed to be so inexhaustible a fund, that they cared neither for Shakspeare, nor his executioner, Mr. Claptrap.

CHAPTER VII.

With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly, first ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.
DESERTED VILLAGE.

AMONG the more sober and rational part of the community, were the sable Othello, Squire Bounce and Susan, the principal performers of Mr. Tramp's quondam company.

The rest were a long miscellaneous row
Of creatures; plebeians, whom one does not know,

who, flushed with their late success, dared each to aspire to the exalted situation of manager of an independent company.

In vain did Squire Bounce urge them to listen to reason;—in vain did he point out what a different kind of man Mr. Claptrap was, to their late tyrannous manager, Tramp. They were intoxicated at the idea of possessing fifteen pounds a-piece, and they magnanimously resolved to be independent. Of their peregrination, the particulars have never reached us, though we have ascertained that the magnanimous independence they professed, conducted many of the unhappy wanderers to a state of durance vile, where they languished months; nay some of them years in misery and want.

On the day following that which had attached Squire Bounce, Othello and Susan to the suite of Mr. Claptrap, the company removed to Sutton-coldfield, soon after which Susan received a letter from a gentleman of large fortune in the neighbourhood, who offered to make a handsome settlement upon her, provided she would consent to live with him as his mistress. The perusal of this epistle threw Susan into a violent agitation.

She reflected on the prospect of being comfortably sheltered, fed, and clothed, without the fatigue of providing by labour for the means of satisfying the cravings of nature. She thought it charming to be again flattered and admired—again to move in splendour, and to have servants at command. These were great and strong temptations to one who had so lately felt the necessity of making seven shillings a week provide for all her wants, yet, under her present circumstances, no one knew that she had lived formerly with Colonel Ednor; no one knew she had forsaken a home and parents, and therefore, among the companions with whom she was compelled to associate, she was treated with marked respect.

On the contrary, in her days of splendour, she had sensibly felt the humiliation of her situation, from those whom she considered her inferiors;—for two servant maids whom she had hired, on learning that she was not Colonel Ednor's wife, left her house without even condescending to ask for their wages.

While she was quickly scanning with an agitated mind all these circumstances, Squire Bounce knocked at her chamber-door. He was surprised at her flurried manner: the letter was still in her hand: in haste she hid it, but her feelings were too much for her, and she burst into tears.

Bounce stopped at the door, as if not knowing whether he should retreat or advance; but she pointed to a chair, and he sat down.

Susan wept for some time, and Bounce who really possessed some degree of feeling, (although he had not evinced much by his conduct towards his family,) and more affection for Susan than he chose to allow, begged to know if he could assist her in her present distress.

After some hesitation she shewed him the letter, which he read attentively, but made no comment on its contents, till Susan said, “Oh, Mr. Bounce, what will become of me? What would you advise me to do?”

“Do!” said Bounce, astonished at the question, “why let me send an answer to the gentleman; and tell him that Miss Susan Beverley has chosen a situation in life which exposes her indeed to many trials and difficulties, and worse than all, to many insults; but, that she is resolved in surmounting the one, and rejecting with disdain the other.”

Susan’s colour rose as she gave Squire Bounce permission to answer this impertinent letter; he immediately, however, penned an epistle to this effect, and encouraging Susan to hope they should in time both figure away on the London boards, he left her to send back her answer by the bearer of the gentleman’s gentlemanly offer, who was waiting at the door for that purpose. He then proposed they should visit Mr. Claptrap, when he kindly set forth Susan’s conduct on the present occasion in the most flattering light.

That very evening Susan played Southern’s pathetic Isabella; but, in the middle of that scene, when she receives the ring, and repeats these thrilling words:

> I have view’d him all:
> And let me, let me say it to myself,
> I’ll live again, and rise but from the tomb,

some other object than Villeroy seemed to arrest her attention. Her eyes were fixed beyond the stage. Her agitation became extreme, and she was sinking to the ground before Villeroy had said,

> “Have you forgot me quite?”

Squire Bounce looked surprise; for according to the play, she was not to fall till he had thrown off his cloak and discovered himself. He however, hastened to support her, but her agitation he perceived to be real; confused, he knew not what to do, till at length the audience called out to him, to go on. Still however, Susan made no reply, and rising suddenly from the ground, he turned towards the audience, and said that Miss Beverley had fainted in earnest.

The curtain then fell, and Susan was raised from the ground, and placed in a chair. By the usual applications she was restored to sensibility, and her first words expressed a wish to be conveyed to her lodging.

“I cannot,” she continued, “go on the stage again to night, pray make an apology for me, I must go home.”

Here poor Susan’s feelings found relief in tears, and when she was left alone, she threw herself on the bed, and wept bitterly.

The object which had caused so much terror and agitation to Miss Beverley, was none other than Colonel Ednor in the boxes. And he was no less surprised, to find in Miss Beverley, his former companion, Susan Cowslip.

The gentleman with whom he was in company, had persuaded him to go to the *theatre*, to see a very pretty little actress.

"She is so pretty," he continued, "that I sent her the other day a very handsome offer of a settlement, to which the little fool returned me this indignant answer."

Mr. Faulkland at the same time drew from his pocket Squire Bounce's epistle to the amusement of Colonel Ednor, who quizzed his friend most unmercifully on the rejection of his suit.

"I should like," he added, "to see this primitive strolling player, and to night we will go to the play and behold poor Isabella murdered."

"By heavens!" said the Colonel, "It is Susan Cowslip;" but this moment Susan recognised her betrayer, and overcome by his sudden appearance, she fainted.

On the following morning a note was delivered to her, addressed to Miss Beverley, of which the following is a copy:

My dear Susan,

My surprise at seeing you last night, was little less than your own. You have done wisely to change your name; I am however surprised to find that you have been so silly, as to refuse the very liberal offer of Mr. Faulkland: why, my dear Susan, it is an opportunity you can never expect to have repeated of settling yourself in the world. Allow me the pleasure of calling on you to-morrow morning, and then we can talk over this matter—till then adieu. Ever your sincere friend,

EDNOR.

Susan burst into a passion of tears on reading this epistle, which she tore into a hundred pieces. In the midst of her agitation Mrs. Claptrap knocked at her door.

Susan did not immediately answer, and Mrs. Claptrap opened it, "expecting," as she said, "to find Miss Beverley ill in bed."

Susan was however, very busily employed in picking up the torn letter; her eyes were swoln with weeping, and her whole person was in a tremour.

Mrs. Claptrap halted at the door, surprised at Susan's agitation; but the hapless girl bade her come in and placed a chair for her. The veteran actress eyed Susan with a scrutinizing glance; then looked at the torn letter, then again fixed her keen dark eye on the novice in acting.

Susan could not stand this—she rose from her seat and went to the window. "I am sorry, Miss Beverley," at length began Mrs. Claptrap, "to see you thus distressed. Can I do any thing to relieve you from your affliction, or at least lighten your grief?"

"No," replied Susan, bursting again into tears, "No! Mrs. Claptrap, no, nobody can release me from my affliction—Oh what will now become of me?" "Indeed, Miss Beverley," said Mrs. Claptrap, "I am greatly surprised at your agitation, it seems very strange not only to me, but to all the company; what could cause your fainting fit last night? I fear, Miss Beverley, that some love affair is at the bottom of this. Perhaps you would do well to make me your friend."

Poor Susan thought she should *not* do well by making Mrs. Claptrap her friend, and therefore instead of replying to this *friendly* good woman, she preserved an absolute silence.

The manager's lady was exceedingly indignant at this behaviour, and rising with the air she assumed when enacting Queen Catherine, she said:—

"'Deserve we no more reverence?'

You may repent this want of confidence, Miss Beverley; a young person, like you, should make friends of those who are older and wiser than themselves—but I shall not intrude on you; I wish you a good day." So saying the tragedy queen left the apartment.

Scarcely had Mrs. Claptrap made her exit, when Mr. Bounce appeared; he was really grieved at Susan's apparent distress, and began to offer her every possible consolation, when Colonel Ednor's voice was heard upon the stairs.

Susan started from her seat; then again sunk into it, where she remained pale and breathless, heedless of all Jack's tender speeches.

Upon the entrance of the Colonel, Squire Bounce rose from his seat by Susan, and advancing towards Ednor, he asked him "what he meant by intruding upon Miss Beverley, without first knocking at her door."

The Colonel eyed Jack from head to foot with a look of the most sovereign contempt: then without deigning to make any reply, he advanced towards Susan, calling her familiarly by her christian name.

Susan started from her seat and clinging to Jack, entreated he would not forsake her.

"Oh begone, Colonel Ednor," she exclaimed, "Oh begone."

"Why, my dear Susan," he replied, "this folly is beyond my utmost expectations." Then addressing himself to Squire Bounce, he proceeded thus, making a low bow, "May I beg, young gentleman, that you would leave us awhile?"

"Oh no," rejoined Susan; "do not leave me, Mr. Bounce."

Jack was every minute more and more puzzled as to what this meeting could mean, but he had not enacted heroes to so little purpose as to quit a lady in distress. Besides he was interested in Susan's welfare, and he very coolly replied, that, "he should remain with Miss Beverley, so long as his presence was not disagreeable to her."

"Upon my word, Susan," replied the Colonel, "you seem to have secured a champion—but I would have you to know, Sir, that I am not to be insulted by a strolling player, and an R.V. a rogue and a vagabond, Sir."

Jack was about to reply, when Susan entreated he would be silent. "For my sake, she added; "Oh, Mr. Bounce, for my sake take no notice of what he may say."

Poor Susan shook in every limb, as the Colonel advanced towards them; lifting his arm at the same time in a threatening posture, saying to Jack, "Do you choose, Sir, to leave us alone, or not?"

"No," was the firm reply of Jack.

"Then I shall make you," was the Colonel's answer, giving the Thespian hero a smart cut across the shoulders.

Jack's arm was instantly raised to return the compliment, when Susan's voice again arrested him, though his blood rushed through every vein impelled by indignation and revenge.

"In the presence of a lady you are safe, Colonel Ednor," at length said Jack; "there are other means to get redress, and I shall teach you, that though a strolling player, and a vagabond, the laws of England protect all her subjects.

"In the presence of a *lady*," repeated the Colonel, with a look of the most sovereign contempt: "I am safe; and that *lady* a strolling player, and my cat-off mistress! I thank you, Sir, for your *gentlemanly* conduct."

This cruel sarcasm struck cold upon Susan's heart; her hold of Mr. Bounce's arm relaxed, and she would have fallen, but his helping hand was still extended to support her; his colour, however, went and came, and in considerable agitation he placed her in a chair. Colonel Ednor walked backwards and forwards, occasionally stopping before the silly, vain victim, of his barbarous duplicity: as she again became animated he approached her, but she rose from her chair, and in low, but firm accents, bade him never come near her more.

"This last act of cruelty," she continued, bursting into tears, "this last act of cruelty, has wrecked all my hopes of future happiness. By following one steady line of conduct, I had regained some little respectability;—and you, oh cruel Colonel Ednor, you, a second time, have blighted all my hopes!—Leave me; do not insult me any longer by your presence.—Alas, in your countenance, Mr. Bounce, I see that all is over;—yet, as a man, I entreat you will not leave me to the mercy of that depraved wretch."

"No," said Mr. Bounce, "I will not leave you, Miss Beverley;—and so, Sir," he continued, addressing the Colonel, "you are welcome to stay here as long as you please, but we shall remain here together." Colonel Ednor, in a great passion, "swore that Mr. Bounce should repent his insolence," and then left the room.

A silence of some minutes followed his departure, which Susan was the first to break, and thus began: "I cannot tell you, Mr. Bounce, how much I am obliged to you; but I must leave the company; for I know the Colonel, in revenge will betray the secret, which I have so carefully preserved. Oh, Mr. Bounce, you shall know all my sad story; but now, dare I ask you to stay longer with me? yet I am afraid to remain here without you; what shall I do?"

Jack considered for some time, and then advised that she should immediately quit her present lodging, and said that he would send for Mr. Claptrap to remain with her, while he went to procure an apartment for her.

Mr. Claptrap obeyed the summons, and while Squire Bounce went to look for lodgings, Susan, with many sighs, disclosed to Mr. Claptrap, that Beverley was not her real name.

Mr. Claptrap listened with great attention to her story, and promised to conceal from Mrs. Claptrap the particulars he had just heard.

Susan then begged he would communicate to Mr. Bounce, all she had just told him. Her feelings were so poignant, and her frame so exhausted, that she could scarcely express her thanks to Mr. Claptrap, for his assurances, that while she conducted herself with propriety, he would be her friend.

When Mr. Bounce returned, he proposed that Susan should leave her present habitation, about the time the London coach set off for the metropolis, that the woman of

the house, might suppose she was gone thither. These arrangements being made, and carried into effect, Susan took possession of a small room in an obscure cottage, in the very heart of the town.

Mrs. Claptrap was told, that it was necessary Susan should conceal herself, in order to elude the troublesome impertinence of a gentleman who had, at a former period of *her* life, endeavoured to persuade her to live under his protection, and who under the pretence of much kindness, had teased her by impertinent questions and insinuations.

To this relation Mrs. Claptrap did not give much credence, yet, just for the present, the lady manager had no wish to fall out with Susan, for in losing her, she feared to lose Mr. Bounce, one of their chief performers.

In this retirement, we shall leave Susan to the bitter reflections of her conscience, and the contemplation of future toil and trouble.

When Colonel Ednor returned to his friend's house, he broke forth in ungentlemanly threats and imprecations against Mr. Bounce in the following terms:

"He shall suffer for it, I am resolved. Really I was quite surprised when I saw Susan the other night. She is much prettier than I thought she was, at least, than she appeared to me when I gave her up. I have half an inclination to take her again; but that meddling fool, will, I suppose, interfere: but let him if he dare."

Mr. Faulkland endeavoured to pacify him, telling him it was not worth while to trouble himself about either of them.

"You know," he added, "we leave this place, to-morrow afternoon; and after all, I think, Ednor, this Thespian hero only did what every honest man should do, under the same circumstances. I do assure you, that I would not repeat *my* offer to *Miss Beverley*. I admire her resolution; a resolution and a virtue I did not expect to find in a strolling actress; and which is, in my sentiment, doubly commendable, since she has tasted the sweets of luxury and idleness. Come, come, give up this pursuit, and let us talk on some other subject."

Ednor pretended to be convinced, and Susan was named no more; but early on the following morning, he went to her former lodging, and was hastening up stairs, as soon as the door was opened, but the landlady called to him to stop, asking him if he wanted to see Miss Beverley? adding, "She is gone to London, I believe; she left my house last night, when the stage set off, and she did 'nt act last night; and my lodgings are let to another person."

"The deuce she is!" ejaculated the Colonel, "but this may be some trick." So he hastily went on, and opened the door of the apartment he had been in the day before. There sat Othello and another performer. They both started up, and advancing towards the door; the Colonel by a hasty retrograde movement, made a false step, and fell backwards down the stairs. He broke no limbs, but cut his lip and forehead, which bled profusely. Othello hastened to offer his assistance, but the Colonel, whose chagrin at the accident, taught him to refuse haughtily the proferred assistance, and putting his handkerchief to his face, he rushed out of the house, in a rage. On reaching his friend's house, he gave some sort of explanation for his wounds, which satisfied Mr. Faulkland, and on that same afternoon, they left that neighbourhood for the metropolis.

As Mr. Claptrap's company were about moving from their present place of abode, Susan did not again appear on the stage, the short time of their stay at Sutton-Colefield.

Indeed, she was so out of spirits, that it required her utmost exertion, to enable her to attend the first rehearsal, on their arrival at Cheltenham.

Mrs. Claptrap had relaxed a little in her attention to the poor girl, and Susan felt keenly this alteration; but what affected her more than all, was the gradual coolness of Squire Bounce.

CHAPTER VIII.

Can I, young Hamlet once, to nature lost,
Behold, O horrible! my father's ghost,
With grisly beard, pale cheek—stalk up and down,
And he the royal Dane—want—half-a-crown?
Forbid it, ladies! gentlemen, forbid it!
Give joy to age, and let us say—you did it.
To you, ye gods, I make my last appeal,
You have a right to judge, as well as feel;
Will your high wisdoms to our schemes incline,
That kings, queens, heroes, gods, and ghosts may dine?
Olympus shakes! that omen all secures,
May every joy you give, be tenfold yours.

GARRICK'S EPILOGUE ON QUITTING THE STAGE.

MR. Bounce had in fact been induced to pay Susan many attentions when she first joined the company, from a natural wish to befriend a pretty unprotected girl; in the course of time, something like affection had mingled with this feeling of urbanity; and he had even questioned himself once or twice on the possibility of her making a good wife.

There were however, moments, when his naturally good understanding befriended him, yet he was wavering, when the communication of Mr. Claptrap about her former connexion with Colonel Ednor completely decided his future mode of conduct. Having made up his mind on this important point, he deemed it ungenerous any longer to pay her those attentions, which had induced her to believe that his attachment would terminate in matrimony.

After some little consideration on this subject, and the uncomfortable life he had led for these last two years, he resolved on writing a penetential letter to his father, whom the reader has already recognised by the name of Mr. Weldon, soliciting his forgiveness, and promising if he would extend the hand of mercy, that he, the said Jack, would endeavour to obliterate the folly of his former conduct by a double diligence in any plan of life his father should be pleased to point out.

Mr. Weldon, senior, read this letter twice: the first time with feelings of indignation: the second perusal, however, softened his heart, and with the open letter he repaired to his wife, who fanned the slumbering spark of forgiveness in the worthy man's breast. She pointed out that we were commanded to forgive even our enemies; how much more, those who were so nearly allied to us, and who by their repentance and contrition, laid themselves open to our reproof as well as our mercy. Jack's sister too, with tears in her eyes interceded for him, and before a week had elapsed Squire Bounce received the following letter:

"Dear Jack,—

"So you have at last come to your senses; thanks to the buffetings and trials you have experienced in the respectable way of life you chose to adopt. Mercy on us, that a man, who could have been comfortably settled in his own native town, and

enjoying all the comforts of life, should choose to be strolling about in barns and tap-rooms! But I suppose by this time you are heartily sick of mumming away before a gaping audience. Well, as your mother and sister have taken it on themselves to answer for your good behaviour, I will permit you to return; but bring none of your play-books home with you, throw them to the dogs, and never let me hear the name of Shakspeare drop from your lips, or wo betide you.

I send you a ten-pound note, as your cash may be low, and as you tell me you have never exposed your real name, come back, you young rogue, but mind; let us have none of your fool's tricks here, no starts and fine tragedy airs: leave them behind you in the barn, where, I suppose, you and your companions are glad to shelter yourselves from the cold. Ah, well! the more I think of you, the more I am puzzled; and I must hasten to conclude my letter, lest I should change my mind.

Your mother and sister desire their love, and so good-bye to you for the present Mr. Jack; and according as you behave, so you will find me, your loving father, or the reverse.

JOHN WELDON.

The receipt of this epistle gave Jack unfeigned pleasure; he immediately hastened to Mr. Claptrap, and presented him with the best part of his superb wardrobe, viz., Richard's robe, a suit of pasteboard armour belonging to the ghost of Hamlet's father, the fools-cap in which he had been wont to personate the fool in King Lear, two or three vandyked ruffs, nicely cut in paper, a pair of tawny boots, a helmet à la Giovanni, three pair of whiskers, a black, a white, and a red curly wig, a Spanish hat, Penrudduck's walking-stick, a robber's hat, a box of rouge, a Jew's garbardine made of brown calico, sometimes converted into a Dutch merchant's polonaise, by studding it with bell buttons; it also occasionally had represented a monk's habit, when a hood was attached to it; a miller's hat, and many other valuables too numerous to specify.

He then told that gentleman he had received a letter from his father, requesting he would return to his family; "and," continued Squire Bounce, "as I find my abilities are not of that cast as to sanction my hopes of an engagement at one of the London theatres, I am anxious to acquire distinction in some other way. I have to express my acknowledgements for your liberal conduct towards me, and I beg you will do me the favour to accept of the few trifles that bundle contains, as a tribute of my gratitude."

Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap were vociferous in their expressions of regret, at parting with so accomplished a performer, using every argument in their power to induce him to alter his resolution; but Jack had conjured up the comfortable fire-side of his father's house, and he was impatient to make one in the family circle, which now surrounded it.

Mr. Bounce, having made known his intentions to Mr. Claptrap, went to Susan's lodging, and communicated the same intelligence to the unfortunate girl, who was diligently studying some of the long speeches of Lady Randolph, and at the same time as diligently employed with her needle.

When he announced his departure for the morrow, the hand which had so rapidly passed the needle through the splendid robe of queen's stuff adorned with yellow trimming to imitate gold lace, remained suspended; the yellow silk was drawn so completely to its utmost extent, that had it been jarred it would have twanged like a harp string.

“Going!” she exclaimed, her hand falling like a lump of lead, in her lap. “Going, Mr. Bounce,” she added in faltering accents, and pallid cheek; “what then will become of *me?*

Squire Bounce was not prepared for this powerful appeal to his feelings, and he was silent. Susan having composed herself a little, entreated to know the cause of his sudden resolution to leave the company. Jack then told her that he was reconciled to his father, as we have already detailed; but when he said that he was going *home*, Susan burst into tears, and said, “I have no home to go to, no living soul who cares what may become of poor Susan. Oh, Mr. Bounce, I would give any thing to quit this strolling life, but who would receive a stroller into their family even as a servant?” “Oh,” she continued, “I thought it a fine thing to be an actress, but I find myself exposed to want, misery, and contempt, where I expected to find fame, wealth, and adoration.”

“Not contempt, Miss Beverley,” replied Bounce; “while you conduct yourself with propriety, for where the temptations to error are so numerous, there is the greater honour in repelling them.”

Susan shook her head, as she replied, “Yes, to contempt, Mr. Bounce, for when we left Sutton-Colefield, for this place I heard a chimney-sweeper say to his boy, who was pointing and laughing at me, when I was in the scene cart, ‘Hold your tongue, boy; what do you laugh at? can’t you be quiet? there’s no knowing what any of *us* may come to at last!”

Here Mr. Bounce’s gravity and feeling were overpowered at Susan’s serious description of so ludicrous a circumstance, and he burst into a fit of laughter, to the great discomposure of the poor girl, who thought it no laughing matter. He begged pardon for his involuntary mirth, but said, “that he really hoped Miss Beverley would pardon him, for if that were the only mark of contempt she ever met with, she would indeed be fortunate.”

Susan’s spirits, however, were depressed at parting with Mr. Bounce, who was the only gentleman of the company, to whom she could at all times communicate her sorrows, and she in vain endeavoured to rally her spirits. Squire Bounce gave her encouragement to hope for an engagement at some of the London theatres, and having again and again exhorted her to persevere in the same prudent line of conduct she had hitherto adopted, he put into her hand a five pound-note, entreating she would do him the favour to accept that, as a mark of his friendship.

He also presented her with a plume of feathers, with which he was wont to adorn his hat when he enacted Richard the third; a paste loop and button, two pair of silk stockings not *much* darned, and the splendid garter which graced his knee, when he personated any of the royal blood of England.

These donations were gratefully received by Susan, and she ventured to ask Mr. Bounce to write to her.

Jack was extremely sorry to say “*that* was quite impossible, for his father had positively declared, that if he did not completely break off all connexion with persons in a theatrical line, he would cut him off with a shilling.”

“If however,” he added, “you should ever come to Boston, I will, if possible, call on you; in the mean time, believe me I shall never forget the days we have passed together in buffeting the world, and the pleasure I have experienced in sometimes benefiting you by my advice.”

Susan now wept aloud; she felt that in losing Mr. Bounce, she was losing a brother, and a few minutes elapsed before she could reply to his friendly language.

He had promised to play Norval that night for her benefit; and he assured her, that the last time he appeared in public, as a performer, should, as he hoped, be for her benefit indeed.

Squire Bounce now took his leave, and disposed of the rest of his wardrobe to his brothers, of the sock and buskin. Jack however could not relinquish that vanity, which had first induced him to lead the life of a strolling player, and in the play-bill, it was announced, that the part of Norval would be enacted by Mr. Bounce, *being his last appearance on the stage*.

He further added, that he would, between the play and the farce, repeat Shakspeare's seven ages as an appropriate speech on the occasion, to which he would add, "A farewell address," written by himself.

Susan expressed the warmest acknowledgements to Mr. Bounce for his intended kindness, which she, poor silly girl, wholly attributed to his friendship for her. Mr. Bounce did not undeceive her, but, secretly exulted in that transitory fame, which, as Mr. Bounce he should that night acquire; he exerted himself to the utmost, and was received with much applause.

When the play was over, and sufficient time had been allowed him to rise from the dead, and then equip himself in the habit of a gentleman, he stepped forward and recited the "Seven Ages."

After a short pause which was necessary for him to make, that the public might have an opportunity of expressing their approbation before he began his address, he spoke as follows. We cannot help however, observing, that this poetic effusion of Mr. Bounce's genius, had been highly applauded in the green room. "It was," as he himself observed," "rather to be classed under that species of composition, commonly called an ode, than any other, from its irregularity; but as it contained some expressions *novel* and *striking*, and not generally found in poetry, he hoped it would do.

"If however," he continued, "it should not draw on me those plaudits which from its merits I have every reason to expect; I shall but share the fate of many other original geniuses, whose works have been neglected during their author's life, but who have acquired by posthumous fame, an honour more to be envied than the most flattering praises of contemporaries. My epilogue will live, when I shall be dead."

Othello ventured to say, that he should much rather for his part enjoy his fame while living, as he might then hope to fill his pockets, a circumstance of far more importance to him, than posthumous fame, but Othello had no father to go to; Mr. Bounce had: and it is very much to be questioned whether this trifling circumstance might not operate in some degree upon the young man, who thus sublimely preferred posthumous fame, to present renown. But we beg pardon for this digression, and proceed to give the lines which called forth Squire Bounce's magnanimous preference, and Othello's more humble, yet, more sensible choice, of bread and cheese, to posthumous renown.

In love with fame, I trod these magic boards;
In love with wealth, great and unbounded hoards,
In my mind's eye—in distant prospect I beheld.

But now my fame must to the ground be fell'd:
My father's voice, in tones of deep despair,
Calls *me* from hence, ME his only hope, his
heir:—
So farewell, gentles all, while time shall last,
Your favours, in my bosom lock'd up fast,
Shall live—when I am far, ah! far away.—
When hills between us rise, when woods be-
tween us lay,
Then, oh! then my panting heart shall lean to
thee,
And my warm'st wish and sanguin'st hope shall be,
That odious want may never stare thee in the face.
That plenty, peace, and love, may still inhabit
in this place,
That you may all live long, and never meet
disgrace,
Nor lack of *filthy lucre* cramp your generous
breasts,
When such as me entreat your aid to help them
in distress.

Here Mr. Bounce made a low bow; and some one in the boxes having said, "I am sorry, Mr. Bounce, you are going to quit us," this speech was repeated from various parts of the house, and the Thespian hero quitted the stage deeply affected at the marks of sympathy which his farewell address had elicited from the hearts of his auditors.

If Mr. Bounce felt satisfied with his exit from the stage, Susan Cowslip had reason to rejoice as heartily in his success as himself, for after having paid all the expenses of the house, she netted seven pounds!

On the following morning Mr. Bounce took his leave of Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap and company, and set off for Boston in Lincolnshire. As he proceeded on his way, he could not but rejoice in his expectations, nor could he sufficiently appreciate his father's indulgence, in offering him an asylum under the parental roof, after his disobedient conduct.

As he drew near home, his heart began to be agitated, and the first sight of his native town, brought the tear to his eye; but ashamed of this weakness he walked on faster, having performed part of the journey on foot; for when he had given five pounds to Susan, and one other pound to Othello; when he had paid Mr. Claptrap a small sum he owed to him, and satisfied his landlady for a fortnight's lodging and board, his ten pounds began to look rather small; the balance of the thirty pounds had gone long ago. But the *filthy lucre* occupied little of his thoughts at the present moment; he was going home where his wants would be supplied, and where plenty and smiling faces awaited him.

When he knocked at his father's door, he trembled, but without ceremony entered the passage, but the servant, prevented his advance, and asked his name; he impatiently replied Mr. Bounce; but just as the maid had opened the parlour-door, he recollected

himself, and exclaiming “Stop, stop, girl, for mercy’s sake—stop—not Bounce—did I say Bounce?—Mr. Weldon I mean.”

Fortunately, there was no one in the apartment, but hearing his mother’s voice above stairs, he sprang towards her, and clasping her in his arms, he repeated, “My dear mother, my dearest mother; do you not know me? do you not recollect poor Jack Bou—Weldon, I mean?”

Poor Mrs. Weldon, was, at first, alarmed at the unexpected seizure made by her son, whom she did not immediately recollect; but in a few seconds, his voice, which strongly resembled that of his father, struck upon her ear, and though time had considerably altered his appearance since he left Boston, a long lanky boy of fourteen; yet she soon discovered traces of her wandering son.

His sister attracted by the noise, came to see what was the matter. Jack was so altered, that she had not the slightest recollection of him, and therefore called loudly for assistance, supposing that the young man was a robber.

The old gentleman, who, from the garden heard the uproar created by his undutiful son’s arrival, hastened into the parlour, and giving Jack a hearty squeeze of the hand, welcomed him home, by “Prodigal dog,—so you’ve cut with Punch’s mockers.—Well, it is a long lane that has no turning, as your poor mother always says.” And with many such expressions did the fond father greet “his naughty boy.” That was the most severe epithet Mrs. Weldon bestowed on Jack, of whom we now take leave for a season.

CHAPTER IX.

Methinks ’tis pitiful to see her try,
For strength of arms, and energy of eye;
With vigour lost, and spirits worn away,
Her pomp and pride she labours to display,
And when awhile she’s tried her part to act,
To find her thoughts arrested by some fact;
When struggles more and more severe are seen,
In the plain actress than the Danish queen,
* * * * * *
Sad and in doubt she to her purse applies
For cause of comfort, where no comfort lies;
Then to her task, she sighing turns again,
“Oh Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.”

CRABBE’S BOROUGH.

THE departure of Squire Bounce, was the beginning of fresh trouble to Susan. Mrs. Claptrap, unawed by the presence of her defender, threw out many hints, that she was well informed of the particulars of Susan’s story; and with all the acrimony of a vulgar mind, she relaxed in those attentions she had been accustomed to pay the hapless girl. She, however, acted only on her own surmises, for Claptrap honourably kept the secret intrusted to him; exhorting Susan to persevere in her good conduct, and to be diligent in studying those characters she most liked; that she might, at some future time, obtain an engagement at one of the London theatres.

Encouraged by this hope of figuring in the capital, Susan bore Mrs. Claptrap’s caprice and ill humour, for some time; but at length, her tyranny became so overbearing, that Claptrap himself advised her to quit the company, saying, what was indeed a fact, “that he could not bear to see her so ill used;” but, at the same time, he sensibly observed, “Mrs. Claptrap is my wife, and if I were to take your part openly and decidedly, I should never know a moment’s peace, and you would fare worse than ever. I will give you a letter to Mr. Playright, and strongly recommend you to him, and you may, perhaps, get an engagement at his theatre.” Susan thanked Mr. Claptrap for his advice, and immediately prepared for her journey to London.

In the evening, however, she played “Jane Shore,” with more than her usual success, and one of the audience was clamorous in his applause. His conduct was so singular, that he very much amused some of his neighbours; for Susan no sooner appeared on the stage, than he stretched his neck forwards, then rubbed his eyes, again looked at the provincial actress, saying:

“What a likeness! bless me, I never saw so strong a likeness in my life.” But when Susan began to speak, he exclaimed in an under tone, “It is she herself! I declare she plays very well.”

As the tragedy proceeded, his observations continued. “Ah, poor thing!—well, who would have thought!” Regardless of the attention his manners excited, he followed the woe-worn heroine to her last stage of misery, with the most profound feeling,

frequently applying his handkerchief to his eyes, and ejaculating short speeches, indicative of the sympathy he felt now for the misfortunes of Jane Shore, and occasionally for her representative Susan Cowslip. When the curtain fell, he heaved a deep sigh, and he continued for some minutes motionless, till he was roused by the approach of a little boy, who gave him a note, with these words written on it.

"Do not betray me!"—but I will see you to-morrow morning, if you will call at the first cottage by the road-side, leading out of the town. Ask for *Miss Beverley*.—Susan.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Grigs, for that was the auditor who had admired and pitied Miss Beverley, "this is quite an adventure."

"A pleasant one, I hope," replied one of the by-standers. This observation, recalled Mr. Grigs to himself, who looking at the person who had thus addressed him, for one minute, then turned short upon his heel, and addressed the boy, who was standing staring at the apothecary, saying: "Very well, boy, very well;—that's all:—but stop here,—here's two-pence for you."

The boy's countenance relaxed into an expression of profound respect, and pulling down his head, by a curl which wantoned on his fair front, and scraping his heel at the same time, he departed, saying: "Thank you, Sir.

As Susan lay dead on the stage, she caught sight of Mr. Grigs, and fearful of a second exposure, she scarcely waited for the curtain to fall, before she jumped up, and ran off the stage, and wrote the note in question. Calling the prompter's boy to her, with whom she was a great favourite, she bade him give that note to the little gentleman in black, with a white wig, who was standing by the *orchestra*, leaning his chin upon both hands, which were supported by a substantial gold-headed cane.

The boy obeyed; and the result of this note was the following interview next morning between Mr. Grigs and Miss Beverley.

The apothecary mused over his breakfast, upon his approaching interview with Susan, and then set off for the cottage by the road-side. His step was measured, and holding his gold-headed cane with both hands, the top supporting his chin, a very usual manner of carrying a walking stick, his small cocked hat shading strongly his face, the protuberance of his wig preventing its resting equally on all parts of his head, he at length reached Susan's door.

His appearance was respectable, and the cottager's wife dropped him a low curtsy, and said "She would call Miss Beverley down to him. "When Susan appeared, she asked the dame if she could spare her kitchen for five minutes?

"Yes, sure," was the reply, "and welcome."

"I have but little time," said Susan, addressing Mr. Grigs, "for we rehearse at ten, to tell you all my troubles; but to say how much I am obliged to you for this condescension is impossible."

She then, in as few words as possible, gave the story of her life, not forgetting Colonel Ednor's discovery of her. Her recital, which was accompanied by many tears, excited Mr. Grigs's sympathy; and he advised her to return to her own village; but Susan had not strength of mind enough for such an attempt; she could not bear to encounter

All the reproaches, infamies and scorns,
That every tongue and finger would find for *her*.

“No, Mr. Grigs,” she replied, “I can’t, indeed, I can’t return to Silvershoe; but I will endeavour to merit the pity you have kindly expressed for me.” She then inquired after the Woodbine family, and upon hearing that Mary had got a lovely boy, she burst into tears, exclaiming, “Happy Mary!—Oh, Mr. Grigs, tell her, from me, she cannot possibly value her own happiness enough. Happy Mary.”

“Hem!” said Mr. Grigs, “yes, certainly, she is happy; but, Susan, as the Spanish proverb says, ‘every body has their skeleton in the closet,’ and Mary might be happier: but, then, Susan, in *her* case, and *your* case, I believe we may trace your sorrows to your own selves. I don’t mean to distress you, Susan, but merely to say that we often accuse others, ay, even Providence itself, for the miseries, which are the result of our own folly. But, be assured, Susan, that while you conduct yourself properly, you shall always find a friend in me.”

Susan’s tears flowed gently as Mr. Grigs proceeded.

She felt the truth of his observations, but entreated he would believe, that it should be the study of her life, to merit the friendship he so kindly offered. “And now,” said Susan, “tell me about my father and mother? are they well? do they ever mention me?”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Grigs, “they are well, quite well; I see them sometimes, but I cannot say they ever mentioned you to me; but that is not surprising, you know, Susan, all things considered. But I am afraid I am intruding upon you; it is just upon the stroke of ten. God bless you, Susan; and be a good girl, and remember what I have said to you; I will always befriend you, while you conduct yourself with propriety.”

Mr. Grigs then took his leave, giving her a guinea; he shook her cordially by the hand, and departed, while Susan bent her steps to a large barn, in which the company were, that night, to enact Richard the Third.

After the rehearsal, Susan made known her intentions of quitting the company to the lady manager, whose surprise at her resolution, was as great, as her disappointment was unfeigned; for Susan was the best actress of the company, always excepting Mrs. Claptrap, and would therefore, be a loss.

The latter made use of some arguments to induce Miss Beverley to remain in her present advantageous situation, but finding her oratory ineffectual, she changed her tone; adding, “That Miss Beverley might go farther, and fare worse.”

Susan’s departure was regretted by many of the company, and by none more than by Othello; who, finding her really serious, made up his mind, and at once, upon a point which had hitherto puzzled him, namely: that of offering himself and his *fortunes* to the fair actress, to whose personal attractions he was not insensible, but whose theatrical abilities were more substantial reasons for his resolution to sacrifice his liberty. He could not, however, have preferred his suit at a more unpropitious moment, for London and its golden harvest were within the grasp of Susan, and without any deliberation, she rejected the suit of the tawny Othello. The next morning, with a light heart, and that pliability of mind, generally characteristic of her sex, she entered into the stage coach. With great rapidity of thought and many a sigh, she glanced her past life, but with the goal in view, (a London theatre) she looked for better times. Yet Susan was heartily sick of the stage, and would gladly have adopted some other mode of life: but all access was closed to a more comfortable employment; for who would engage her as a servant, without a character? Not a day passed, but she sighed for the peace and quiet of her native village; and often, with bitter tears, lamented her credulity in listening to the artful tales of

Colonel Ednor, who had seduced her from the path of virtue; and who, regardless of the miseries he had heaped on so many aching hearts, still, as Susan thought, lived on, caressed and courted by the gay and thoughtless, as the most agreeable and captivating companion.

Susan had often enacted Jane Shore, and, perhaps, Mrs. Siddons herself, had seldom repeated the following lines with more pathos than did poor Susan Cowslip:

Mark by what partial justice we are judged:
Such is the fate unhappy women find,
And such the curse entailed upon our kind,
That man, the lawless libertine, may rove
Free and unquestioned through the wilds of love;
While woman, sense and nature's easy fool,
If poor weak woman swerve from virtue's rule,
If strongly charm'd, she leave the thorny way,
And in the softer paths of pleasure stray,
Ruin ensues, reproach, and endless shame,
And one false step, for ever damns her fame:
In vain with tears the loss she may deplore,
In vain look back to what she was before;
She sets, like stars that fall, to rise no more.

Yet Susan wanted not good sense enough to own the justice of this severe, but wholesome law, which had driven her from her home and all her former connexions; but she nevertheless could not avoid thinking it hard that such disgrace should attach solely to the weaker vessel; and that while she was shut out of society, her betrayer, was, by many persons, even of her own sex, better received than men of a less pleasing exterior, but of unquestionable worth. As far as related to Colonel Ednor, Susan was not quite correct, as the sequel of our tale will shew.

Mr. Playright, on whom she waited immediately on her arriving in London, very willingly engaged her; and, for some years, Susan figured away as the principal performer of the establishment which had the honour of exhibiting her talents; but time passed, and with its flight, fled also the graces of youth and loveliness: her voice, too, lost its sweetness, and after having spent her prime in this same theatre, she was told, she was now only fit for second-rate characters, and therefore must not expect so large a salary. Indignant at this ungenerous conduct, she relinquished her situation, and again repaired to the mart in the vicinity of the larger theatres, where she learnt that a company in the north, was in want of a tragedy queen.

Thither she bent her wandering steps, and was well received.

In one of her perambulations she played at Boston, and though time had laid his hand heavily on her fading figure, she was recognised by Jack Weldon, now a steady character in his native town, where he acted a principal part as an attorney of considerable eminence.

His father being dead, he indulged so far in his old *penchant* for the stage, as to shew much kindness to the itenerant companies who stopped at Boston; and without making himself personally known to Susan, he beat up volunteers for her benefit, and

enclosed her a two pound note, merely saying in the envelope, “That it came from an old acquaintance.”

Susan immediately puzzled herself by ineffectual attempts to discover the generous donor; but at last Squire Bounce presented himself to her imagination; she accordingly inquired at the post-office, as the most likely place where she could gain any intelligence whether such a person was to be found in the town; but young Weldon had prudently concealed his real name, even from Claptrap, and thus successfully eluded all Susan’s attempts at discovering him. Thus year after year of Susan’s life rolled unprofitably away, till at last, the stage-struck *heroine*, who had, in beauty’s bloom, figured away as the principal performer of several companies of comedians, could scarcely find breath enough to repeat the long speeches to which she still endeavoured to give strength and energy.

CHAPTER X.

Yet, yet endure, nor murmur, O my soul,
For are not thy transgressions great and numberless?
Do they not cover thee like rising floods,
And press thee like a weight of waters down?
Does not the hand of righteousness afflict thee,
And who shall plead against it, who shall say
To Power almighty, thou hast done enough:
Or bid his dreadful rod of vengeance stay?
Wait then with patience, till the circling hours
Shall bring the time of thy appointed rest,
And lay thee down in death. JANE SHORE.

SUSAN'S services were however still acceptable, for in characters not requiring youthful beauty, she to the last played with some degree of success, and at Market Deeping, she distinguished herself by enacting some of the principal characters of Shakspeare.

But the theatre was a barn; she caught a violent cold one evening after leaving the stage, from the draughts which assailed her on every side. When she went to her home, the upper room of a poor cottage, she felt exceedingly ill, and in the morning was unable to rise. This was unfortunate, for the company were to strike their tents on the following day, and Susan was this night to have played Constance in King John for her benefit.

An apothecary was called in, and he declared that Miss Beverley must not think of quitting her bed; that her fever was great, and he must entreat she would take the medicine he had brought and compose herself. This was no easy task to one whose finances were low, and who had depended on this night's performance for the means of supporting a precarious existence.

Susan had now been nearly thirty years a wanderer, yet she had never, been able to put by a little store to support her in old age. Seldom or ever had she made more money than would meet her daily wants. Sometimes she and her companions might perchance reap a golden harvest, but this would be certainly followed by autumns of scarcity. During her engagement in London, her expenses had very nearly absorbed her salary. Her lodging, her food, and particularly her apparel, had been beyond what they should have been: but the stage is no school for economy; actors even of the first rate, are seldom wealthy. It was no wonder then that Susan who had occasionally received only seven shillings a week, should be without a provision at that period of her life when her strength failed, and when she sighed for peace and repose.

The apothecary's orders, therefore, that she would remain quietly in bed, were received by Susan with impatience. How could she remain in bed? she must get up, and in the evening she did so, and crawled to the cold barn.

By that exertion, which imperious necessity imposes, she went through her part, but she fainted as soon as she left the stage, and was carried home in a state of insensibility.

The following morning she was in a high fever, and in this state was left at Market Deeping, while the rest of the company went on to Lincoln.

The apothecary was in the room, when the manager and his wife entered the poor creature's apartment, and having expressed much sorrow for her indisposition, they gave her folded up in a piece of paper the profits of her benefit, and placing a small bundle on the bed, containing some of her wearing apparel which they had in pawn for a trifle, that the receipts of the benefit redeemed, they wished her a good morning, and took their leave. Susan was unable to make any reply to their *kind condolence*, and the medical man having again and again cautioned her against any exertion mental or bodily, he left her, promising to call again in the evening.

The apothecary paid Susan every attention, and at his entreaty the owner of the cottage waited on her, but she grumbled excessively, saying, "indeed she had something else to do than to throw away her time on mummers and morrice dancers."

After three days of complete inertion, Susan raised herself in her bed, and wept over her hapless fate. "What will now become of me! Alas, my cash is low, and I shall never be able to defray all the expenses, which I have incurred through this indisposition."

She took from under her pillow her little purse; it contained fifteen shillings, and her benefit profits amounted to one pound sixteen and sixpence. Her wardrobe was no longer such as to excite her companions' envy, and she could expect to raise but little from that, even if she were compelled to part with it. While she was thus ruminating, her landlady entered.

"Oh, Miss, you be up, be ye? I began to be afeard as you would never get up again; howsomever, I am glad to see you be better; and as I can let my room for eighteen-pence a week more nor you gives me, I wishes you to provide yourself with another lodging. I suppose your purse can't stand eighteen-pence a week more; now you be out of employ. The players are playing away at Lincoln finely."

Susan sighed deeply, and the woman proceeded, "But you can't be distressed neither, because you had your benefit; and there is your bill for last week and this week up to to-day, Thursday; and I should be obliged to you to pay it, because we are poor folks, and can't do without our money."

Susan begged she would leave the bill with her; saying, at the same time, that she should not quit her present abode till Saturday, when her week would be up.

The landlady insisted that Susan should quit her lodgings on that very day, and also begged Miss Beverley would be pleased to know, that she should be paid immediately. "If not," she added, "you must take the consequences: that's all!"

Susan looked at the bill, the two weeks' lodging amounted to five shillings: nursing and attendance, five more: then, there was so much for groats, for barley, and many other articles made use of in illness, which amounted to five more. Susan stared with astonishment, at this exorbitant charge, and was resolved to dispute the payment of it; but second thoughts induced her to relinquish the idea, and she determined, if it was possible, to quit the cottage on the morrow. The apothecary called in the course of an hour and found her fever increased, the natural consequence of her late irritation of spirits: but she assured him she was better, and asked him for his bill.

"It is a mere trifle," he replied, "not worth mentioning, a few shillings only, I beg you will not name it, till you are quite well. In another week we will talk about the bill."

The sound of another week terrified Susan, and she again begged he would allow her to settle her account. The apothecary reluctantly consented; but Miss Beverley was so

pressing, that he went home on purpose for it. Twelve and six-pence was the amount; without any observation from the poor invalid, the bill was paid, and she begged that as he went through the kitchen, he would send up her landlady.

"Poor thing!" said the apothecary, to the owner of the cottage, "I never saw any one so anxious to be out of debt in my life; she has just paid me, I did not wish it, but she insisted on it."

The cottager looked astonished as she ejaculated "Indeed! why them sort of people are not often so fond of paying their way. I began to be afeard, for my part, that I shouldn't get my money; but I'll go up to her directly, mayhap she may want summut."

The mercenary creature entered Susan's apartment with a smile and a curtsy; and as she drew back the bed curtains, she expressed a hope that Miss Beverley was better.

She was most obsequiously attentive, and Susan was at a loss to account for this change of her conduct, but she soon found out the source from whence it sprung, and she profited by the discovery.

"I shall pay you to-morrow, good woman," said she, "and I shall quit your lodgings to make room for a richer tenant."

The landlady who stood by the bedside was now vehement in her protestations of sorrow and good will. Of sorrow, that Miss Beverley should imagine that she meant to turn her out for a new lodger, however much he might pay; and of good will towards the exhausted Susan, for whom she professed quite love and affection.

Susan was not to be deceived by her protestations, and complaining of fatigue, desired to be left alone.

When the woman went below, she accused her husband of having lost a good lodger. "I never will believe you again, John; you said you was sure she could'nt find salt to her porridge; and now our room may be empty, till another tramping party come this here way. She says, 'She will go to-morrow,' and it's all your doings."

The husband was violent in his reply, and their altercation was so great, that Susan could partly discover the cause of it, from the words she heard. This made her more anxious to quit the roof, and having made up her mind to the decrees of

> The stern rugged nurse,

Adversity, she endeavoured to compose herself to sleep; it was morning, however, before she closed her weary eyes, and when she awaked, the sun was shining brightly through her casement window. She was, however, refreshed by the kindly influence of the drowsy god. Rising, she opened the window, and inhaled the pure breezes of the morning, but the air was too chilling for an invalid, and she closed it. Collecting the general articles of her wardrobe, she tied them up in a bundle, and then with a sigh and a tear she took fifteen shillings out of her purse, and with her money in one hand and her bundle in the other, she descended the cottage stairs, at the foot of which, she was met by her hostess, who could but ill disguise her chagrin, at losing a lodger, who promised to pay them well, and who had given them little, or no trouble, except during her illness.

No feelings of remorse were mingled with these calculations of the landlady's for driving the poor feeble victim to seek a home in her present debilitated condition; and when Susan gave her the money, she took it rudely, saying, "Miss Beverley, you need'nt be in such a hurry to go, I should'nt have turned you out."

Susan made no reply to this polite speech, but with feeble steps reached the door, and went out. Then entering the town, she passed through its principal street, and in an obscure corner, took a lodging for the night, with only one pound five in her pocket.

She had been refused admittance into several houses because she looked ill; the owners of some recognised her as one of the actor folks, and objected to accommodate "any of them there sort of people." One family, more avaricious than humane, at length admitted her into their cottage; but in the wretched abode that sheltered her, Susan met with little sympathy, and it was only by paying before hand, that she could obtain this lodging.

A roll and a draught of milk was her only refreshment during the day; she had slept some part of it, and in the evening, she wrapped herself up, and seated herself at the window. The back of the cottage looked to that part of the country, through which flowed the Welland. The night was clear and frosty, the moon shone resplendently, and threw her silvery light all around, while the translucent wave reflected in tremulous lustre a long line of silvery white. There is something soothing in the witching hour of eventide; the stillness which attends it, adds to its solemnity; and in contemplating the wide expanse of deep blue ether, few are the hearts which can resist its magic sweetness. Susan's heart was dissolved in softness.

Though she had attained that period of life when the feelings are blunted by their contests with an unfeeling world, yet there were moments when the days of her youth flitted before her fancy, in all the loveliness of health and innocence. Then Mary Woodbine, Betsy, and the friends of her childhood, would rush on her recollection, and Colonel Ednor would close the picture. Heavy sighs and tears, and as she advanced in life, feelings of a more bitter nature would attend this retrospective view. Never, perhaps, had Susan felt the loneliness of her situation, so much as at the moment when she placed herself at the casement, yet, by degrees, she yielded imperceptibly, to the effect of the calm scene before her. She wept, indeed, but her tears flowed gently down her harassed cheek. Long did she sit musing on her fate, and at length, wearied, and in some degree composed, she retired to her humble bed.

But little refreshed by heavy sleep, she found herself unable to proceed to Lincoln on the following day; in fact, the privations to which her scanty purse compelled her to submit, were ill calculated to renew her reduced frame. Day after day she lingered at this obscure spot, paying every night for her lodging till her small fund being exhausted, she was compelled to say "She would pay on the following morning." Unwillingly her host consented to this short delay, muttering as he went down stairs, that "he should trust her no longer than the morrow; and then, if she could not pay, she must trudge."

The morrow came, and Susan, in an agony, parted with her last sixpence to her unfeeling landlord.

"'Tis all I have in the world," she said in despair, as the man took it.

"If that's the case, mistress," he replied, "you must ev'n provide yourself with another lodging; I can't afford to keep those who can't keep themselves."

"But I have here what will satisfy you," resumed Susan, "for a day or two longer, and then Heaven knows what will become of me. I am too ill to be removed, good man, at the present moment: do not turn me into the street; I shall not live long, and the parish," she added with a groan, "the parish will bury me."

“Well, for the matter of that,” replied the man, as he glanced at the bundle containing Susan’s wardrobe, “You may stay another day or so—but don’t you want something to eat?”

“No,” sighed out poor Susan, “I have no appetite; I only wish to be alone.”

“Your wants are easily gratified then,” resumed her host, “for I am going directly.”

As soon as he arrived in his kitchen, he told his wife all that had passed, and she very willingly allowed they were on the right side of the hedge.

“She can’t live long, I’m sure,” added her husband, “and then you may get all her gear.”

A week however passed, and though Susan gradually got weaker, she did not die, and her host and hostess became clamorous for money. Having seized on the bundle, the woman took the greater part of its contents, and then rudely bade poor Susan begone.

In vain the broken down-daughter of misfortune supplicated for pity. Pity had never found entrance into the flinty bosom of this man and his wife; and in despair Susan put on her bonnet and shawl, and taking the few things their rapacity had left, she tottered down stairs. This exertion was however, too much for her, and she sunk into a chair that stood at the entrance of the kitchen.

“Ah well,” said the man, “you may sit if you like, but it shall be in the open air. Open the door, dame.”

This command was immediately obeyed, and the unfeeling monster lifted the chair with the terrified Susan in it, and placed her in the lane, regardless of her earnest but feeble entreaties, “that he would be merciful.”

“Charity begins at home,” said his wife, “and we can’t afford to keep folks for nothing; you must go to the infirmary, or get passed to your own parish. I shan’t let you die in my house—I shall have the crowner come, and who knows from your maciated looks, he may think you’ve been starved to death under my roof, and the jury may bring me in as a complice to your death.”

“Yes, to be sure,” said a little sharp-nosed cobbler, “you’re right, neighbour, and I thinks you do much to let her sit in your chair.”

Susan’s situation became every instant more agonizing; the children collected round her and made all sorts of remarks, as to what would be done with her.

Among the motley group collected, was her former hostess, whose taunts were past endurance, and Susan made a great effort and rose. But the idlers followed her, and overcome by this weight of misery she sunk to the ground.

All at once her persecutors withdrew apparently without a cause, and left her resting her beating head against a post; and life seemed ebbing fast away, when the voice of kindness recalled her fleeting spirit. Her eyes gently unclosed and fixed themselves on those of benevolence itself. An elderly gentleman in a clerical habit stooped to raise her; and in the tenderest accents inquired the cause of her misery? But Susan could pronounce only two words, they were comprehensive, “Poverty—Sickness.”

The clergyman now called for assistance, and the first person who answered his call, was her late host. He was despatched for a chair, and Susan being lifted into it, was by the clergyman’s order conveyed to the infirmary; whither he accompanied her.

As he went along, he expressed his surprise at the unfeeling conduct of the persons who had surrounded her, and who had fled at his approach: “Did you know any thing of her?” he continued addressing the wretch who had turned her out of his house.

“She lodged in my house,” he replied in a surly manner, “but she could not pay her way; and I can’t afford to keep others, I can’t keep myself without parish relief during two months of the year.”

The clergyman reprimanded him, and having given particular orders respecting her at the infirmary, he departed.

Good nursing and good food did wonders for Susan: in the course of one week, she was restored almost to health. The clergyman however advised her not to remove till another week had passed; and then having learnt who she was, and finding her anxious to return to her native village, he gave her two guineas and paid her fare to London, where she could procure a ready conveyance to Silvershoe.

Susan gratefully accepted this offer, for she found herself incapable of pursuing her former mode of life. Her voice was gone, and her worn-out frame exhausted, rather from care and sorrow, than age, was no longer adequate to the arduous characters she had hitherto played. Peace and repose, were now the summit of her desires; fame, wealth itself, had lost its charms. Her only aim was to die in her own native village, to revisit once more scenes endeared by the only days of happiness that had gilded her fateful existence.

To obliterate by days of penitence and prayer, the errors of her former life was the ardent longing of her soul. Joyfully, therefore, she took her seat on the top of the stage, which was to convey her to London, and on the very same day, upon which she arrived in the metropolis, she mounted the Ampthill coach.

Few villages so exactly resemble the description of Goldsmith’s *Auburn* as Silvershoe: it is perhaps one of the most picturesque in England. It was evening when Susan entered it. The setting sun glowed with refulgence—the lengthened shadows fell across the road—on every side were objects familiar to her view: repeatedly she recognised the countenance of some old acquaintance: but no one recollected her.

“Do you go on to Ampthill?” said the coachman to her, as she sat unmoved on the coach-box at the George inn door, overcome by indescribable sensations. How different from that gay season when Susan with Colonel Ednor coquetted on May-day evening.

The question roused her, “No,” she replied, “I will get down here.” She was now surrounded by faces which, though altered by time, still retained so much of their former expression, as to be remembered. She was assisted to alight by the hostler, whose round face was indeed enlarged, but time had made no deep furrows in his full rosy cheeks. At the door stood Elkanah Hodge, talking to a big lad of about seventeen or eighteen, who called him *father*. Hodge, however, did not recognise his former sweet-heart; but turning to the landlady, he said, “What a poor sickly looking creature that be!”

Susan’s spirits could no longer support this scrutiny, and she hastily bent her trembling steps towards Underwood farm.

Betsy Underwood was by this time a grandmother, and at the moment when poor Susan entered the farm yard, the former was walking about nursing her little grandson; but seeing a pale looking woman in a shabby travelling dress, a stranger too, enter the premises, she went to meet her, and inquired her business.

"Betsy," said Susan, bursting into tears, and grasping Mrs. Underwood's hand, "do you not recollect your old school-fellow, Susan Cowslip?"

Mrs. Underwood started, looked earnestly in the invalid's face, and soon discovered traces of the prettiest girl that had been in the village, except Mary Woodbine.

Betsy's feelings were raised to a painful degree, and in silence she pressed the wanderer's hand, and led Susan into the kitchen. There, in interesting conversation they passed the evening, and when George Underwood came home, his welcome seconded that of his wife.

Strange, and melancholy changes had taken place, since Susan's departure from Silvershoe; the bare mention of which will anticipate some part of our tale, but having at once reverted to them, we shall be saved their repetition at a future and advanced stage of our journey.

Farmer Cowslip and his wife were both dead, and the farm was let to strangers. Mr. Grigs too had paid the debt of nature. Mrs. Underwood had never mentioned Mary, and Susan was fearful of inquiring about her. But before we proceed to give an account of the melancholy events to which we have alluded, it will be necessary to observe that Susan found an asylum in Underwood farm, where she endeavoured to render herself useful. She lived, however, only two years after her return to her native village, and then died in peace.

To comment upon her suffering melancholy fate would be superfluous, it is in itself sufficiently eloquent as a beacon to those

Who fancy all that glitters is gold.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Northumberland court.

THE

VILLAGE COQUETTE;

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUCH IS THE WORLD."

VOL. III.

Women, like princes, find no real friends:
All who approach them their own ends pursue:
Lovers and ministers are never true.
Hence oft from reason heedless beauty strays,
And the most trusted guide the most betrays:
Hence by fond dreams of fancy'd pow'r amus'd,
When most you tyrannize, you're most abus'd.—LITTLETON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. AND W. B. WHITTAKER,
AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MDCCCXXII.

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Northumberland court.

THE

VILLAGE COQUETTE.

CHAPTER I.

Ev'n in the happiest choice, where fav'ring Heaven
Has equal love, and easy fortune given;
Think not the husband gain'd, that all is done;
The prize of happiness must still be won;
And oft the careless find it to their cost,
The *lover* in the *husband* may be lost;
The *graces* might alone his heart allure;
They and the virtues meeting must secure.

ADVICE TO A LADY—LORD LITTLETON.

THE first grief Mary experienced after her marriage, was the loss of Judy Gabriel, whose death was sudden and unexpected. She went to bed quite well one night, and when Betty Glover waked in the morning, the poor old woman lay stiff and cold by her side. Judy was attended to the grave by Mary and Betsy, and William and George. The former had indeed much cause to lament her death; for Judy was both willing and able to advise the young bride as to her conduct, and was in fact the only being, except her father, from whom Mary would receive reproof.

Towards William, Mary had hitherto conducted herself with much kindness and propriety, for she really loved him; yet she did not at all times comply with his wishes when they were in opposition to her own. More than once she had acted in direct opposition to his express desire, and this imprudence led as repeatedly to those trifling disagreements which imbitter the happiness of matrimony.

Lovers may quarrel, and afterward kiss and be friends; but when once the nuptial knot is tied, the case is totally different, and "tifting" *then becomes* a dangerous experiment.

William had unfortunately been spoiled at home; his mother and sisters, for whom he felt the warmest affection, had been used to anticipate his wants, and their kindness had made him unfit for a wife in general; for though he had been accustomed to Mary's fickle and absolute manner before they were married, yet he now often thought that her conduct was improper, and that her self-will was intolerable. He was, however, careful to hide these feelings; but in secret he brooded over her little failings till, as he thought, they made up in number what they wanted in weight.

The birth of a son obliterated for a time every sensation but that of love and delight.

Mary's unceasing attention, her affectionate care and anxiety respecting her little darling, doubly endeared her to her fond husband, and all was peace and harmony again among the inhabitants of the farm.

As, however, William's indulgence to Mary since the birth of her child, had greatly increased, she fancied herself ill-used, if by chance he put a negative to any wish

she might, from the whim of the moment, think proper to express. In the course of a few months their bickerings recommenced, and irritation on both sides was excited, which imbittered not only their own, but the happiness of Mary's father.

At this critical period, the evil genius of Silvershoe, in the person of Colonel Ednor, again appeared in its vicinity.

After his interview with Susan Cowslip, he went to London, but the sight of her, revived certain recollections, and he resolved, after three years' absence, on taking a trip to that spot where he had first beheld Mary Woodbine.

As he liked an adventure, he changed his dress to that of a countryman, and taking his seat by the Ampthill coachman, he questioned him as to the inhabitants of Silvershoe and its neighbourhood.

The coachman gave him all the intelligence he wished: Mary Gabriel's death, Judy's death, Mary Woodbine's marriage, the birth of her son,—all was detailed to him by this annalist of the villages he passed through on his way to the capital.

Ednor asked who was the toast of the village now that Mary Woodbine was married.

"Oh," replied the coachman, "Mrs. Meadows is as pretty as ever; yet, I understand, they are not quite comfortable at Woodbine farm."

This was better news than the Colonel had anticipated,—and at Ampthill he took an obscure lodging, as a servant who was waiting the arrival of his master at that place. He staid here however but two days, for he found the sandy road between Ampthill and Silvershoe so exceedingly disagreeable, that he resolved on going nearer to the latter place.

To his great delight, he met Sally Greenly in the town, on the very day he had made this resolution.

She did not, he perceived, recognise him, but he followed her out of Ampthill, and addressed her in his usual tone of voice.

Sally turned hastily round, uttering an exclamation of surprise, when Ednor put his finger on his lips, and she was immediately silent; he explained to her in a few words, that he wished to get a convenient lodging near Silvershoe.

The girl smiled maliciously, and said, "herself and mother had been obliged to quit their own neighbourhood for a time, but that they had returned to Ware-hedges the last week."

"Could you not," said the Colonel, "accommodate me with a lodging, Sally? I would pay you well." Sally smiled again, and the Colonel offering her a pound note, she told him he should hear from her the next day.

With this answer he was perfectly satisfied, and on the next morning he received the following epistle, directed for the gentleman's servant at the Bull's-head public-house:—

My mother will let you lodge with us, but you must say, you are a cousin of ours, comed from Yorkshire, or else the people will wonder who you are. To night we will have a room ready for you; and I think you should call yourself John Greenly.

Colonel Ednor's face betrayed what his high spirits felt at being thus dictated to by Sally Greenly; but after ruminating a few moments, he submitted to call himself *John Greenly*,—and then went on reading the letter.

Mother says, she guesses what you want; and she bids me tell you, that if we get into a scrape, she hopes you will pay us well. She says too, that Mary Woodbine as was, and William Meadows, don't agree over and above much; and she says, she thinks they are not happy at Woodbine farm; and so she bids me tell you, that you may come when you like.—From your humble servant.

SALLY GREENLY.

"So," said the Colonel, as he concluded this demonstrative epistle, "I find that the spirit of intrigue is not confined to great towns; there is as much finesse and address in this epistle as if it had been penned by the most experienced and best-schooled dame in the universe. I shall however profit by its contents."

At the appointed time he made his appearance as Ware-hedges, as "John Greenly just comed from Yorkshire," and was received by the dame and her daughter with many expressions of kindness.

During the day, however, he was teased with innumerable questions about relations and cousins, and uncles and aunts, by Sally, whenever any one of their neighbours came into their cottage, and he also was compelled to endure their expressions of fondness, of which they were not sparing, with patient and apparent gratitude.

In the evening he ventured to approach Silveshoe; and as he had assumed the dress and manners of a Yorkshire rustic, together with a flaxen wig, he passed unnoticed by many of the inhabitants of the village, amongst whom was George Underwood, to whom touching his hat, and making an awkward bow, he bade him. "Good evening," and then passed on.

"This will do," thought the Colonel, "if *he* does not discover me, I am safe." So on he passed, amazingly pleased with his masquerade dress, and entered the village just as the sun was setting.

Woodbine farm-house was an old-fashioned, irregular building, spacious and commodious within, possessing every requisite for internal comfort. In the front was a small piece of ground with rails, to prevent the approach of the farm-yard gentry, which sometimes strayed from the posterior part of the house. Beyond this enclosed piece of ground was an orchard, with a common cart-road through it; and in the opposite direction was a foot-path, leading to a well-stored fruit-garden. At one extremity of this garden was an arbour, facing the west, and receiving the last rays of the evening sun.

A public lane was outside of this fruitful spot of ground, and from this lane, Colonel Ednor saw Mary and William amusing themselves with their little boy.

He stood still to listen to their conversation; for William, who had been tossing the child till he had almost terrified Mary, at length consigned him to the arms of the mother, whose glowing cheek, and sparkling eyes, as she followed its rapid ascent and descent, rendered her, in Colonel Ednor's fancy, the most bewitching being he ever beheld.

Maternal love beamed in her eye, as she pressed the lovely boy to her bosom; then suddenly turning to William, she said,—"I have promised Betsy to spend the day with her to-morrow."

"I wish, dear Mary," replied William, "you would spare one day for my mother! She has scarcely seen her grand-child; and she thinks that you slight her. If you loved me, Mary, you would love her."

Mary's smile vanished, and was replaced by a look of displeasure, as she replied—"Dear me, William, you expect me to be always at Meadow farm."

"Always!" replied William; "you have spent but one day there since we were married."

"I am sure I have," said Mary, quickly,—"I have spent *two* there;—I well remember that the last was dull enough, and that you quarrelled with me the next day, because I *couldn't* sing your mother's favourite song."

"Say, *wouldn't*," replied William—"you wouldn't sing it, Mary, to oblige *me*, my mother, and my sister."

"Well, then!" resumed Mary, "I *wouldn't* sing it,—since *that* expression pleases you best. But, I am sure it must be tea-time, and my father must not wait tea for any one."

Their altercations continued till they reached the door of the farm-house, when Mary endeavoured to recover her usual gaiety; but a cloud sat on her brow, and William was thoughtful.

Farmer Woodbine observed them; and though he prudently made no remark on the subject, yet his increased tenderness to his daughter, and a reduced portion of his usual kindness to William, imparted to the mind of the latter the idea, that his father-in-law supposed he behaved unkindly to his wife.

This was an unfavourable impression, and in order to dissipate the thought, he rose immediately after tea, and strolled towards the village, without any particular object in view, except that of losing sight of his care. He had not advanced many steps from home, when he was met by one of those gay spirits, who are the life and soul of thoughtless society, though they are pointed out by the wise as objects to be avoided by all who are anxious to do well in this world of probation.

Frank Lightheart accosted William with his usual gaiety; and, in fact, made himself so agreeable, that the latter consented to accompany him to the George inn, where they had no sooner arrived, than they were surrounded by a number of young men, surprised, but at the same time pleased, to see the *steady* William Meadows in their society.

Frank Lightheart was an excellent singer; his company was therefore courted by the villagers. On this account the landlord gave him lodging for nothing, being amply repaid by the idle customers who were induced to spend much time and much money at the George inn, by the sweetness of his voice.

In this society did William Meadows pass this fatal evening. It was the first he had ever in his life wasted in dissipation, and he returned home "*as happy as a prince*."

Mary shrunk, as he approached her. She had never seen him tipsy; but her feelings were roused, when he addressed her in a style of language totally new to her; importing—"that he was not going to be led by the nose any longer, and that he meant to enjoy himself abroad, since he could not enjoy himself at home."

On the following morning, he appeared to be ashamed of his conduct on the preceding evening; but Mary, instead of being silent about what had happened, reproached him with cruelty, and declared, “that tipsy men *had* always, and *would* always, be her aversion.”

This was ill-timed; for William, who was on the point of making an apology, took up his hat, without saying a word, and left her.

Soon after he was gone, Betsy entered, and found Mary in tears. With great volubility, the latter recounted all her troubles, but her sister mildly reproved her for not paying more attention to William’s mother.

Mary defended herself, by saying, that they were always complaining of her;—she did not like them;—she could bear none of them; they were all so stupid, and had no conversation.

In vain Betsy pressed her to go that very day to Meadow farm, saying, she would accompany her. In vain she urged her to receive William with kindness, when he returned.

“For your own sake, dear Mary,” said the affectionate and prudent woman, “do as I advise you. Think only, if you drive your husband from you by unkindness, what will become of my poor father! It will break his heart to see you unhappy. My dearest Mary, take no notice of what has passed. I am sure, if you would be a *little* kinder, you might be the happiest woman in the world!”

“I am sure,” said Mary, “before I was married, I said many things worse to him than all I said last night, and he was never affronted then, but used to coax me till I was good humoured again; and I never went or came, but just as I liked.”

Betsy sighed as she said, “That is very true, Mary, but the best of husbands are not *always* lovers; though for my *own* part, I cannot help saying, I have found George more attentive to my wishes since, than before I was married.”

“Ah!” said Mary, quickly, “that’s because you never contradict him.”

“Perhaps so, replied Betsy, smiling—“but is it not the better plan of the two? Believe me, you must sometimes give up your own will, if you wish to be happy. Why should you expect *always* to do as you like?”

“I *will* as long as I *can*, though,” was the reply of the thoughtless Mary.

At this moment they were joined by farmer Woodbine, who drawing Betsy on one side, complained that he was not happy; “William is not,” said the old man, “so kind as he should be to Mary, and he staid at the George Inn last evening till past twelve o’clock.”

Betsy endeavoured to quiet his mind; but suspicion had taken its abode in the breast of the farmer; and it was not to be removed by any argument she could use in opposition to the conviction, as he thought, of his own senses.

When the dinner hour arrived, William made his appearance accompanied by George Underwood, who had been listening to *his* complaints against Mary; he had however succeeded in dissipating the gloom of William’s mind, by laughing at him, and telling him, “that he thought every body knew that Mary was a spoiled child, and always would be.” The time of dinner passed very well, and in contemplating the smiles of his blooming child, William recovered his good humour, declaring, “that his boy was not half so pretty as his mother.”

Mary stole a sly glance at her sister, and with her usual thoughtlessness alternately teased and pleased William during the remainder of the day.—Several times an impatient "Pshaw!" burst from his lips; but Mary, unconscious how rapidly she was undermining her own happiness, continued to play the dangerous game, till her father at last said, "Mary, my dear, that is too bad!"

The colour rose to Mary's cheeks, and darting at her father an expressive glance, she caught up her little boy and left the kitchen.

A silence during some seconds followed her departure; and the old farmer with considerable agitation, which he in vain strove to conceal, caressed Betsy's little prattling girl. George and Betsy exchanged looks, but neither ventured to speak; and William with a heavy sigh grasped his father-in-law by the hand; then rising suddenly, he rushed out of the house followed instantly by George. Farmer Woodbine's feelings now found relief in tears, which flowed silently down his venerable checks; but at length he sobbed aloud, as he patted his little grand-child on the head, exclaiming in a voice scarcely articulate, "As thou art now, thou little smiling cherub—such was she—she was my darling—but now she breaks my heart; she kills me by inches. Oh, Betsy, what can we do—to save her from misery, from wretchedness, and perdition?"

Betsy endeavoured to convince her father he was too much alive to these things. "You know, father," she added, "Mary always has had her own way; she and William will make it up again, and all will be well!"

The farmer shook his head, and desired her to go to Mary, and persuade her to act differently towards her husband. "Tell her the consequences, Betsy, of thus incessantly thwarting him; tell her she will make herself, and him, and me, miserable!"

Betsy used every argument, she could devise, to convince her sister of her error; but the latter still trusted to her power over William's heart, and refused to own that she had been wrong, declaring, that "William was so touchy there was no bearing him."

The rest of the afternoon was spent in mutual complaints and reproaches; and with heavy hearts, George and Betsy returned to their own peaceful dwelling.

CHAPTER II.

KATHERINE. Love me or love me not, I like the cap;
And it I will have, or I will have none.
PETRUCHIO. Thy gown? why, ay; come, tailor, let's see't.
O mercy, God! what masking stuff is here?
What's this? a sleeve? 'tis a demi-cannon;
What! up and down, carv'd like an apple tart?
Here's snip and snip, and cut, and slash and slash.
Like to a censer in a barber's shop;
Why, what, o'devil's name, tailor, call'st thou this.

TAMING THE SHREW.

ABOUT nine o'clock on the following morning William was going to market, and Mary pettishly observed, that "if she had been asked, she would have gone to Ampthill with him, as she wanted to make some purchases." "If you please, you can go now," replied her husband; "put on your bonnet, and the horse can soon be harnessed to the taxed cart, and you can take little William with you."

"Come now, make haste, darling," said old Woodbine. "Put on your things quickly."

"I hate to be hurried," rejoined Mary, as she went up stairs. "If William is in so great haste, he had better go without me."

William did not hear this remark, for he went instantly to prepare the taxed cart for the journey: Mary, however, was so long, that he became impatient, and called to her under her chamber window. Mary in a pet pulled the string off her bonnet, and this accident delayed her longer; still her patient husband waited, till the all-important business of the toilet was completed to her approbation.

The joy expressed by her child, as he struggled in his way to the chaise, and extended his arms to his delighted father, excited a smile, though she had resolved to be very grave, demure, silent and reserved during the day's excursion. But it was impossible to resist the noisy happiness of the two Williams. Before they got half-way to Ampthill, Mary was in excellent spirits and high good humour. William Meadows was captivated by her smiles, and again felt all the joy and delight, when, as Mary Woodbine, she had bestowed an approving glance on his suit.

"Mary," said he, "I intend to treat you with a new gown and a new bonnet, and William with a new hat."

Mary was delighted with the proposal, and they entered Ampthill, each with a smiling countenance. "Let us go to the shop at once," said Mary, "and, William, you shall choose the gown and the bonnet."

"Agreed," was the answer of the happy husband, and to the shop they went.

The shopkeeper complimented Mary on her good looks, and admired her beautiful boy. Then addressing William, he said, "Ah, Mr. Meadows, you are a lucky man, to have such a good-humoured, pretty wife! What shall I have the pleasure of shewing you, Mrs. Meadows? delightful day this."

"I want a gown, Mr. Calico," said Mary."

And the shopkeeper in an instant displayed his store of *new prints* just come from London; there were spots and stripes, and stars and leaves of all colours.

William fixed on a lilac leaf. “It is so delicate, Mary,” said he, “and will suit you so well; and trim your new bonnet with lilac ribbons, and then, I am sure you will be smart.”

“I do not like lilac,” replied his wife, “I like pink.”

“Well, just as you please,” rejoined William, only “I was to choose the gown, you know.”

Mary coloured, saying, “If I don’t have the gown I like, I shall never wear it.”

“Pink let it be, then,” said William; and a pink gown, and a bonnet trimmed with the same colour, was also purchased.

“And now for little William’s hat, I like a white beaver; don’t you, William?”

“I think brown would be best,” he replied, “but please yourself.”

Mary observed “That brown was so dull and grave a colour, and she liked white; but”—

“You seem to like any thing, Mary, which I do not;” retorted William, so I need not stay with you: there’s the money, and buy what you please.”

Thus, the harmony with which they entered Ampthill was dispelled, and their ride home was silent; or if they did speak, it was to thwart each other, and contribute to mutual discomfort.

Mary, however, was impatient to display her purchases to her father, who admired them, but observed, that he thought William admired lilac very much.

“But he is not to wear them, dear father, you know;” she replied, as she displayed her finery, “and he ought to like me in any colour.”

“So he does, my child,” replied the old man; and at this moment William entered, and Mary, charmed with all her purchases, went to him, and said, with an arch smile, “You like me in any colour; do you not, William?”

“Yes,” he replied, patting her cheek, “when you smile you would charm, though dressed in a hop-sack.”

“I shan’t try the experiment, though: and now, William, as you have let me have my way to-day, I will oblige you. Shall we go to Meadow-farm on Sunday.”

William’s eyes sparkled with delight as he gave an answer in the affirmative; and Mary, conscious of her power, now ventured to tell William, that he ought never to contradict her; “never, never,” she added playfully: “and so now, dear William, the next time you go to Ampthill, buy me a lace cap.”

“You joke,” he replied; “I never heard of such a thing. What would people say, at seeing farmer Meadows’ wife in a lace cap?”

“The landlady of the George-Inn has one,” answered Mary; “and if you loved me, William, you would not refuse me.”

An altercation of some length ensued, which ended in Mary’s refusing to go to Meadow-farm on the Sunday.

William made no reply to this peevish retort, but as soon as tea was over, he took up his hat, and again repaired to the George-Inn. Friday and Saturday passed without much recrimination; and on Sunday, Mary, to oblige her father, who had urged her with tears, told William, that she intended to dine with his mother and sisters.

“There now, dear father, am I not a good girl,” said she, smiling at him; “and, William, if you would not thwart me so much, I should never be cross; but you tease me so, and won’t let me have my own way.”

“The least said, dear Mary, upon this subject, is soonest mended,” observed old Woodbine, with a smile; “not one word more.”

Mary playfully kissed his cheek, and then seizing her little William, who was on the floor scrambling to get into his grandfather’s lap; she ran to adorn herself in her new pink gown and bonnet. When she came down stairs, the flush of exultation was on her cheek, she thought she looked so well in pink; and her boy was so pretty in his white beaver bonnet.

The distance of Meadow-farm, was only a short walk; with a light heart, and quick step, she proceeded with her husband across the orchard; followed by the eyes of her delighted and admiring father. She turned round twice to nod to him, bidding little William shake his hand to his grandfather, in token of adieu.

Old Mrs. Meadows was surprised to see them. “Well!” she exclaimed, “this is, indeed, an unexpected *favour*.” Mary’s countenance fell at this cold reception, and William said, “unexpected pleasure too, I hope, mother.”

“Yes,” replied the old lady, looking at her blooming grandson, “pleasure too. Ah, William, you were just such another rosy-cheeked cherub, as this boy is, at his age.” Still Mrs. Meadows took not much notice of Mary, except that she eyed the new gown and bonnet, and thought them both too smart. She did not say so, but her manner intimated it. Mary saw this, and the afternoon was spent in those slight, but wounding expressions, which imbitter the happiness of life, and throw a shade over those hours which might have been gilded with the sunshine of good humour.

At night, when they returned home, they crossed the little bridge over the small streamlet to which we have already alluded. The moon shone calmly and clearly, and was reflected in the still water with magic sweetness, the willow tree scarcely waved its long taper leaves and branches, and as they passed beneath its graceful foliage, William heaved a deep sigh.

“I remember” said Mary, echoing back his sigh, “you once said, I need not fear to sit under the willow; I am sure I may wear it now, for you seem to love every body better than me. You took part against me all day, and your sister was always right and I always wrong.”

“Nay, Mary,” replied William, “you may thank yourself for every thing which has happened unpleasantly to-day. For you contradicted my mother, almost every time she spoke.”

“Yes,” resumed Mary, with some asperity, “I did contradict her, because she always takes a delight in contradicting me; and when I went into the house, she never said she was glad to see me, till you put the words into her mouth: I hate to go there, and I’ve a great mind to declare, that I never will go again.”—

“That’s as I please,” said William, “and Mary, I would advise you to mind a little what you are about; you have tired my patience nearly out, and perhaps you may live to repent your present conduct. I have brooked your ill humour long enough, and if you *won’t* please me, I know what you *shall* do: I know, too, what I shall think if you don’t mend your manners. The pink bonnet and gown, were not bought to please me; if that was the case, you would make yourself agreeable in other respects. I suppose you mean

to please *somebody* with your flaming pink bows, though that somebody is not me, that's very clear."

"What do you mean, William," said Mary, bursting into tears.

"That I suppose, there is somebody you like better than your husband, or you would do your duty to him: I have for your father's sake, endured your behaviour to the utmost, and I neither can nor will put up with your whims and fancies any longer: now you know my mind, and you had better act accordingly."

Mary was dumb, and he said no more. He had indeed said enough to one whom his own foolish fondness had spoiled, and who was, therefore, less to be blamed than himself.

Had he treated her rationally before marriage, and been

> "To her faults a little blind,
> And to her virtues very kind,
> And clapp'd his padlock on her mind,"

after marriage, Mary would have been quite a different creature. The language he had just used was not calculated to effect an amendment in his wife; he had wounded her feelings without convincing her judgment.

At the orchard-gate he left her, and joined the party assembled at the porch of the George inn.

When Mary entered the kitchen, her father was asleep in his elbow chair; so she glided softly up stairs, undressed her weary infant, and having hushed him to a sound sleep, she sat down beside him, and wept silently for some time.

Mary possessed an affectionate heart, and if she had been gifted with fewer attractions, she might have been perhaps more amiable. But accustomed to homage from her infancy, why should it be expected that she should bear with equanimity and coolness the most dangerous and intoxicating power, that of power over the hearts of her fellow-creatures.

When supper was ready Mary descended to partake of the social meal with her father.

"Where is William?" he inquired with anxiety.

"He will be in by-and-by, father," was Mary's reply, and farmer Woodbine made no further remark. At half-past nine, he went to bed, and at ten Mary followed his example. William returned at eleven, and the next morning he behaved with much coolness towards his wife,—saddled his horse, and without saying where he was going, he left the farm.

"Do you dine at home, William?" said Mary. "No!" was the laconic reply.

William Meadows was a spoiled child as much as Mary, and he wanted equal management as herself.

CHAPTER III.

Those, that do teach young babes,
Do it with gentle means, and easy tasks:
He might have chid me so; for in good faith,
I am a child to chiding.—OTHELLO.

WILLIAM'S visits to the George inn were well known to Colonel Ednor, who had overheard all that had passed between young Meadows and his wife in the garden: he had on that evening loitered about the farm till he saw William join Frank Lightheart, when he followed them to the George inn; and though he kept in the porch, he overheard much raillery, which was bestowed on William's domestic habits and pretty wife, whose petticoat government was much talked of in the village.

Besides, Sally Greenly had been maliciously busy in making inquiries of all that passed at the farm; and there are always news-mongers in abundance to carry bad news. Sally had learnt from a neighbour, who had followed them unperceivedly when they went home on Sunday night, the account of William and Mary's quarrel, which was indeed bitter enough. This was considerably exaggerated to Colonel Ednor; and his wicked heart rejoiced in the misery, which he hoped would contribute to the attainment of his infamous ends.

He had forbore to visit Silvershoe, since the first day of his appearance there; for at the inn he had excited some little surprise by an exclamation of delight, which partook not of his assumed Yorkshire dialect. But on the Monday he ventured to approach the farm, at a time when he knew Mary would be alone, having watched William for some distance, on the road to Ampthill. He saw her standing at the door of the house, with her child in her arms; and though a smile animated her features as she played with her baby; yet, he imagined there was an expression of discontent upon her brow, which did not seem to be in unison with the more playful expression of the lower part of her face.

Colonel Ednor was at a loss how to accost her; and while he was laying various schemes for the accomplishment of this purpose, she went into the house; but soon re-appeared equipped for a walk.

"I shall be back to tea, tell my father," said the victim of her own capricious temper, to the servant who came the length of the door. With a loitering step Mrs. Meadows strolled towards Clophill, nor stopped till she found herself near Beaumont's tree.

An involuntary sensation made her start, as soon as she perceived where she was, and she hastily turned, and retraced her steps towards home. Her thoughts were carried back to events of former times, when William presented himself to her imagination,—fond, kind, imploring; ay, and forgiving, too:—how was he altered!—Alas! she was compelled to acknowledge, that her own folly was the cause of this lamentable change; a heavy sigh escaped her, and she resolved to be more discreet for the future.

Whilst her thoughts were thus occupied, she was accosted by a peasant, who asked her the road to Silvershoe.

"The road is before you, honest friend," she replied,—"you can't mistake it."

“Mayhap you be going thick way yoursel,” replied the man, “and I’ll e’en accompany you. This is a foine country.”

Mary made no reply, and the stranger went on—“That’s a foine baby, too;—is it your own?—let me carry it for you a bit.”

Mary turned round to look at the stranger who thus intruded himself, and begged he would leave her, and not be troublesome.

“Troublesome! noa, noa; not for worlds; I would not be troublesome to Miss Mary Woodbine.”

Mary started, and with a beating heart and pallid cheek, in a moment recognised Colonel Ednor; still, however, she had presence of mind to pretend not to know him; she only quickened her pace, till being out of breath, she was obliged to halt a few minutes.

Ednor kept pace with her; halted when she halted; and proceeded when she proceeded. Mary’s agony became intense, as she approached the village; but who can paint her dismay, when, upon hearing the sound of horse’s feet, she turned round, and discovered her husband approaching.

The villain by her side instantly fled, and Mary, overcome by a variety of sensations, sunk to the ground with her child in her arms. The varying hue of her husband’s face, his fixed gaze at her, as he remained immoveable on his horse; his sudden and fierce spurring of the generous animal, and the rapidity with which he passed her, wound up the sum of ills which Mary now foresaw would be heaped on her aching heart.

Just as she was rising from the ground, she was joined by George Underwood, who seeing her thus prostrate, hastened to her assistance, and earnestly inquired what had happened. Pale and trembling, Mary could only reply, “that she was miserable, and should be miserable for ever.”

George could get no explanation from her, but he kindly carried her baby, and accompanied her to the farm. William’s horse was roving at large in the orchard, instead of being housed; and his bleeding sides gave proof of the intemperate conduct of his master. Poor Mary shuddered; but when she entered the kitchen, she summoned all her resolution to her aid, and advanced, with a languid smile, towards her husband, holding out her child;—but he started from his seat, and fiercely bade her—“Begone!”

Mary now sunk upon her knees, and, in tones of agony, shrieked out—“Oh, William, I am innocent!—do not—do not spurn me thus. Forgive all my past *folly*, but never believe I could wrong you.

“Who was that man with whom you were walking?” asked William, fixing his eyes sternly upon her—“and why did he fly when I came near?”

Mary’s tongue refused to perform its office, and he repeated the question with sparkling eyes, and in a voice which thrilled through her soul, he bade her, “if she dare, confess her crime, and name the wretch,—the villain! who fled at his approach.”

“Oh, William!” replied Mary, retreating from him,—for his frantic gestures terrified her—“Oh, William! pray be calm, while here, before heaven I swear, I am not guilty of any *crime*, though great have been my follies; I am innocent, dear William—oh, believe me. The man was an impertinent stranger, who asked the road to Silvershoe, and wanted to take my baby from me.”

William Meadows, with a smile of cool contempt, bade George attend to her. “You hear she gives a good account of herself; and I dare say, you are fool enough to

believe her. I was fool enough *once* to believe all she said; but I am wiser now. You see how cool I am;—you see I am now capable of judging:—I am not now misled as before by a fond, weak, foolish, affection. Give me the boy," he continued, fiercely,—"thou serpent,—thou second Eve; thou base, false, wretched woman, never shalt thou see him or me again."

As he said this, he darted out of the kitchen, leaving Mary senseless, who, in the struggle to retain her child, had fallen prostrate on the floor.

George followed him, and by dint of persuasion and entreaties, at last induced him to go to his home. There he learnt the cause of his rage; and, having despatched Betsy to her sister, he so far quieted William's agitation, that he consented to pass the night at Underwood farm.

Mary lay for some time in her fit of insensibility; and the terrified maid-servant having called in one of the men, they raised her from the floor, and placed her in a chair. Just as she opened her eyes, farmer Woodbine entered the house, in company with Betsy, who had overtaken him at the entrance of the orchard.

The poor old man, whose mind had been of late much harassed by the disagreements between his daughter and her husband, stopped short at the door. Betsy encouraged him to enter, and placed a chair for him, saying—"My sister will be better by-and-by, father; she was frightened at William—'s horse." The old man shook his head,—and Mary's first words convinced him, it was William himself, not his horse, which caused the agitation of his much-loved daughter. "My child! my child!" said Mary—"I shall never see it more;—he told me so;—and he is gone, too;—all—all is gone:—Oh, my child!—my child! But I am innocent, dear father;—innocent," she continued, as she sprang from her seat, and dropped on her knees—"innocent!—I have been silly and foolish—but I am innocent. Oh, my dear father! what will become of me? William is gone, and has taken my child with him."

"William," said Betsy, "is at my house, and little William is there, too, dear Mary."

Mary's joy at this intelligence was expressed by a shriek, which startled old Woodbine: she clung round her sister's neck in an ecstasy; no friendly tear, however, relieved her woe-fraught heart,—but the loud hysteric laugh betrayed her excess of agony.

Farmer Woodbine had sunk upon a chair,—but he now rose, and was leaving the house in search of William, when Mary flew towards him, and entreated, that—"he, too, would not forsake her."—"Forsake thee, my child!" said the poor old man, whose grief found relief in tears—"Forsake thee! never, never! I was going to fetch William home."

"Oh, he will kill me quite," replied Mary, "by another such look as that with which he left me."

The old man sighed, and pressing his daughter to his bosom, soothed, consoled and comforted her, till at length her highly-wrought feeling relaxed, and the melting balmy tear trickled down her pallid cheek.

Betsy sent one of the farming-men to her own house, desiring that the little boy might be sent back to its mother, and George at length persuaded William to comply with this request. The sight of her babe almost reduced Mary to her former state of insensibility; but she was at length brought to some degree of composure, and persuaded to go to bed; Betsy promising to spend the night with her.

It will be necessary, for the exposition of one or two things noticed in the previous part of our narrative, and for the better applying to particular persons some portions of intelligence, we have to communicate in the sequel, to commence the following chapter with a review of some little matters that were antecedent to the marriage of Mr. William Meadows and Miss Mary Woodbine.

CHAPTER IV.

Trifles, light as air,
Are, to the jealous confirmation strong
As proofs of holy writ.———
* * * * * *

Dangerous conceits are in their natures, poisons,
Which at the first, are scarce found to distaste;
But with a little, act upon the blood,
Burn like the mines of sulphur.———
* * * * * *

O that the slave had forty thousand lives;
One is too poor, too weak, for my revenge!
Now do I see 'tis true.——— OTHELLO.

WHEN William Meadows told his mother and sisters, that he was going to be married to Mary Woodbine, they expressed much disappointment and regret; and Mrs. Meadows declared that Primrose's daughter was worth twenty such flirting girls as Mary Woodbine; "howsomever," she continued, "you must do as you like, William, and as you makes your bed, so you must lie on't, that's all!"

Mary's behaviour was not calculated to obliterate the unfavourable impressions of her mother-in-law; her conduct towards her was indeed repulsive, rather than conciliatory; and the pointed manner with which she avoided all intimacy at Meadow-farm, drew forth many reflections from the old lady and her daughter, which by being frequently repeated to William, imperceptibly led him to scrutinize and consequently to discover faults which might otherwise have escaped his notice.

Thus is domestic happiness often blighted by the selfishness and interference of those, whose duty it should be to cement the bonds of union and family love. The flinty rock is worn by the continual droppings from the pellucid fount; and the human heart though apparently callous to the tale of envy, or the complaints of selfishness, yields at certain moments to the repeated whisperings of those imprudent, not to say, evil, spirits, which every where infest the path of life. Ill betide the busy meddler who widens the breach between husband and wife.

Mary's conduct was in many instances highly improper, but the light in which it was viewed by William's relations made it criminal. Of this she was well aware, and in the pride of innocence, she was little careful to avoid giving them cause for their illiberal animadversions.

The events of the memorable day we have just recorded, were no sooner known, than Meadow-farm became a scene of busy and sorrowful confabulation. The tale of William's supposed wrongs which had been conveyed through the lips of at least half-a-dozen persons before it reached the ears of Mrs. Meadows, was strangely misrepresented.

Slander is like a snow-ball, it gathers as it proceeds. William's farming-man had walked directly to the George inn, after he had fetched little William Meadows, to his mother; and there by his prating collected a group of eager listeners around him.

This officious and talkative clown, told “how his measter had comed whoam in a great passion; how he had kicked his wife, and swore he never more would live with her, and how he had left the farm in a passion.”

But in reply to a question from one of the company, which implied a wish to know *why* all this happened; the bumpkin was at a stand-still; when one of the listeners took up the thread of his narrative, and declared “he saw Mary walking along the road we a strange man, and that whiles they were talking together William comed up and catched um, that Mary fell in a fit and the man attempted first to help her, but that William sent him flying over the hedge in a giffy, and threatened Mary, by holding up his whip; that she conscious of her guilt, entreated his pardon, but that he knocked her down and—

“Ah but,” said one of his auditors, “you said she was in a fit, how could he knock her down then.”

“Why, man,” replied the other, “she had got out of her fit, which was only a sham; and then William he rode off to the farm, and I knows no more about him.”

This man who belonged to Meadow farm met the ploughman on his return home, to whom he communicated the whole affair, with a strict charge of secrecy: but the ploughman met the dairy maid; and the dairy maid went home with a story so marvellous, that the other servant maid exclaimed, “Mercy on us! will he be hanged?”

These words caught Mrs. Meadows’ ear, and entering the kitchen she desired the maids not to gossip so much, but mind their own business.

“And who is this, that is to be hanged?” said she.

The maids looked at each other, but did not reply—The good wife’s curiosity was now excited, and in an angry tone snatching a broom out of the hand of one of her serving women at the same time, she commanded her to say, “who was going to be hanged?”

Still however, she could get no answer, and the maid who was farthest from her ran out of the kitchen: her companion would have followed her example, but her mistress caught hold of her, “What is the matter with you? Who were you talking about?” said she.

Poor Jessy stammered out, “We were—only talking about—about—young Mr. Meadows.”

“Is the girl mad?” said Mrs. Meadows.

“No,” replied Jessy; “young master catched his wife with another man walking—and he—he—he shot him; and he—he—he, is gone away, and nobody knows nothing about him.”

A scream from her mistress cut short her farrago of lies, and brought young Primrose and his wife into the kitchen. All now was a scene of confusion; and farmer Primrose set off for Woodbine farm, where from Betsy Underwood he learnt the truth. He then hastened home to quiet the apprehensions of his wife and mother-in-law, and the latter was persuaded to go to rest, instead of going in search of her injured son.

Not a spinning wheel turned with its usual alacrity; not a furrow was ploughed in the direct line on the following day. The blacksmith’s iron cooled; the woodman’s axe stopped before it reached the tree he was felling. In short, the events we have detailed, caused a sensation so violent and extending so far, that Colonel Ednor, though he smiled at the exaggerated accounts Sally was constantly repeating to him, thought it the wiser

plan to avoid the consequence which he judged might possibly from these reports, be his lot, provided he and William met.

For the next two days therefore he did not quit the cottage.

William in the mean while, was a prey to the most lively suspicion. The assurances of George and Betsy that Mary was innocent in reality, made little impression on his mind, though he seemed to yield to their opinion; and with slow and sullen step he approached his own home.

Old Woodbine saw him enter the orchard, and turning to his daughter by a look, for he could not speak, imparted this circumstance.

Mary did not move from her seat; but closer pressed her smiling babe to her heaving bosom. The sight of her husband brought the colour to her check, but it soon fled, and she sat pale and motionless, like a criminal awaiting her doom.

William took no notice of her, but extended his hand to the old man, then passed through the kitchen, and went up stairs.

The extreme grief visible in Mary's countenance, her pallid cheeks and lips, spoke conviction to William's jaundiced mind, and he resolved to extort the truth from her by threats, if she refused to answer to his interrogatories. Having therefore walked about the room for a few moments; he endeavoured to chase away every softer feeling, which he imagined might impede the justice due to him; and at length he went to the top of the stairs to call his wife.

Twice did his quivering lips refuse their office. Then summoning all his courage, he pronounced the word "Mary." She started from her seat, looked anxiously at her father; extended her babe towards him, then as quickly withdrew it, saying—"No, he will not take it from me."

With a trembling step and a beating heart, she ascended the stair-case, and entered that apartment where William was impatiently awaiting her; as she entered, he closed the door and turned the key. The first words he spake, convinced her that all her happiness was now at stake.

"Mary," said Meadows, in a mild and determined tone, "tell me, as you value your own happiness and mine, tell me who was that stranger you were walking with, who fled at my approach?"

"Oh, dearest William," replied Mary, he was a traveller, who was impertinent and troublesome; and on seeing you, he made off."

"It is false!" rejoined William, turning deadly pale; "if he were a traveller, how should he know me? and fly when I came near?"

"Mary was confounded at this unexpected reply, and knew not what to say.—For an instant, only, she thought she would tell the truth; but the dread of what would follow, closed her lips.

"Speak," cried William, his voice rising as he spoke, "you dare not deny your guilt any longer!—Oh, Mary!" he continued, his voice suddenly softening, "what have I done to you, that you should thus abuse me? But you are, and will be, the greatest sufferer. I do not wish, while your poor old father lives, to quit the farm entirely. I shall superintend its concerns; but never, never more, shall call it *home!*"

"Oh, God!" cried Mary, "what will become of me if you forsake me, William? Oh, I am innocent! dearest William, I am, indeed, indeed! Do not kill me quite; for the sake of this dear babe, do not cast me off on mere suspicion."

“Suspicion!” echoed back her husband, in a high tone, “mere suspicion! but I will be calm; my purpose once fixed, Mary, no power on earth shall change. Yet I shall not suffer you to become the sport and contempt of the village. I shall watch every movement; and for the sake of that venerable old man, whose silver hairs you will ‘bring with sorrow to the grave,’ I shall dissemble my feelings. I have made my arrangements with George; and there, in his peaceful home, there I shall dwell.”

Regardless of the agony of his wife, William thus made known his intentions; and then, very deliberately left her and the farm, saying, as he passed through the kitchen, “that he should dine with George.”

Poor Mary’s spirit, which had been bowed to the ground by this interview with William, rose, as she fondly hoped, that by her future good and prudent conduct, she should obliterate the remembrance of the past. Alas! she foresaw not the extent of her sufferings, nor the consequences of her former folly.

Old Woodbine drooped under this domestic misery. His venerable face, which was wont to greet with smiles all who approached him, now sunk dejected upon his bosom. Heavy sighs bespoke his internal suffering; and Betsy saw, with grief and dismay, that he would sink under this calamity. For the next two days, Mary never left the farm; nor did William, when she went out of the house for the performance of her duties, fail to watch every movement. Yet he spake not to her; nor did he take any notice of his little boy, whom the servants occasionally brought to him.

Thus passed two days: on the third, having business at Ampthill, William mounted his horse, and with a brisk gallop, set off for that place; but he started not from his own home; he was now in the habit of putting up his horse at Underwood farm, so that Mary knew not of this journey.

Having completed his business, he was returning to Silvershoe, at a brisk pace, and was not far from Ware Hedges when he saw, or fancied he saw, the man who had caused all his trouble, pass down a lane leading to Ware Hedges.

Scarcely believing his own senses, he hastily turned his horse’s head that way, resolving to be satisfied on a point of so much importance to his peace. He soon overtook the object of his pursuit, and instantly recognised him, as the peasant who had fled at his approach. Pushing on his horse, he got before him; then dismounting, he tied his panting beast to a gate, and fiercely approached the astonished villain, who began to think this adventure might not terminate to his advantage, and that all the wrongs he had heaped on womankind, were about to be revenged, by the enraged husband who stood before him. He therefore again attempted to fly from the wrath and peril which William’s countenance so strongly foreboded: but his pursuer was naturally swift of foot, and at this moment, his speed was accelerated by the thirst of revenge, for the flight of his adversary was, in his eye, an additional proof of his guilt.

William soon overtook the fugitive, and instantly proceeded to make use of his horsewhip; but his opponent, unused to such chastisement, turned, and grappled with him. In the struggle, his hat, and with it his wig, fell to the ground, and discovered to the now petrified William, Colonel Ednor!

For one instant, poor Meadows stood motionless; and the villain, profiting by his amazement, again attempted to escape; but the lightning’s flash was not more rapid, than the pursuit of William; again he closed with Ednor, and at last, threw him to the ground; while his whole frame convulsed with passion, shook his prostrate enemy. Speech was

denied him; but Ednor saw that his life was at stake, and ventured to say, “You are mistaken, Mr. Meadows; I never wronged you; and Mrs. Mead—.”

“Ah, wretch!” exclaimed William, still holding him to the ground by the collar, “villain!—cowardly, dastardly villain!—but you shall not live to do more mischief!” Suddenly springing from his stooping posture, he assailed the prostrate Colonel with a succession of blows; and his rage was so great, that he was just going to stamp upon his foe, when he was interrupted by the approach of Sally Greenly with a number of rustics, who advanced to Ednor’s relief.

Sally had seen their first meeting, and auguring ill from the encounter, she called some labourers from a neighbouring field, to assist in rescuing her cousin, whom William Meadows was cruelly beating.

They instantly obeyed her summons, and two of the strongest of them seized William’s arms, while other two raised *John Greenly*.

“Greenly?” said William, “that is the villainous Colonel Ednor! who broke poor Judy Gabriel’s heart, and drove her daughter mad!—who enticed Susan Cowslip away from her home!—and who now has come here again to seduce my wife!—Let me alone, that I may punish him for all his wickedness.”

The astonishment of the rustics was not to be expressed; they all let go their hold of Ednor, as if they feared contagion from his touch. Those who held William, let *him* loose also; but they made a circle round Ednor, and would not allow the former again to approach the now abashed Colonel; and Meadows, thus disappointed of glutting his revenge on this worthless being, mounted his horse, and was soon out of sight.

When he was gone, the rustics, one by one withdrew, leaving Ednor to his fate. With difficulty Sally and her mother conducted him to their cottage.

Having despatched a lad to Ampthill for a surgeon, old Dame Greenly put Ednor to bed. When the apothecary came, he declared his patient to be in a dangerous condition, and then inquired the particulars which led to the cruel maltreatment that had reduced John Greenly to so precarious a state.

Sally then gave a most elaborate and false account of the circumstances, and the apothecary, saying that he would call again in the evening, departed.

Ednor had been purposely silent during the visit of the medical gentleman, for he felt more inclined to give vent to the feelings of his heart in threats and invectives, than to personate a Yorkshire peasant:—but when he was left with his hostess and her daughter, he declared that he would prosecute William for an assault, and that “Master Meadows should rue his behaviour on that day during the remainder of his life.”

CHAPTER V.

Alas! why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame;
These are portents; but yet I hope, I hope,
They do not point at me.—OTHELLO.

WHEN William arrived at the door of his own house, his horse was covered with foam; and himself was panting with rage. Upon entering the kitchen, Mary rose from her seat; and Betsy, who was there likewise, was as sudden in her movement as her sister; for William's countenance and manner, evinced the most frightful prognostication.

Mary retreated, as he advanced towards her. "*Now*," said he, "I have proof of your guilt beyond contradiction, you base, wicked, woman. The unknown traveller," he continued, striking his wife, "was Colonel Ednor—I have seen him, and laid him as low as you now lie."

Mary's shriek, at hearing the name of Ednor, was followed by her fall,—partly the effect of William's blow,—partly the effect of her own acute feelings. As she fell, the child lost its hold, and rolled towards William; terrified, it cried, and stretched its little hands to its enraged father. Insensible, however, to every kind feeling, Meadows regarded it not, but continued to pour forth a volley of invectives, in abusive language, on his prostrate wife, who, half raised, and with clasped hands, mutely implored his pity. In vain Betsy urged him to mercy; in vain she entreated him to spare her poor old father, who sat motionless in his chair, gazing alternately on the agonized frame of his beloved daughter, and on the helpless innocent babe, whom Betsy had consigned to his feeble arms, and who nestled closely to his bosom.

"Lie there!" continued William, addressing his wife; "lie there till your paramour can come to raise you, and that will be long enough, I trust!"

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Betsy, shuddering—"you have not murdered him?"

"No," rejoined William, fiercely—"I was interrupted, or I had done it; but he will not, I *fear*," he continued, turning to his wife, with assumed composure, and with a bitter smile,—"he will not, I *fear*, be able to take a walk with you *very soon* again."

Mary had crawled towards William, and was about to clasp his hand, when he sprang from her, exclaiming—"Touch me not, viper.—Oh, I shall go mad! but I deserve it all:—Yes,—I was told how it would be, before I married; and yet I persisted. I was bewitched: you and that old hag, Judy, bewitched me."

He stopped short, and, totally overcome by the agony of his feelings, he dropped into a chair, and burst into a loud laugh. Mary, more terrified at this frantic demonstration of his grief, than at all his previous threats, suddenly rose, and throwing herself at his feet, clasped his knees, notwithstanding all his efforts to free himself from her grasp, and protested most solemnly, that he was deceived by appearances.

"Hear me, William," she continued; "the terror I felt on discovering the peasant was Colonel Ednor,—and the dread lest he should be recognised by you; and that you should imagine from my former folly, that I knew him to be in disguise, caused me to fall when you came to us. I dared not tell you, nor any one else, 'twas he—indeed, William, I

have never seen him before nor since that day; nor does he know that I had discovered him.”

Mary’s protestations were often interrupted by William, but she still persisted in her story; and her agitation was so great, and her manner so forcible, that William was staggered; but, fearful of being again deceived, he pushed her from him, saying—“It were strange indeed, if you had not your story ready; but it is all in vain: your very humility is a proof of your guilt; for when, before, were you not loud and vociferous in your defence, and reproachful and taunting in your reply?—No—no—I tell you I have been warned of this.”

“Ah,” said Mary, “may those who have thus poisoned your mind, live to repent it! I have enemies, and I know them; but, dearest William, believe them not;—I have been silly, foolish, and head-strong, but no more: believe me; indeed—indeed you will be sorry for this day’s behaviour.”

At this moment two strangers appeared at the door; they were constables who had come to arrest William Meadows on a warrant issued by Justice Grievall. This circumstance naturally leads us back to Ware-hedges, where Ednor now lay very ill.

It seems that, immediately on the medical man’s seeing in how dangerous a condition his patient appeared, he thought it comported with his duty to hasten to his neighbour Grievall, with whom he conferred on the manner, the magnitude, and the consequences of the assault that had been made on John Greenly.

And here it may not be amiss to observe, that this apothecary bore William Meadows no good will, from the unshaken opinion the latter entertained of the abilities and skill of his friend Mr. Grigs; and by his credit and influence in the village, the Ampthill apothecary had never been able to get one patient in Silvershoe. This was an unpardonable offence, and he rejoiced in an opportunity of being revenged on William for the contempt,—for such it was considered by Mr. Squill,—with which that ignorant young farmer had presumed to place Mr. Grigs’s knowledge of physic in competition with a man who had served his time in London, under one of the most celebrated practitioners of the day.

The Justice, too, though a good sort of man, thought farmer Woodbine and his son-in-law often encroached on his office,—as it seldom happened that an inhabitant of Silvershoe was brought before his worship;—for, what with the peaceable disposition of the parson, and old Woodbine, and the active and judicious service of William Meadows, and George Underwood, few villages boasted of so much order and good conduct as Silvershoe.

Now and then, indeed, at the George inn, disputes would arise, but the morning generally dispersed the ill effects of the last night’s draught of ale.

The justice, therefore, having pushed his spectacles upon the top of his head, pricked up his ears, and listened with an unusual share of attention, as the apothecary added circumstance to adjunct, and adjunct to circumstance, in the relation of dame Greenly’s narrative; and, when the whole of the detail was gone through, embellished in its progress with an adequate sprinkling of adjectives, raised to the superlative of cruelty and barbarity on the one side, and on the other, palliated with every adverbial indicative of innocence, peace, honesty, and goodness, the worthy Justice muffled himself up in his great coat, and repaired to the cottage of dame Greenly, to take the deposition of her dying nephew.

Ednor, who wished the Justice far enough off, took advantage of the indisposition he actually laboured under, and pretended he could answer nothing.

Dame Greenly was, however, sufficiently voluble in speech, and detailed so many atrocious circumstances on the part of Meadows,—and so much of goodness and innocence on that of her nephew John Greenly, that Justice Grievall, without a moment's hesitation, issued his warrant, and in execution thereof, we find a couple of constables at the door of the farm-house.

These "Catch-polers," as the people of Silvershoe termed Justice Grievall's messengers and assistants, were recognised by William, who had frequently seen them at Ampthill; and he rudely asked them, "what they wanted there?"

"Why, Maister Meadows," said one man, "you see we have got a bit of a warrant from Justice Grievall, which commands us to take you up for assaulting John Greenly, Dame Greenly's nephew, who now lays in a dangerous state at her cottage."

Mary started from her knees and clung to William; who endeavoured to shake her from him, as he said, "John Greenly! there is no such person—It is true, I have nearly I believe quieted Colonel Ednor, who lies there perhaps in a dangerous state: so much the better; and as for myself, as to what becomes of me, that is no matter. I am ready to go with you; I am alike indifferent to die or live."

"Oh, merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Mary, "are you going to prison? then let me go with you: you shall not, shall not leave me behind you, William; oh dearest William, do not shake me off; let me go with you? What will become of me! With you I shall be safe. Let me—let me go with you. Oh, if he should die!"

The meaning of these last words, was perverted by William; and darting at her a look which chilled her inmost soul, he wrested himself from her grasp, and Mary fell senseless at his feet. He instantly quitted the farm in company with the two constables, and was fortunately met by Mr. Grigs at the entrance of the orchard.

To the good man's questions, William made no reply; but bade him go to the farm where he was wanted.

Mr. Grigs had been in London two or three days, and on his return home, he heard an imperfect account of the unfortunate events, which had taken place at the farm, during his absence. It was on his road to the capital, that he had had the interview with Susan Cowslip.

"Bless me!" he ejaculated, "how unfortunate! that I should be away!—dear me, dear me—why can't people be a little more patient? William is so impetuous. To be sure, Mary is rather imprudent: rather so, I must confess; but then William spoiled her, and now he is tired of the spoiled child, he himself helped to make capricious and selfwilled."

With these thoughts, and many others of the like nature, Mr. Grigs proceeded to Woodbine farm, and met at the entrance of the orchard, as already described, William and the two constables.

William's repulsive manner, checked *many* inquiries: Mr. Grigs was a peaceable man, and he never pressed his services where they were likely to be rejected uncourteously, and he therefore hastened to the farm repeating as he went,

"Why he is quite an altered man! hem! why I am sure he looks older than I do. His eyes sunk, his cheek hollow—no colour in his countenance; and then how stern he was! What can be the matter! dear me—dear me. I wish I had not gone to London: there is always something happens, when I am away."

The scene which presented itself when he entered the kitchen at Woodbine farm, called forth all his sympathy.

Poor old Woodbine was still seated in his armed chair; his little grandchild in his arms, unconscious of the misery around it; the lovely babe was crowing and playfully twisting its little fingers in the silvery locks of its agonized grandfather.

On the floor lay Mary with Betsy chafing her hands, while the maid was sprinkling her face with cold water.

His exclamation as he entered, caused Betsy to turn round. "Oh, Mr. Grigs," she cried, bursting into tears, the first she had shed; "you are just the person I wanted to see."

"What does all this mean?" said Mr. Grigs.

"I cannot tell you now," was Betsy's reply. Mr. Grigs did not repeat his questions, for his attention was directed to farmer Woodbine, whose changing countenance foretold approaching indisposition. He therefore hastily advanced towards the suffering old man, and taking the child from his arms, gave it to the servant who stood near, amazed at so much misery.

"Mary will be better," he replied, "by-and-by, Betsy, don't be alarmed about her; but call some of the men, that we may convey your father to bed—poor old soul! I am under great apprehensions on his account—send for Betty Glover. Oh dear me! 'what does all this mean?"

The commands of Mr. Grigs being obeyed, poor old Woodbine was put to bed under the charge of Betty Glover; and by this time, Mary was restored to her senses.

Language fails to describe her feelings, as she told her sorrows to her kind and never-failing friend Mr. Grigs.

"Compose yourself, my dear Mary," said he, as she concluded her mournful tale; brushing the tear from his eyes at the same time: "I will go to Ware-hedges and ascertain the state of the Col—the—the patient; and in the mean time keep up your spirits, for the sake of little William. Here, girl, bring the baby here. There now, Mary, there's a smiling cherub for you: be sure you take care of it, while I and George go to Ampthill; and I shall take one of your men with me, and send you word how we go on."

Mary was in some degree consoled by the appearance of the worthy apothecary, who by presenting her babe to her, had diverted her thoughts from resting solely on her husband, and her apprehensions on his account, lest Colonel Ednor should die. Her father too, now shared some of her anxiety, and she repaired to his bed-side; but he had sunk into a deep sleep, and after contemplating his much-loved features, now o'erclouded by grief, she, on tip-toe, left the room, and placing herself at the kitchen window, impatiently awaited the return of the man Mr. Grigs had promised to send back to her.

Frequently she entreated Betsy would go to the lane, and see if he were coming; but for herself, she protested, that as William would not let her accompany him to prison, she would not cross the threshold, till he returned.

Hour after hour passed heavily away, and no messenger came. At seven o'clock her agitation became so great, that Betsy was terrified.

"He must be dead or dying," said she, "and what will be the consequence?"

A shriek followed the picture, her imagination had formed, of William tried for murder. Her feelings were now wrought up to so high a pitch, that they almost bordered on insanity; when Mr. Grigs again appeared before her. But he came slowly into the

kitchen, and called for a glass of ale, as he seated himself and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

Betsy looked at him earnestly, and by an expressive shake of the head, he unobserved by Mary, whose attention had been momentarily diverted by her child, intimated that there was some cause for apprehension.

Mrs. Underwood left the kitchen, to relieve her oppressed heart, and Mary dreading, yet anxious, to hear the result of his journey to Ampthill, advanced towards Mr. Grigs, without articulating a single word, but her countenance wanted no help from her tongue. Mr. Grigs understood her, and, after requesting a few minutes to recover his breath, for he had been riding very fast, he desired Mary to take a seat, and then proceeded to detail the particulars of his journey, as they are related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow.—— HAMLET.

"AFTER I left you, Mrs. Meadows, I thought I would call at Dame Greenly's as I went along: when I tapped at the cottage-door, the old woman (what a disagreeable old woman it is, hem!) the old woman positively refused to let me see the — the patient. However, I at last persuaded her to admit me; and I found the—hem! the patient not quite well *certainly:* he appeared very low,—and I—I—thought, I had better not intrude too long on him; so I left him, and went to Ampthill. There, I found Mr. Squill giving in his deposition, and a frightful deposition it was, to be sure: don't be so agitated Mary, my dear—now, pray don't. So, when he had finished all he had to say, Justice Grievall began a long discourse to William, who was not however, in a humour to be lectured, and he begged he might instantly be put into confinement."

Here poor Mary burst into a flood of tears, and Mr. Grigs for some time exhausted his rhetoric in consolation, heedless of the entreaties of his agitated auditor that he should go on: but he at length proceeded in his tedious tale, in the following words:

"When William turned round to the jailer, he espied me; but really I was quite surprised, for he took no notice of me, no, none at all; however, I advanced to the Justice, and offered myself as bail for the prisoner, for—hem! for William; but indeed my dear Mrs. Meadows, if you weep so, I cannot go on, I can't indeed. So as I said before, I offered myself as bail, and so did George; saying at the same time, that I had seen the patient, and that although he was certainly *ill*, I did not conceive there was any immediate danger."

"'Will you, upon your oath, Mr. Grigs,' said the Justice to me, 'will you swear Mr. Grigs, that there is no danger?' An oath, you know is a sacred thing Mary, and so I hesitated; for there is no possibility of saying how things may turn out, you know. The wound—the bruise I mean, in the head may be attended with serious consequences, for *you* understand that the Col—the patient is injured in the head, but I forgot you do not comprehend these matters."

Mr. Grigs might perhaps have described to Mary, the whole anatomy of the pericranium, when her changing cheek recalled him to subjects of deeper interest than Colonel Ednor's scull.

"Bless me, Mary, my dear Mrs. Meadows," he resumed, "don't be so agitated."

"But," said Mrs. Meadows, "Is William really in confinement, Mr. Grigs? If he is, I will, I must go to him."

"That is quite impossible, Mary," said the garrulous apothecary—"quite impossible. But I am sorry to say, that he is detained till the Col—the *patient*, is pronounced out of danger, as Justice Grievall said in cases of mur—hem! in cases like the present, he could not admit a prisoner to bail."

Mary's grief now became extreme, and Mr. Grigs in vain essayed to calm the agitation of her spirits; she gave herself up to despair, and walked about the kitchen in a distracted state, followed by Mr. Grigs; who used every argument in his power to induce

her to resign herself patiently to misfortunes, which she did but aggravate by her present mode of conduct.

The entrance of Betsy, caused some interruption to his well meaning, but ineffectual, attempts, to rouse Mary from the contemplation of her own immediate sorrows; and upon his making some inquiries after farmer Woodbine, he received so alarming an account, that he hastened up stairs, and found the poor old man just rousing from a kind of stupor. The first word he articulated was “Mary,” and Betsy ran to fetch her sister. When the latter approached the bedside, he extended his trembling hand to his beloved child, and feebly grasping hers, he said, “*My* Mary,—*My* Mary,—*My* dear child, how pale you look! Where is William? where is George? I want to see them.”

In an agony, Mary threw herself upon the bed; and Mr. Grigs, the only one present who was at all able to collect his thoughts, replied that “William and George, were not at home; but that they expected them shortly.”

A slight convulsion passed across the old man's countenance, and in a few seconds he entreated to be raised in bed, and supported by pillows: his wishes were immediately gratified; and he then begged little William might be brought to him.

“Dear me!” exclaimed Mr. Grigs, feeling farmer Woodbine’s pulse, “this is really very unfortunate. Betsy, my dear,” he continued, drawing Mrs. Underwood to the other end of the room, “you must entice Mary away; for I perceive such an alteration in your father, that I fear”—here he was interrupted by Betsy, who burst into tears, and ran out of the room; but was quickly recalled, for Woodbine entreated she would return.

Little William Meadows being placed on the bed, beside him, the old man endeavoured to raise his grandchild to his lips, but his strength was unequal to the task; and Mary, starting from her reclining posture, held out her child to him.

“Heaven bless thee, sweet babe;” said the venerable grandfather: “Heaven bless thee, Mary, Betsy, my children; God preserve thee;” then looking steadily at Mr. Grigs, who was standing at the bottom of the bed, but who soon was by the bed-side, “Mr. Grigs,” he added, “be a friend to them;—to her:”—he added, pointing to Mary, “for *I* feel, and *you* must know, that all will soon be over with me.”

A shriek from Mary interrupted him. “I have killed my father!” said she, wringing her hands; “I have killed my father, and driven my husband to prison! Oh, what a wretch am I!

“Mary, my dear Mary,” said Mr. Grigs, “do be pacified; see how you distress your father.”

He said no more, for a sigh, so deep, that it startled Mary from her selfish sorrow, again drew her to the bed. Old Woodbine fixed his eyes on her; she took his hand, but it was cold! and returned not the warmth of her pressure:—his eyes, too, gradually lost all expression; and Mr. Grigs, raising Mary from the bed, upon which she had sunk senseless, from the conviction that her father had fallen a sacrifice to affliction and grief, she was conveyed to her own apartment, where Mr. Grigs used every possible means to restore her to sensation, but for a long time without effect.

Such an accumulation of sorrow was more than his compassionate heart could endure. As he chafed Mary’s hands, and exhausted his medical skill for her recovery, the tears of sympathizing pity, fell copiously from his eyes.

Betsy, thus called upon for exertion, took her nephew from the side of her lifeless father; and while Betty Glover was performing the last sad offices of the dead, she hushed the lovely babe to sleep upon her heaving bosom.

When Mary, whose grief was far more poignant than that of her sister, because it was accompanied by the pangs of remorse, was restored to sensation; she was, with difficulty, prevented from again relapsing into insensibility. The cries of her infant roused her however, and she yielded to Mr. Grigs's reiterated request, that she would go to bed.

"For little William's sake, Mary, you must not give way to this exorbitant grief: and see, there is poor Betsy nursing the baby, and you are sitting there without exerting yourself at all."

At this moment, George Underwood arrived; he looked exceedingly weary, and was quite out of spirits. The new misfortune which had befallen the family, in the loss of his father-in-law, during his absence, quite overcame him, and he wept like a child.

To Betsy he related all that had happened since Mr. Grigs's departure.

"William," he said, "was so altered, that he did not appear like the same man. His behaviour towards Justice Grievall had irritated the latter exceedingly; and Mr. Squill, maliciously added fuel to fire, by aggravating every circumstance he proceeded to state."

William had refused to offer bail before Justice Grievall had objected to it; and that, in fact, if Colonel Ednor did not get better soon, matters would go hard with his assailant.

George then lamented Mary's former conduct and folly, to which all their present misfortunes might be attributed as their real source.

"If," he added, "if Ednor should recover, I very much question, whether William will ever return to his own home; he appears exasperated beyond all description; and I candidly confess to you, my dear Betsy, that in his present temper, I am not over anxious that he should be under the same roof with Mary."

On the following day, when Mr. Squill went to the cottage, Colonel Ednor was gone! and dame Greenly and her daughter, were clamorous in their grief; declaring that their house had been attacked in the night, and that her nephew had been forcibly conveyed from her roof.

"Well, well," replied Mr. Squill, "all this is very fine, dame; but you know there is no longer any necessity for your keeping up this farce. *Colonel Ednor* is gone of his own accord! he knows best why he came here: and betwixt you and I, dame, no good intent brought him to this part of the world. But that is neither here nor there; we must nevertheless make some inquiries after him; and William must be detained a day or two longer at Ampthill. I understand there is sad grief at the farm; and that old Woodbine is dead."

"Ah, well!" said Sally, "I always thought that family would have a downfall; they were all so proud."

"Yes," replied Mr. Squill, "and so conceited, and ignorant, that they never called in my assistance, but always trusted to that bungler, Mr. Grigs; preferring him to me, who studied under the great doctor Drinkwater. Well, for my part, they have brought their misfortunes upon themselves and nobody pities them; and so, dame, they must bear them. But the time flies, and I have many patients to see: so good-bye."

The misfortunes which had befallen the Woodbine family, were, notwithstanding Mr. Squill's observation to the contrary, deeply felt in the village; and Mr. Norton, the

clergyman, no sooner heard of the death of the farmer, than he repaired to the scene of sorrow with the hope of contributing consolation. He was startled at the wan countenance of Mary, and the deep dejection of Betsy; and having spoken peace and comfort to the afflicted sisters, he asked George to explain all the circumstances which had preceded so many melancholy events.

The clergyman listened with profound attention to the tale of woe which George related. Then desiring that he would, on no account, leave Woodbine-farm, he went home to get his horse, and set off for Ampthill.

When he arrived at that place, he repaired to Justice Grievall, and demanded a constable might be sent for, to fetch dame Greenly and her daughter to Ampthill.

Justice Grievall, for some time, refused; declaring that the disappearance of Colonel Ednor was so suspicious, that he had just given orders that William should be conveyed to Bedford jail, until this mysterious affair should be cleared up.

Mr. Norton strenuously opposed this proceeding; and insisted that dame Greenly and her daughter should appear before his worship, and swear, if they dared, that Colonel Ednor had been conveyed away *forcibly*.

The general voice, and the murmurs which had already reached his ears, respecting his conduct on this business, induced Justice Grievall to send a constable for dame Greenly, agreeably to the wishes of the clergyman.

Mr. Norton in the mean time, went to the place of William's confinement; he found him gloomy and sullen, refusing all consolation and explanation, and earnestly entreating to be left alone. Finding that the mind of the prisoner was not tuned to comfort, and that his presence rather irritated, than soothed, the unhappy man, Mr. Norton left him, hoping that he would in a short time become more composed, when he found that every exertion was used for his release.

But William longed for the solitude of a prison; and his removal to Bedford, was a circumstance he ardently desired. Life and death he contemplated with different feelings: the former had now lost every charm, and the latter, he sighed for, as a sovereign balm to his woes.

Dame Greenly and her daughter willingly accompanied the constable, for Mr. Norton had desired the latter not to say that he was in the town; depending therefore on the good disposition of Justice Grievall and doctor Squill, they repaired to Ampthill.

They were followed by hisses as they went along, for nearly all the inhabitants of this country town, thought that Ednor had met with his deserts, and that William was justified by his suspicions, whether they were real or imaginary, in the chastisement he had bestowed on the infamous villain, whose character was known and reprobated in that part of the country.

With an air of assurance the dame and her daughter entered the library of Justice Grievall. The appearance, however, of parson Norton, changed the expression of their countenances; and they looked at each other, then at Justice Grievall, who bade them speak the truth boldly, and fear no one.

Thus encouraged the dame stated in a long round-about story, "That her cottage had been attacked in the night, by armed men, who had fired in at the window, and that a ball had passed just by her ear; that the Colonel had entreated for mercy, but, that the men seized him and carried him away, and that one of them had left his hat behind him, which she had brought with her."

The hat was produced, and bore the initials of William Meadow's. At this part of her narrative, her eyes met those of Mr. Norton; hers instantly fell, for he fixed his on her sternly, and said, "This you will swear to; and by the hat, you mean to insinuate that William Meadows was one of those who carried off the infamous Colonel."

Dame Greenly in her confusion, replied in the affirmative, although, the more wily and collected Sally, by nods and signs, intimated that she should say *no*, to this question.

Her answer, however, was sufficient to satisfy Mr. Norton and all present, that the whole was a falsehood; and he turned towards the Justice, and desired that the jailer who had William in custody might be sent for.

Upon the appearance of this man, he was asked, how he could be so imprudent as to allow William Meadows, his prisoner, to be out at night?

The man looked with astonishment at Mr. Norton, who put this question to him, and dame Greenly saw that she had in her zeal to second Colonel Ednor's views, gone far beyond the mark.

Justice Grievall could no longer refuse to listen to Mr. Norton, as the jailer swore that his prisoner had never been out of the dark-room, since he had been first confined in it.

Mr. Norton had not done with Sally and her mother, but in the presence of all those assembled, he severally reprimanded them, adding, "This is not the first time that I have had cause to protect the Woodbine family, against your base and wicked contrivances. You have not forgotten your cruel slanders against Mary Woodbine before she was married, and this same Colonel—For shame, for shame.—Were you not compelled to quit the neighbourhood in consequence of your malicious conduct at that period? And the first time your return becomes public, it is on an occasion of a similar disgraceful nature. I should hope to hear soon that you have again been driven from the neighbourhood, by the contempt and just indignation of your more worthy neighbours.—Go, base as you are, and never let me see your faces again."

The Dame and her daughter were quite abashed at this public and severe reproof, and hastened out of the Justice's apartment, amidst the murmurs of all present; and when they came into the street, they were assailed by groans and hisses. They remained but a few days longer at Ware-hedges, and then decamped, no one knew whither.

Mr. Norton now had free permission to liberate William Meadows; and, accompanied by Mr. Grigs, he went to communicate to the prisoner the good news of his release.

William however evinced no signs of joy at this intelligence; on the contrary, he appeared unwilling to leave the place of his confinement; but Mr. Grigs was copious in his expressions of congratulations both to the prisoner and his liberator. There was, however, something so extraordinary in William's manner, that the benevolent doctor called Mr. Norton out of the room, and with many excuses for taking such a liberty, entreated the clergyman to invite William Meadows to *his house*.

"He has been used to pay more respect to you than to me," said Mr. Grigs, "and I think really he stands in need of some one to superintend his actions at present."

Mr. Norton readily consented to ask Mr. Meadows to his house, and in the course of half an hour, William was seated by the side of Mr. Grigs in his whiskey, while Mr. Norton rode his own horse, by the side of the apothecary's vehicle. They left the town

amidst the shouts of the inhabitants; and, at a brisk pace, set off for Silvershoe. William's gloom increased as he reached his native village, and with difficulty was he persuaded to stop at Mr. Norton's. But the clergyman was so pressing, that he knew not how to evade compliance: therefore he got out of the whiskey and followed his reverend friend into the parsonage.

CHAPTER VII.

> What have you done? A rising smile
> Stole from her thoughts, just redd'ning on her cheek,
> And you have dash'd it.
>
> ISABELLA, OR THE FATAL MARRIAGE.

THE news of William's return was conveyed to the farm by Mr. Grigs, and his countenance as he entered, communicated the pleasing intelligence before he opened his lips. Mary caught his hand and pressed it to her heart—then holding her child towards the doctor, she said in broken accents, "Oh that he too could thank you!

Mr. Grigs was overcome, and he suppressed the rising tear, exclaiming—"My dear Mary, this is too much—be composed."

Her first joy having thus found vent, certain feelings returned, and chased the smile from her flushed cheek.

"Where is he?" at length she inquired, "why does he not come home? Oh, Mr. Grigs, when will he be here? I will go and meet him."

"Stop, Mrs. Meadows," replied Mr. Grigs, "William is at Mr. Norton's. He has some business to settle, business of importance, which will detain him late; and perhaps he may not return home to-night: but you must excuse this, Mary, because just now, his!—just now—his mind—has much to—to——"

Mr. Grigs knew not what to say, for Mary's countenance expressed so much despair, that he feared to proceed.

She, however, assumed composure, and made no observations on his communication, though her manner shewed how deeply she felt this unwillingness on the part of her husband to return home, after his release from confinement.

Mr. Norton in the mean time was endeavouring to convince William, that his conduct had been precipitate and unjustifiable. "You acted," he continued, "upon mere suspicion: what proof had you of your wife's guilt? and why do you still brood over your imaginary ills, till they assume the form of reality? Believe me, Mr. Meadows, when I declare solemnly to you, that I think you wrong your wife. No one can deny, but she has been capricious and wilful; but her very conduct towards you, before you were married, convinces me, that she is innocent of the crime you suspect. I entreat you to pause before you proceed to any rash act, of which you may repent during the rest of your days."

William listened patiently to the clergyman's arguments; but they evidently wrought no conviction on his mind, already a prey to the dreadful passions of jealousy and revenge.

"You will sleep here to-night," continued Mr. Norton: "a bed is prepared for you; and to-morrow let me have the pleasure of accompanying you to Woodbine-farm. But I have an event to communicate, which I had nearly forgotten. Farmer Woodbine has paid the debt of nature."

William started from his seat, exclaiming—"Dead! Woodbine dead!—when did he die?"

"The very day you were at Ampthill; the day before yesterday. You will therefore easily imagine how much your presence is required at the farm, to administer consolation

to your afflicted wife, whose health has received a great shock from such an accumulation of sorrows. But I will intrude no longer on you at present. I will, however, see you before I retire to rest."

Mr. Norton left the room after saying this, leaving William, with feelings, in some degree softened. The death of his venerable father-in-law, whom he highly respected, was an unexpected blow, and struck those softer chords of the human heart which dissolve it into tenderness.

Unconscious of the passing hours, William sat musing on the events of the last few days, while the tears imperceptibly chased each other down his manly cheek.

In this state Mr. Norton found him, when he came to wish him good night; and as an earnest, that he intended to remain in the village, William said, he should attend the old man to his grave on the following Sunday.

William Meadows, early the next morning, took leave of the worthy vicar, and, accompanied by George, went to Underwood farm, firmly refusing the most pressing entreaties of his brother-in-law and his wife to return to his own home.

Mary, in the mean time, with a composure which astonished her friends, submitted to her hard fate. She seldom spoke, except to her little boy—but then her tones were so mournful, that they drew tears from all around her.

George described her situation to William, in the glowing language of a sensitive nature.

"If," said he, "William, you could but see her, I am sure your heart would be softened, and you would be convinced that you wrong her. She is so altered, you would hardly know her; and Mr. Grigs is fearful, that her grief, which is now so solemn, so deep, and so still, will injure her health to that degree, that she may go into a decline."

William listened sometimes with emotion, but oftener with impatience, to the picture of his wife's distress; but he never shewed the least inclination to see her.

Sunday at length arrived, the day on which the remains of farmer Woodbine were to be committed to their parent earth. He was to be buried at Flitton, the parish to which Silvershoe was an appendage; and the greater part of the inhabitants of the latter place assembled before the farm, to evince their respect for the deceased.

Flitton is about one mile from Silvershoe;—and the long train of mourners being arranged, and the bearers having approached the coffin, Betsy and Mary, who resolved to follow their parent to the grave, appeared. George Underwood supported his wife,—Mr. Grigs, Mary; for William would not allow his wife to know that he was present, and he had consequently not been mentioned at the farm since the day of his arrival at Mr. Norton's.

He joined, therefore, the group of unallied mourners, who, from affection to farmer Woodbine, followed his corse. Thus unknown, and unnoticed, he walked immediately behind his wife: for a long time he resisted the impression which her feeble steps and tottering frame made on his heart; but his natural disposition was mild and affectionate; and as he advanced, concealing his face, tears of tenderness at length began to flow.

Still, however, he did not make himself known, resolving to continue the part which he had begun, of an inexorable and *just* judge.

The mournful company increased as it proceeded; children quitted their play, and in silence watched the solemn procession: here and there one, a little older than the rest,

would be seen putting up a finger to impose silence on some little child, who, in a whispering voice, would ask, whose burial it was?

When the funeral procession reached Ware-hedges, William could scarcely command his feelings:—the recollection of all that had passed there, and the various emotions which this retrospective view presented to his imagination, were almost too powerful for him. He looked on every side, expecting to see rising before him, the form of him whose presence at Silvershoe had imbittered his happiness.

The train, however, passed uninterruptedly on, and his attention was again fixed on his trembling wife.

Mary, with a resolution which did her honour, walked the whole way without one expression of complaint;—when, however, she drew near the church, a groan burst from her agonized bosom,—and the wind caught her hood.

Mr. Grigs gazed with feelings of inexpressible grief and alarm on her pale countenance, which resembled that of a marble statue, chiselled by the hand of some eminent artist, as the image of despair. Her eyes were fixed in their sockets;—no friendly tear bedewed her cold cheek, which sunk and hollow, betrayed the ravages that grief and sorrow had made on her youthful and erst beauteous frame.

Mr. Grigs began to say something to her, but she motioned for him to silence; and he instantly turning towards William, whom *he* knew, darted at him an expression of indignation and anger, which shewed how deeply he was affected.

Betsy wept the greater part of the way;—she had lost a friend indeed, in her father, but she was supported by a fond and affectionate husband.

Mary, alas! in her sorrow, was obliged to a stranger for assistance; and he who should have offered his sheltering arms to her, followed her unknown and almost unpitying. The funeral service being nearly completed, heavy groans burst from Mary's bosom; and, when those thrilling words stole upon her ear—"*Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,*" she sprang forward, and would have fallen into the grave, if Mr. Grigs had not rushed forward and caught her. But she was cold and senseless without the smallest trace of life.

A scene of anxious confusion followed, and Mary was carried into a farm-house not far from the church-yard. Here Mr. Grigs used every means in his power to recal the fleeting spark of life. While William franticly implored him to save her. No one, however, paid any attention to his clamorous grief,—and Mr. Norton having consulted with Mr. Grigs, they agreed that Mary should be carried to Underwood farm, so soon as she was able to be removed.

"Then," Mr. Meadows, "you may go to your own home," said Mr. Grigs. "We will take care of Mrs. Meadows, if she *should* recover; but I very much doubt whether she will ever trouble you again."

Mr. Grigs spoke this with some asperity. But he was so indignant and so enraged at the conduct of William, that he desired him to leave the room, lest Mrs. Meadows, should be again reduced to a state of insensibility, by the sight of her obdurate and hard-hearted husband.

William absolutely refused compliance, and declared he would not leave the room, till she gave some signs of returning life. Mr. Norton, however, persuaded him to retire into the next apartment.

Mary gave slight symptoms of existence, long before she was restored to complete animation; and the indefatigable Mr. Grigs never left her, till he had accomplished the desired end of restoring her to life, for so it may be called. She was however, so weak, and so low, that the slightest movement in the room alarmed her; and when the door opened, she drew her head under the clothes, and entreated Mr. Grigs "not to let *him* come into the apartment."

"No, my dear Mary," replied the apothecary, "nobody shall intrude on you; no, no one: don't be alarmed, only take this little drop of medicine, and then compose yourself."

"I will do any thing you wish," she replied, "only don't let *him* come in;—hush! was that his voice? don't leave me. Is Betsy there? don't leave me, Betsy."

Mr. Grigs repeated his promise, that no one should come into the room, except Betsy and himself. "And mind," added Mary, sobbing, "that he does not take my darling William away."

In this state of restless anxiety, did Mary pass the evening; and when Mr. Grigs left her, Betsy took her seat by the bed-side, watching every movement of her unhappy sister; who, starting from uneasy slumbers, desired repeatedly she would "lock the door, and not let *him* in."

Thus, heavily passed away the night; and in the morning, she appeared but little refreshed; yet, Mr. Grigs pronounced her better, "Considerably better: and," he added, "if we can but keep that headstrong William out of the way, she may recover; but if she suffers such another attack, all the physicians in the world cannot save her. I think we might, in a post-chaise, remove her. She pines for her child, and I should be more upon the spot, if she were at your house, Betsy, than here."

This proposal met Mrs. Underwood's wishes, and as the distance was fortunately short, Mary, who was lifted into and out of the chaise, bore the fatigue very well. Her agitation however, as she approached Silvershoe, caused some alarm to her friends; but she was so gentle, and so docile in their hands, and exerted herself so much, that she was carried into the house without any further ill effect than that of extreme weariness and a kindly shower of tears.

"And now, Mrs. Meadows," said the delighted Mr. Grigs, "now you shall see your little boy, if you will promise to be very good, and smile upon us a little."

The sight of little William did wonders, for although Mary was too weak to nurse him, yet her spirits were revived as she saw his little arms extended towards her.

William had with difficulty been prevented from forcing himself into the presence of his wife, but Mr. Grigs declared "that unless he wished to kill her, he would not persevere in his ill-judged intentions."

"You take upon yourself too much, Mr. Grigs," said Meadows, "I must, and will see her."

"Go then," resumed Mr. Grigs, in great agitation, "go and see *her*, whom you have reduced to the brink of the grave, and complete your barbarous work; but I will not stand by and see her murdered." When he had said this, he rushed out of the house, and went to Mr. Norton, who instantly repaired to farmer Underwood's, fearing to learn the result of Mr. Grigs's sudden departure.

William however, had been thunderstruck at the vehemence of the usually mild apothecary; and he hesitated, having it now in his power to go to his wife, whether he had not better defer his visit for a time.

In this frame of mind, he was found by the vicar, who had little difficulty in persuading him to go to Woodbine-farm, at least, until the following day.

George had been absent since the funeral of farmer Woodbine, on particular business, and did not return until Mary had been one day and a night an inmate in his house. He was delighted to find her better, and then went to Woodbine-farm, but his brother-in-law was not at home. George then went to the inn, but he had not been there; indeed, he had not been seen in the village since the morning. The impetuosity William had displayed upon the whole of this unfortunate affair, made George rather uneasy at not finding him, and he lingered about the farm till past ten at night; hoping to see him, before he retired to rest: but he waited in vain. Then, with a melancholy presentiment, he returned home; and communicated to Mr. Grigs, the terrifying news, that William was no where to be found.

"Bless me!" said Mr. Grigs, "I never knew any thing so extraordinary. He really has a mind to kill us all. Oh dear me! what can be done? It is so silly of William, If it were not for poor Mary, I should not trouble my head about him; but for her sake he must be found: but I shall not go after him to-night, I can tell him."

George, too, felt so indignant, that he said he should go to bed, and not trouble himself about the impatient William.

The next morning, George received a letter from Meadows, saying, that he had absented himself till Mary should be better: that "he could not endure to be near her, and not see her:—that when she was well enough to return to her own home, he would be there to receive her:—but that if she died, he intended to take vengeance on the villain; on her murderer! for such he looked upon the villain Ednor!"

"There now," said Mr. Grigs, as he read this portentous epistle; "there now, did you ever know the like? What is to be done now? how is he to know she is better? and how are we to get her to Woodbine-farm? Oh dear me! that people will be so impetuous. But I hear Mrs. Underwood's voice. Ah, Betsy, my dear, how do you do this morning? how is Mary!"

"She has rested ill to-night," replied Mrs. Underwood, and she is exceedingly low-spirited. Oh, Mr. Grigs! where is William? I do not think she will get better, till she sees him."

"Hem! Hem!—Why Mrs. Underwood, you see," rejoined the apothecary, "you see that silly man—he is so silly—pshaw,—nonsense,—I could almost hang myself.—He is gone away, Betsy my dear; and nobody knows where."

"Gone!" exclaimed Mrs. Underwood, turning pale, "gone! good gracious! what is to be done?

"Ah! that's the very thing;" added Mr. Grigs, walking up and down the room; "that's the very thing. What's to be done? I am sure I don't know; but this I know, I wish William had never been born."

A long consultation followed, but no good resulted from the deliberations of the agitated parties; and this day passed on, in silent and melancholy meditation on the part of Mary, who never mentioned her husband, but lavished the tenderest expressions on her little boy. At night, however, she asked Mr. Grigs when she might go home.

"Soon, my Mary," was the reply; "but you must be patient awhile; I think you look a little better to-day. That's right now, give us a smile:—but I am engaged a little

this evening.—So God bless you.—Ah, this little cherub I see fast asleep,—he really is a beauty, Mary.—But good-bye."

Mary sighed as he left the room, and complaining of weariness, she went to bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

How could you promise love to me,
And not that promise keep?
Why did you swear mine eyes were bright,
Yet leave those eyes to weep?
BALLAD OF WILLIAM AND MARGARET.

ABOUT ten o'clock the next morning, a boy brought a letter from William, desiring to know how Mary did; and describing the state of his feelings as beyond all endurance.

"Tell the person who sent you," said George, "that unless he returns home, his wife will die."

"Lord, Sir," said the boy, "I darn't tell him no such thing; the gentleman looks half mad now, and his horse is always saddled and—"

"Where is he then?" inquired George.

"Why, I left him at Luton; but he said, as I was to bring a letter, and he would send for it, as he was going further on."

"Stop, boy," resumed George, "and I'll go with you part of the way;" and after giving some necessary directions to his wife, Underwood set off, desiring as he quitted the house that she would let Mr. Grigs know where he was going.

When our travellers were about two miles from Luton, the lad rode closely up to George, and in a whisper, said, "I saw the gentleman go into the hovel a good way on—upon the downs."

"Well, then, my lad," replied Underwood, "go straight on your way; I suppose, although you pretend ignorance, you know who the *gentleman* is?"

"Why, yes," said the boy, "I an't seen farmer Meadows so often at market, as not to know him; only, as he was so odd, I pretended I had never seen him before."

"Very well," resumed Underwood, "you may be off."

The lad doffed his hat, and set off full canter for Luton, while George rode across the downs, and got to the hovel unperceived by William. He fastened his horse to a stake that was near the cottage, and tapped at the door. No one answered: he tapped a second time, and then without further ceremony entered: he was met at the door by an old woman, who asked him his business.

"I am tired," said George, "I want to rest a little."

William, who was seated with his back to the door, and resting both elbows upon his knees, while his dejected head was supported by both hands, started at George's voice, and advancing towards him, asked, "What he meant by coming there?"

William's countenance was pale and sallow, his cheek sadly sunk, his dark eye hollow and wild in its expression, his fine arched eyebrows were drawn nearly together; his black hair hung about his face in great disorder; his speech was rude, and his manner so appalling as he advanced towards his brother, that the latter retreated a few steps.

"I came, William, to impart comfort to you, to lead you to your own home, and to tell you that Mary is somewhat *better*."

William smiled; but his smile terrified George. "She will live, then," he said; "are you certain she is better? I have sworn never to return to Silvershoe till she can welcome

me to my home; but that is impossible, she never can welcome the wretch who has so cruelly used her."—"No," he cried with vehemence, "she must curse me as the cause of all her sorrows. If she does not recover, George, the villain who urged my soul to madness, shall not live to triumph in her death and my misery. No, no, I will follow him to the end of the earth, but I will be revenged. Oh, Mary—Mary, my dear Mary."

George seized William's arm, for he thought he was going to escape, saying at the same time, "This is downright folly, William; Mary will recover; but Mr. Grigs says that unless you return to the farm, she never will."

"Mr. Grigs is a meddling fool," said William, "and so you may tell him from me. If I had seen her, I should not have left home. But to be close to her," he added, struggling with his tears, "and not to see her, was more than I could endure! Oh George, George,—but go—I will promise not to leave this hovel, but home I will not go."

George used every argument in his power, to induce Meadows to accompany him home; but the latter was obstinate, and muttering curses on Colonel Ednor's head, he ran out upon the downs, motioning to George not to follow him.

Underwood did not attempt it, for he was afraid of driving him to some act of desperation; he therefore, with a heavy heart, retraced his steps, and entered his own home just at dinner-time: he was vexed and harassed, and was no ways sparing in reprobating the conduct of William, which he said resembled that of a madman.

Mr. Grigs came about two o'clock to hear the news, and his grief and disappointment was great. "Not," said he, "that I care much about William, he has brought his troubles upon himself; I think of poor Mary: but I have not seen her to-day. How is she?"

Mr. Grigs went up stairs, without waiting for an answer, and returned with a countenance expressive of grief.

"I can't think what has agitated Mrs. Meadows so? she is all in a tremor, and is so flushed, and her pulse is all in a flutter; she seems quite flurried, and she talks and smiles, and is quite odd. Has any thing happened to-day?"

He was answered in the negative. "It is very strange," he resumed, "I shall look in again, in the evening; I don't like this change."

About eight o'clock Mr. Grigs again saw Mrs. Meadows, who appeared more composed and he left the house in better spirits. Betsy's little girl being unwell she did not sleep in Mary's room this night; but the maid did. The latter soon fell into a sound sleep, and Mary having quite ascertained this, and waited till the house was quite still, gently raised herself in bed. She then got up and softly put on her clothes, and having again and again looked at her child, she went towards the door.

"I will take him with me," she said in an under voice—but just as she was going to raise him, she started back, exclaiming "No—no, no, the night air will kill him."

She then retreated from his little bed, with her eyes still fixed on the lovely boy; gently she unclosed the door, as softly shut it—and gliding down stairs she entered the kitchen. All was still and solitary—the rush-light she held was nearly extinguished by the opening of the kitchen-door, at the foot of the stairs, and she deliberately lighted a candle which stood on the kitchen-table.

While she was thus occupied, she fancied she heard an odd noise, but all was again quiet; when, as she softly drew back the bolts of the house-door, she evidently distinguished voices whispering, without; terror now took possession of her, and she

stood motionless till the sudden lifting of the latch, and the appearance of a face, cautiously peeping through the half-closed door, made her fly towards the stairs, but two men rushing in, her faint scream was stopped by the application of one of their hands upon her mouth. The energy which had brought her so far was now gone, and she sunk a senseless burden in the arms of the ruffian who held her. “She’s not dead surely,” said he, as he looked at her pallid cheek.

“No,” replied his comrade, “never fear she’ll soon recover. But what the deuce could have brought her here at this time of night.”

“Who knows,” said the man who spoke first, “indeed, who’d think of accounting for a woman’s actions.—Let’s begone—she may be missed, and the hue and cry after her may begin before we are beyond pursuit. Let’s bring her out—this is doing our business easily indeed.”

“Let’s put out the light, that will bother them a little; and then as you say, the sooner we are off the better.”

They lifted Mary from the ground, and carrying her between them, they placed her in a chaise and drove off, in which situation we shall leave her.

In order to account for Mrs. Meadows’s conduct in attempting to quit the house, it will be necessary here to add a word or two of illustration. We have briefly then to observe that when George Underwood told his wife he was going in search of William—he was overheard by the ignorant country girl who waited upon Mrs. Meadows, and who immediately hastened to the invalid with the joyful news, “that her master was going to bring back farmer Meadows.”

“Bring him back,” said Mary, “why, where is he?”

“Laws, did’nt you know as he had left his home, and was gone nobody knows where?”

“No,” replied Mary with assumed composure, “I did’nt indeed, Jessy, and mind you tell me when your master comes back.”

The girl promised she would, and it was her intelligence which had caused the irritation Mr. Grigs had observed; and her attempt to quit the house arose from the same source. Finding that her husband would not return, she formed the strange resolution of going herself to fetch him back. Judging very accurately that her friends would oppose this scheme, and prevent it, she dissembled her feelings, and waited as we have seen till the family were all fast locked in the arms of sleep.

About four in the morning the girl who slept in her room rose; but what was her surprise and dismay at finding the bed empty. She started up and half-dressed ran to her mistress’s room: the alarm was soon given, and in less than a quarter of an hour every individual of the family was assembled. The kitchen-door was found upon the latch—every thing appeared as it was left on the over night; no one thing was removed out of its place; but by the table they found one of Mary’s shoes, and outside of the door by the railing, they picked up her bonnet which had fallen off as the men carried her to the chaise.

By six o’clock the news spread through the village—but George had mounted his horse a few minutes after this discovery, and set off on the London road, while Mr. Grigs took the opposite direction. When they were gone, the maid said, “La! I dare say she’s gone after her husband.”

“And why do you suppose this,” asked her mistress; Jessy then told what had passed between her and Mrs. Meadows, and Betsy wrung her hands in despair, as she bade her servant begone “and not let her face be seen, till Mary returned.”

The poor girl sobbed and cried bitterly; and Mrs. Underwood hastened to the George Inn, and employed a man to go across the Luton downs to find out William Meadows—“But stop, my good fellow,” said she, “if Mrs. Meadows went by herself, she cannot have reached half that way. Go in every lane near the village, that will be the better plan;” the man did so, but without success.

At noon George came home from an equally unsuccessful attempt—and Mr. Grigs, who was more fortunate, is the only one to whom we shall pay attention.

Mr. Grigs imagined that Mary from the agitation he had found her in, might have left the house alone, but he knew that however she might be supported by the energy of fever for a time, she must eventually, and that shortly, sink under the fatigue of her undertaking. He therefore pondered a little while, and, as he glanced over the late events, concluded that she had been carried off by force. From a shepherd’s boy he learnt that a post-chaise had passed before it was light, towards Ampthill.

“I was going to look after my lambs,” said the lad, “and I could hardly get out of the way soon enough, for they drove main fast; but as I comed back, the chaise was standing still near the same spot, and I saw a man running with water in his hat—so I crept softly on, and I heard him say—‘She’s mortal bad:’—and as I was afeard a-being seen, I went away,—but I saw them drive off.”

“There’s a shilling for you, my lad,” said the delighted Mr. Grigs; and, spurring-on his long-tailed mare, he got scent of the fugitives from another man, who told him, “the chaise turned off the high road; and that a drover man had said, ‘there was quite *a-to-do* in Sheffield; for a gentleman was there, whose wife had just been brought to him in a dying state after she had run away from her husband.’”

Mr. Grigs immediately entered a chaise and four, and bade the post-boys drive for their lives to Sheffield; Mr. Grigs was well known at Ampthill, and he was readily obeyed.

Off the post-boys set, and Mr. Grigs, who had seldom driven his whiskey at more than a brisk trot, was now whirled over the ground with such velocity, that he seated himself in the middle of the chaise, expecting every instant to have his neck broke. His fears at last got the better of every other feeling, and he tapped at the chaise window; the post-boys turned round, and, touching their hats, began flogging their horses unmercifully, supposing Mr. Grigs thought they did not drive fast enough. The terrified apothecary now threw himself back in the chaise, and, closing his eyes in despair, gave himself up for lost. The entrance into the town aroused him,—and in surprise he found himself safe and sound opposite the inn, where another chaise and four stood waiting.

All idea of self was now forgotten,—and taking the host on one side, he told him his errand:—he said, “Why you must know, Mrs. Meadows!”

“To be-sure I do,” replied the landlord,—“one of the prettiest women in all Bedfordshire;—but they keep this lady so close, and won’t let nobody see her, that, hang me, if I did n’t think there was some foul play going on. But what shall I do, Sir?”

“Send that chaise out of the way, and tell *the* gentleman, that another gentleman wishes to speak with him here!—but at your peril, landlord, let the lady be carried out

before I have seen her. Have you no Justice near at hand?—bless me, I am all in a flutter— all in a flutter—for fear they should outwit us."

"Oh, never fear," said the landlord, "my wife shall stand at one door, and I at the other; and the devil is in it if they carry her off, then. Here, waiter! shew this gentleman up stairs, where the other gentleman is."

Mr. Grigs followed the waiter up stairs rather slowly. Certain thoughts now arose in his breast, for Mr. Grigs was no hero as to war-like encounters; and perhaps the Colonel, who was a soldier, might be armed. "Dear me, in a low tone, ejaculated the apothecary—"I wish I had my pistols."

But he had no time for further reflection or observation, for the door opened, and disclosed Colonel Ednor with his back to the door, urging poor Mary, by whom he was seated, to take some jelly. Mr. Grigs pulled back the waiter, and motioned to him to stop.

Mary turned with disgust away, when the Colonel, rising, said—"I must insist upon your eating it."

"Jelly!" said Mr. Grigs, advancing—"Jelly is very bad for Mrs. Meadows:" but he said no more, for the Colonel jumped up, exclaiming—"Mr. Grigs!—confusion!" and poor Mary sprang from her seat likewise, and fastened her arms round Mr. Grigs's neck.

"Mrs. Meadows!—Mary!—my dear Mary!" said Mr. Grigs:—"Here, waiter! call your mistress:—don't be afraid, Mary; if he were the devil himself, (as he very much resembles him, I have no doubt), he should not touch you."

Mr. Grigs was a hero now indeed, for he set the Colonel at defiance; and Mary having loosed her hold, he supported her to a chair, and placing himself before her, he brandished his gold-headed cane, turning round every now and then to Mrs. Meadows, encouraging her not to fear.

When the landlady entered the room, the Colonel, who had been swearing at, and threatening Mr. Grigs, threw down a guinea, and was about to depart, when the landlady "begged he would take it up again, as her husband would settle with him down stairs."

Colonel Ednor in a passion ran down stairs, at the foot of which he was met by the landlord, who presented him with the bill, congratulating him at the same time upon the recovery of his wife.

The Colonel left the inn through the connivance of the landlord, who condescended to allow him a chaise and pair of horses, and he made his escape in good time; for there was a ducking-stool by the side of a horse-pond here, as well as at Silvershoe, and the country people were assembling round the inn, to impede his exit with impunity. He, however, sprang into his chaise so quickly, that they were disappointed, and they wreaked their vengeance on one of the instruments employed in carrying off Mary. The other escaped at the risk of breaking his neck, by leaping over five-barred gates, scrambling through hedges, and tumbling neck and heels into deep muddy ditches.

The joy of Mr. Grigs was now clamorous, and he shook the landlord and landlady by the hand heartily; gave the waiter something to drink; rewarded the post-boys handsomely, and desired they would give their horses a extra feed, as he should want to return in about an hour to Ampthill.

Poor Mary was in a piteous state,—and when Mr. Grigs went near her, all his spirits fled. Her first question was about William.

“And now, my dear Mrs. Meadows,” said he, “lie down for one half hour, and I promise you that William shall be in his own house to-night;—will that satisfy you? But unless you compose yourself, we shan’t arrive at Ampthill before evening, and then I cannot perform my promise you know.”

Mary allowed herself to be persuaded, and, overcome by her late exertion, she fell asleep, and Mr. Grigs then recollected, that he had not broken his fast that day. “Dear me, landlord,” said he, “have you any thing nice in the house? A bit of ham, or round of beef, or something of that kind?”

The landlord had any thing and every thing, and Mr. Grigs made a hearty meal. In the joy and delight of having rescued Mary from the power of Colonel Ednor, he forgot her alarming disposition; but when the landlady called him into Mary’s room, to look at her, all his anxiety was awakened.

“I wish she was at Underwood farm,” said he with a deep sigh, “Oh, dear! what misery there is in the world. She is very bad:—bless me! how fast her pulse beats. I am frightened to death: how will she bear the journey? Can you spare one of your maids to go with us?”

At this moment Mary opened her eyes. She looked amazed for a few seconds, but she soon recognised that friend, who had never failed her in the hour of necessity. “Ah, Mr. Grigs,” she said, “now let us go home—go to my sister’s, I mean,” she added with a sigh.

“Yes, my dear Mary,” said the doctor—“Yes, you shall go directly, and the landlady will help you. Ah! how we shall surprise them.”

“Poor thing,” he said, as he went down stairs, and drove back the tears which started to his eyes—“poor thing! she is very bad,” he continued, addressing himself to the landlady—“and it grieves me to the heart to see her. I have known her ever since she was born,—and you see, she is so natural to me—that——I think a glass of wine would do me good, landlord; I am rather low just now.” And putting his arms on the table, and resting his head upon them, he indulged nature in her tribute of a tear.

Mary having taken some refreshment at his desire, now, with trembling steps, descended the stairs, was lifted into the chaise, and placed in one corner. She was followed by Mr. Grigs and the maid-servant of the inn, and at a steady pace they departed for home. The apothecary had despatched a messenger to Silvershoe with the joyful intelligence of Mary’s rescue—and Betsy was at Ampthill ready to receive them.

Mary’s spirits began to fail entirely as they approached Underwood farm, but Mr. Grigs rallied her gently, and told her she must be very good, for he was now going to fulfil his promise.

“Ah, Mrs. Underwood, you need not look so curious—that’s a secret between Mrs. Meadows and me. Well, good-bye to you both. Ah! there’s that young rogue, Will—hem! I see Mr. Underwood down there, I think;—yes, indeed, ’tis he. Well, good-bye to you.”

When Mr. Grigs joined Underwood, the latter ordered his horse to be put to the taxed-cart, and off they set.

“I did not,” said George, “go to the hovel this morning, for I really feared William would be guilty of some crime or other; but now he shall know all, and we will bring him back by force, if he will not come without compulsion.” Mr. Grigs agreed to this, but he observed, “that William was a *powerful man.*”

“We’ll manage him,” replied George, “never fear.”

William did not fly from George as before, but his pallid cheek was flushed when he saw Mr. Grigs.

“We are come,” said Underwood, “to argue with you concerning your present folly, and to say, that unless you return to night to Woodbine farm, the consequences will be fatal.”

He then detailed to him the events of the preceding night and day;—William’s agitation as George proceeded was beyond all description, and his vows of vengeance against Colonel Ednor terrified Mr. Grigs.

“You must not think of vengeance now, Mr. Meadows,” said the amazed apothecary—“you must only think of consoling Mrs. Meadows. I have pledged myself you shall return to-night; and I hope, when I declare to you that nothing but your return *can* give me a hope of her restoration from sickness, you will submit to accompany us to Silvershoe. Write her a letter by way of introducing yourself by degrees, and if she is able to support the meeting, you shall see her to-morrow. Come now, my dear Mr. Meadows, let me beg you will listen to reason.”

William overpowered by the benevolent solicitude of Mr. Grigs held out his hand to him, and, rushing out of the hovel, placed himself in the cart, followed by the doctor and George.

George went with him to his house, and the apothecary drove quickly on, and, jumping out of the vehicle with more than his usual agility, he entered the parlour with a smiling face. “I need not ask you any questions,” said Mary, bursting into tears—“your face tells me that you bring good news.”

“I do indeed;” he replied,—“there I have left George and William at Woodbine farm as comfortable as you please. And now you will, I am sure, to please me, go to bed and sleep till morning.”

Mary readily obeyed, and though her pillow was moistened with her tears, yet she sunk into a more peaceful sleep than she had for some time enjoyed. While the benevolent Mr. Grigs, wearied by the exertions of the day, delighted with their results, walked briskly home, and retired to his couch, with a heart glowing with the exalted feelings of love and good-will towards his fellow-creatures

CHAPTER IX.

Ah, gifts neglected, talents misapplied,
Favours contemn'd, and comforts unenjoy'd!
At this sad shrine, the serious man may find,
A subject suited to his thoughtful mind;
And the rash youth, who runs his wild career,
May tremble at the lesson taught him here;
While baffled nature stands desponding by,
And hails the shade of *Ednor* with a sigh.

ANONYMOUS.

HAVING now brought back Mr. Meadows to his own house, we shall account for Ednor's disappearance from Dame Greenly's cottage, and his subsequent abduction of Mary.

Sally had been despatched by him to Luton, a town ten miles on the other side of Silvershoe, on the London road. Thither she went by the Ampthill coach, and having repaired to the King's-head inn, she there inquired for Colonel Ednor's servant, who had been desired by his master, previous to his departure from London, to await further orders at that place.

John listened with astonishment at Sally's story,—and then hired a chaise,—and at eight o'clock in the evening they got into it, and directed the driver to go to Ware-hedges. Colonel Ednor was then lifted into the chaise, and conveyed to Sheffield; here he remained plotting mischief; and having, by the aid of John, found two instruments ready to execute his iniquitous scheme, he called himself by a feigned name, and gave out an extraordinary reason for his bruises—saying, that he was in pursuit of his wife. Then hiring a chaise and four, and largely bribing the post-boys, he partly effected, as we have already observed, his nefarious design.

From Sheffield he hastened to London, where his own physician soon restored him to health. He then declared his intention of commencing a prosecution against Meadows for the assault.

With great difficulty his brother and solicitor dissuaded him from the folly of this exposure of a transaction which would be better consigned to oblivion. He yielded at length to their representation, and relinquished the point.

Colonel Ednor having materially injured his fortune by his extravagant mode of living, and his health being much impaired by the chastisement of William Meadows, and the fall from his curricle, he resolved on amending the former by a wealthy marriage, and procuring a nurse, in the person of his wife.

He therefore made proposals of marriage to several young ladies of fashion, family, and fortune, but his offers were politely rejected; finding that his real character was well known in the fashionable world, he turned his thoughts to the city. But however willing the wealthy citizens might be to consign their daughters to *a suitor* from the west-end of the town, they were also too prudent not to make inquiries about the man's character, who offered himself as son-in-law. As these inquiries did not redound to the honour of the Colonel, he was dismissed with a pertinent and positive refusal.

The Colonel's pride was now piqued, and he resolved on being married at any rate: and he was also resolved that his wife should be young and beautiful.

He had frequently seen a young lady at church, (for he went to church occasionally, and his reasons for doing so, the reader may guess,) in company with a middle-aged gentlewoman and a young man, whom he naturally supposed to be mother and brother to the fair damsel who had attracted his attention. But how to introduce himself was the question. Accident, however, befriended him, for the two ladies were walking together, when an over-driven ox with a whole population flying before him was discovered by the elder lady: terrified they joined the fugitives, when the foot of the latter slipping, Colonel Ednor ran to their assistance, forced open the door of a shop, and dragged rather than led her into it. He was most sedulous in his attentions to her, and when she was recovered and they were assured the enraged animal was secured, he begged she would accept his arm, and allow him the honour of conducting her to her own home. There was no possibility of refusing this polite offer, and he accompanied the two ladies to a small house in the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury Square. He took his leave at the door, entreating he might be permitted to call on the following day to know how the lady was; giving his card at the same time.

About four o'clock on the next day, he knocked at Mr. Saunders's door, and merely inquired how the lady was; but Mr. Saunders was at home, and he begged the Colonel would do them the honour to walk in.

No one could be more insinuating than Colonel Ednor, and he conducted himself with so much propriety during his short visit, that the mother, daughter, and son, were alike captivated.

Mrs. Saunders sighed as she looked at her daughter, who was dependant as well as herself upon her son. She was a clergyman's widow, whose husband had caught a typhus-fever in visiting one of his parishioners, and left them poor, but not friendless.

Colonel Ednor's visit was repeated, and in the course of a short time he became a frequent visitor; and as he talked familiarly of his brother, who lived in South Audley-street, and many other persons whose names were familiar to Mr. Saunders, from seeing them in the newspapers' list of fashionables, he thought there could be neither harm nor impropriety in admitting him to an intimacy with his sister.

Miss Saunders listened to the delicate flattery of the Colonel with indifference; her opinion of him did not improve upon acquaintance, but her obligations to her mother and brother, induced her to sacrifice her own judgement to theirs, and to suppose that she was mistaken, and they were right.

When, therefore, Mrs. Saunders, with all the pride of a mother, congratulated her daughter on the conquest she had made, Lucy Saunders replied only by a sigh, which was followed by a smile.

"To be sure," said Mrs. Saunders, "he is not very young; but he is not old; and it would make me *so* happy to see you settled, my dear, before I die."

Miss Saunders pressed her mother's hand to her lips, and shortly afterwards left the room.

On the morning after this conversation, a letter was delivered to Mrs. Saunders from India; it was from her brother, whom she had long supposed to be dead. He was a singular character, and had left England in possession of only one hundred pounds besides the money required to defray his passage; he had not written to any of his family

since his departure from his native country. Having, however, realized a very large fortune, he wrote to an old friend, for tidings of his family, and from him, he learnt that his sister was a widow, and poor; he immediately forwarded to her a sum more than adequate to all her wants; viz., five thousand pounds, saying, that as he had no family, her children should be his heirs. For a long time she could not believe her senses, and Colonel Ednor being the first person she saw after reading the letter, which was still in her hand when he entered the room, she immediately communicated its contents. Policy induced the wily Ednor to shorten his visit, and he even absented himself for two or three days.

This conduct was declared to be the height of delicacy, and drew forth the most sanguine praises from both mother and son.

Poor Lucy was silent on the subject, and devoutly wished that his delicacy would induce him not to repeat his visits.

Her brother, however, thought differently, and having met the delicate Colonel, insisted upon his accompanying him home. With seeming reluctance he complied, but before the day was passed, he made to Mrs. Saunders proposals of marriage for her daughter.

Mrs. Saunders replied, “That she should be happy to call him son-in-law, but that at the same time her daughter was at her own disposal, and, consequently was free mistress of her choice.”

This was just the answer he expected, and he begged he might have an opportunity of making known to the fair object of his adoration the first and only wish of his heart, declaring at the same time that he could no longer live in this torturing state of suspense.

A message was sent to Miss Lucy, requiring her attendance, but the young lady sent an excuse, saying, she was indisposed.

Mrs. Saunders, alarmed, left the room, and went to her daughter’s apartment. When she entered the room, Lucy sat pale and motionless, while the maid was chafing her hands and rubbing her temples with vinegar.

At her feet lay a letter, to which she pointed; and motioning to the servant to withdraw, she entreated her mother to read that friendly epistle: it ran as follows:

“Let not Miss Lucy Saunders listen to the deceitful Colonel Ednor! Let her write to Mr. Grigs, of Silvershoe, Bedfordshire, and ask him the story of Mary Gabriel’s woes. Let her mention Susan Cowslip; and even Mary Woodbine. These he has injured, oh! how cruelly! The first died mad;—The second, is a wanderer, without a friend;—and the third, though now married, had nearly rued the day when she listened to the flattery of one of the basest men in existence.”

Mrs. Saunders could scarcely ask how her daughter came by that letter; she forgot the Colonel was waiting for them; and he, after remaining an hour in attendance, rang the parlour bell, and said he would call in the evening.

When young Saunders came home to dinner, the letter was presented to him; and on reading its contents, he was rendered speechless for a time.

After a long consultation as to their proceedings, Mr. Saunders, who was not one of those impetuous beings, who rushes headlong to destruction, wrote to Mr. Grigs; and when the Colonel came in the evening, he was told “Miss Saunders was too ill to see him, and that her mother and brother were engaged.”

Ednor thought this very strange, but he dissembled his disappointment, and expressed much sorrow for Miss Saunders's indisposition; adding that he would call on the morrow. Particular business, however, prevented his fulfilling his promise, but he sent his servant with a message of inquiry.

When Mr. Grigs received the letter of Mr. Saunders, he was in deep affliction about Mary Woodbine; but he immediately wrote to the young gentleman; giving him a full and copious account of the Colonel's infamous proceedings with regard to Mary Gabriel, Susan Cowslip, and Mary Woodbine.

Mrs. Saunders was struck with horror at the villany of this bad man. She wept and scolded by turns; and at last, declared that she herself would see him, when he next called, and tell him a little of her mind. She kept her word, and scarcely rose from her chair when he entered the parlour; neither did she return any answer to his anxious inquiries after his beloved Lucy.

"Your Lucy, indeed!" at length she exclaimed; "your Lucy! thank heaven, she has escaped the misery to which she was consigned by her imprudent mother."

Colonel Ednor replied, "I am at a loss to account for this conduct, madam; and a reception so different from any I have hitherto received; and—"

"Pray, Sir," resumed Mrs. Saunders, drawing herself up, and arranging her ruffles, "pray, Sir, "did you ever know one Judy Gabriel?" the Colonel started, and turned pale; "and Susan Cowslip?" she added; and as he retreated into the passage she followed him to the door, saying, "and Mary Woodbine; and half a hundred more, I dare say!"

The Colonel did not hear the latter part of this speech, for he made such a hasty retreat, that he was out of hearing before the old lady had reached the street-door, which she shut to violently, as she exclaimed "The villain! let him never darken my doors again."

The informant in this affair, was Susan herself, who during her engagement at one of the London theatres, had seen Colonel Ednor walking out with the young lady and her brother: naturally concluding from her thorough knowledge of his character, that little good could result from any connexion with him, she made inquiries in the neighbourhood respecting the young lady's family. Finding they were persons of the greatest respectability, she instantly wrote the letter in question. Thus, she deprived the Colonel of his prey; and rescued an innocent and amiable victim from his power.

Ednor no sooner reached his home, than he sent a challenge to Mr. Saunders, which that gentleman very prudently carried to one of the magistrates of a police office, and an officer was sent to arrest the Colonel. This measure he considered a greater indignity than any thing he had ever encountered; but he was compelled to obey the summons, as the English law makes no distinction of persons. On his appearance at the public-office, the worthy magistrate asked him if he had written that letter, presenting to the Colonel, at the same time, the letter containing the challenge, to Mr. Saunders. The magistrate wondered Colonel Ednor had not engaged a second, and as the challenge in question looked so much like "slugs in a sawpit," said he must bind him over to keep the peace, towards Mr. Saunders, or in default thereof, commit him to Tothill-fields bridewell.

The Colonel attempted an excuse, and was framing a justification, when the justice cut his discourse short, by demanding immediately his recognizance not to tempt Mr. Saunders to break the peace. With this peremptory command Ednor obeyed; and

thereby escaped an exposure which would have added nothing to his reputation as a gentleman and a soldier.

The Colonel, on his return home, resolved on wreaking his vengeance on some one for his late disappointment; for he had not only lost a young and beautiful bride, but the expectation of retrieving his ruined fortunes. He had, however, learnt wisdom from experience, and he began to think that the less he made himself notorious, the better; for the world, which is very generally correct in its judgment, loudly condemned his general conduct; and the doors of those houses which were wont to be opened to him with a hearty welcome, were now closed against him.

Shut out from society, he became desperate, and, as the only means of again appearing among his former friends, supposing that it was his poverty, and not his villany, which made him shunned, he embarked in a speculation that might retrieve his fortunes, and furnish him speedily with the means of appearing in the fashionable world in a style that should render his company an object to be courted rather than avoided.

With the view of accomplishing this desirable object, Ednor and two other persons, who had been so often black-balled at the gaming-table, that they could not appear there again, opened a "Counting-house" in the city, and professed to do business as merchants of credit and knowledge of the markets. They contrived to deposit in a banking-house about one thousand pounds; from this sum they paid for five pounds worth of inferior goods from one tradesman in ready money; for ten pounds worth from another; fifteen from another; and so on till they had expended about two hundred pounds. The goods thus purchased they sent to a sham auction-room, where they were sold for what they would bring.

On the credit of their prompt payment, the parties in the "Counting-house" obtained credit to a pretty large amount, and were enabled actually to freight a vessel which they loaded with merchandise for South America. The tradesmen for the articles which they bought, drew on the partners at six, nine, and twelve months for their money; the first drawn bills were honoured by means of discounts, that had been obtained on bills drawn by Ednor, and accepted by one of his partners. The next bills due were renewed, as the vessel was expected daily to return, and thus they contrived to wear out fortune by assiduity and genius. However, the ship at length arrived, but there were no proceeds, the supercargo, who was also one of the partners, having sold off all the goods, had pocketed the cash, and sailed for the United States.

Shortly after this unexpected calamity, Ednor drew bills upon Irish stamps, which his own clerk accepted in London, but dated them Dublin; and these the parties in the "counting-house" contrived to pay away for goods to some unsuspecting and honest tradesmen.

The Irish bills being due, though payable in London, were dishonoured; and in Dublin, no such person as the drawer could be found. A prosecution was instituted on these bills, but, by a fault in law, the parties concerned in their fabrication escaped the gallows, while the honest men who held them were merely reduced to bankruptcy.

Other bills, however, appeared in the money-market, that proved to be real forgeries; and Ednor, upon this discovery, immediately prepared to go to France. At Dover he was arrested, and brought to London, where, in one of the cells of Newgate, he had leisure to reflect on his past life. What a retrospect!—and the future, what did it present?—certain destruction, and an ignominious death. The picture his imagination

drew of his fate was more than he could endure; and seeking for some means of self-destruction, as the only way to escape public execution, he resolved on abstaining from all nourishment. Neither threats nor entreaties could prevail on him to eat, and his constitution, which had been materially shaken by his fall from his curricle, and the subsequent chastisement of William Meadows, ill supported the privations he endured; and before he had been in Newgate a fortnight, he died, unpitied and unregretted, even by his brother,—thus terminating by a fearful death his ill-spent life.

Thus perished Colonel Ednor, a man who set out in life with the most flattering prospects;—whose fortune was large; whose person was handsome; whose manners were insinuating, and whose abilities, had they been cultivated, might have rendered him as distinguished a character for virtue, as he became notorious for vice. Indulgence was his ruin: and from the weak and relaxed discipline in which he had been brought up by his mother, before he arrived at manhood, he spurned all constraint, and gratified every wish at the expense of rectitude and morality. Heedless of the sufferings he heaped upon his fellow-creatures, he, to the last moment of his existence, thought only of himself; nor for an instant suffered a single thought as to the agony of his family to divert him from his cruel purpose.

The early part of his life, he had passed in the most cool and deliberate system of profligate self-indulgence; living fully up to the measure of the fool's standard of existence, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." As his years glided on, the discipline of a youth spent in dissipation, became fixed in a regular habit of refined immorality, which had solely for its object the gratification of his violent passions. These, no beam of reason ever shone on; no spark of truth ever penetrated the heart of their victim; the deceit he practised on others, in the end, led captive his own soul; and from the loss of the society of exalted friends, he sunk into the society of the outcast and swindler, and closed a career of iniquity, by anticipating his doom, but hurrying before his judge:—

> Cut off even in the blossoms of *his* sin;
> Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd,
> No reckoning made, but sent to *his* account
> With all *his* imperfections on *his* head.
> O, horrible!—

The particulars of Colonel Ednor's death were seen in the newspaper, by Susan Cowslip; and, in spite of all her wrongs, a tear bedewed the paper, which gave the melancholy detail of his untimely end.

She had written to Mr. Grigs, telling him, that she was the person who had sent the anonymous letter to Miss Saunders. Mr. Grigs kindly answered this epistle immediately, commending her conduct and prudence on the occasion. But from this time no further communication took place between them; indeed, for the next few months he could think of little but Mrs. Meadows, to whom we must now, in conclusion, return.

CHAPTER X.

I have too much believ'd mine own suspicion:
'Beseech you, tenderly apply to her
Some remedies for life——— WINTER'S TALE.

———I am glad thy father's dead;
Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief
Shore his old thread in twain:—— OTHELLO.

WHEN William entered his own house, he was met at the door by his mother and sister. At sight of them, he started back; they were the last persons on earth he could have wished to meet at this moment. George Underwood too, who looked upon the elder Mrs. Meadows as the cause of much of the mischief which had happened, stayed but a short time at Woodbine farm, for he felt it quite impossible to shew any cordiality towards this busy meddling woman. He was no sooner gone than the latter began thus.

"So, William, you are come home at last; well, it is no time to be sure to talk just now; but you might have come *home* I think to us, instead of gadding to Luton downs, and all for the sake of one whose conduct——"

"Mother," interrupted Meadows, with considerable agitation, and suppressed warmth, "Mother, do not compel me to say, you are not a welcome visiter, by speaking against one—whom I have grossly injured—whom you have slandered—and who will not—I fear—trouble any of us long."

"What do you mean, William?" replied Mrs. Meadows with some asperity, by saying I have slandered her; I am sure every body must own that Mary Woodbine was always a pert forward girl—I will speak my mind, and I think you ought to be ashamed of yourself, William, to speak so to your mother."

William was about to reply, but his sister interfered, "Hush, mother," said she, "Do you not see that William is heart-broken, and besides dear mother," she added in a whisper, "Poor Mary is very ill, and if she should die——"

"Die," said Mrs. Meadows, "die, no, no, she will not die—I'll warrant her." William who was walking up and down the room, now stopped before his mother, his countenance terrified her, and she suddenly rose, exclaiming, "William, my dear William, I hope—I am sure—I dare say Mary will recover."

"You have not seen her," replied William pointedly. "Mr. Grigs, that best, that never-failing friend of all who are distressed—he has seen her, watched over her, and saved her;" here he paused,—"saved her I mean, from the hands of a villain—but I fear he cannot save her from an untimely grave."

Overcome by contending feelings, William now sunk into a chair; cold drops stood on his forehead, while his cheeks assumed a livid hue.

Mrs. Primrose was terrified, as heavy and repeated groans burst from his agonized bosom; she chafed his hands, and as she stooped fondly over him, her tears bedewed them; they fell like drops of balm upon his swelling heart. "I feel them here," he cried, pressing his bosom, "here dear sister—but they will not revive my drooping heart—no—no, nought but my Mary's friendly pressure can dispel the sad forebodings which

overwhelm me.—Oh,—if she should die——" he shuddered, and Mrs. Meadows, who was really appalled into silence, at the picture of despair which her son presented, remained motionless. While they were thus sadly grouped, Mr. Grigs entered.

Truly had William said, Mr. Grigs was ever the friend of the distressed. "Though it is now nearly ten o'clock," an hour at which he always retired to rest, "I could not go home William, without just looking in upon you. Come, come, my good friend, you must cheer up, I have left our dear Mary more composed, and she will sleep well to-night I know; and then I peeped at little William, he looks like a sleeping cherub.—Ah, well I shall soon, I hope, see them here;" then turning rather sharply upon the old lady, "you have not seen your grandchild lately, I believe, nor your *daughter-in-law*, hem! Sad times these, when such near relatives are strangers, hem!"

Mrs. Meadows drew herself up and coloured, but the peaceable Mrs. Primrose prevented the retort courteous which was rising to her mother's lips, by saying, "So it is Mr. Grigs, but I hope now, that we shall all be good friends, and happy and comfortable again together. Mother and I will call to-morrow on Mary."

"Not for ten thousand worlds," quickly replied William, "not till she can receive you here in this spot, in her own home, from which *we* have cruelly driven her, shall she see any one but myself, and those never-failing friends who have given her comfort and shelter when I forsook her."

Mr. Grigs seconded William's observations, by observing "That in her present weak state, Mary could not bear the interview;" then drawing Mrs. Primrose on one side, he added with a deep sigh, "Mary is ill, Mrs. Primrose, very ill,—worse than you think she is, and I have my doubts sometimes, whether she will ever recover herself—you cannot think how she is altered, hem! she is so thin, and so pale, and so weak—" here he stopped, the contemplation of Mary's danger was too much for him, and pressing his forehead with his hand for an instant, he suddenly seized his gold-headed cane and little cocked hat, and grasping William's hand, he nodded good night, and with a quicker step than he was wont to exhibit, he walked home, as we have already described, musing on the late melancholy events.

Old Mrs. Meadows finding that her son was not certainly in the most agreeable humour, as she termed it, put on her cloak and bonnet, as did also her daughter, and then sat for some time silently expecting the arrival of young Primrose. William was absorbed in his own meditations, which the entrance of his brother-in-law interrupted. After some few words had passed between them, they parted for the night: William emphatically forbidding his mother and sister to call upon Mary till she could receive them in her own house.

This second warning gave offence to his mother, and she said, "You need not be afraid William, I never intrude myself where I am not welcome; this you must know by experience: I never troubled your house much."

William made no reply to this speech, but wishing her a kind good night, he closed the door after them, and throwing himself into a chair, he sat for some time, unheedful of the passing hours; at length, however, he retired to bed, but not to rest, for his reflections upon his pillow, were agonizing to a great degree. When he glanced upon his own conduct towards Mary, from the days of her childhood, till she presented herself to his imagination in the meridian of her charms, he found much to reprehend. As a child, he had played with her, and watched all her movements with delight; and as she grew

older, his feelings became little short of adoration. Yet at the time he most indulged her, flattered her, and courted her, he felt she was capricious, wayward, and uncertain; but instead of manfully shewing her his sentiments, he smiled when she frowned, and was obsequious when she was lofty and imperious. He had not courage to encounter her generous spirit openly, but would return to his own farm, with spirits irritated, and after a few taunting observations from his mother, upon the dominion which Mary held over him, he would break out into unmanly invectives upon her conduct; but the slave of her beauty, and the witchery of her smiles, he would, the next time he saw her, renew his vows with redoubled ardour, and declare her the arbitress of his fate.

As busy memory proceeded to place before him the subsequent events of their lives, his self-reproaches became more bitter;—his meanness in listening to Sally Greenly;—his subsequent watchings at Beaumont's tree, and his detail of all these events to his own mother, instead of openly repairing to the farm, and warning Farmer Woodbine of the danger of his beloved child. These, and the sundry circumstances which had embittered his life, stung him to the quick, and starting from his bed, he paced the room with hurried steps, exclaiming, "I, only, am to blame in all this; I have heaped sorrow on all around me; and most of all, upon her whom I was bound by honour and affection to protect;—and yet I live!—Wretch, that I am!—and the villain lives too, whose appearance in Silvershoe was the prime cause of all Mary's wo, sound in health.—Grief affects not me, nor reproaches him; while bowed to the earth, our victim sinks, weighed down by suffering."

In musings, such as these, did William pass the night; and when the first dawn of day appeared in the east, he hastily dressed himself, and sat down to write the letter to Mary. This was a hard task, for he had much to say, yet was fearful of saying more than he ought; he tore several letters to pieces, then wrote several others; then thought he would see her without further ceremony; but Mr. Grigs had said it was necessary Mary should be convinced from himself, before he saw her, that all was forgotten. Again therefore he seated himself, and having at last completed his epistle, he took a crust of bread, which the servant urged upon him, and left his home. It was too soon to go to Mr. Grigs, and he dared not approach Underwood farm, so he strolled towards Clophill, entering the little wood which skirted the road side.

It was a lovely spring morning, and he wandered on, refreshed by the pure breeze, as it came wafted across the hills of that part of Bedfordshire, perfumed by the innumerable wild plants which enamel the turf. Upon reaching the end of the wood, he emerged upon the hills, and descending to the rippling stream which ran at his feet, he stood leaning over the little bridge leading to the village of Clophill.

Perhaps there is no visible object so soothing in its effects as the gliding of waters. William as he stood with his eyes fixed on the limpid element felt gradually more composed; and although neither a poet nor a man of letters, his mind gradually and unconsciously dwelt upon those matchless passages, which are within every one's comprehension, in which the Psalmist so often refers to waters, either agitated by storms, gliding peacefully amid green banks and flowery vales, as descriptive of man's pilgrimage on earth: the stream of life swallowed up in eternity presented itself to his imagination; and even the bitter recollection that Mary's stream of life was nearly run, was softened by the recollection that a few short years would elapse when his frail bark should enter the deep waters, and they should be again reunited.

A pleasing melancholy had replaced the irritation of his feelings, and he slowly retraced his steps towards Silvershoe.

But as he was entering the wood, he was hailed by some one behind him, and upon turning round, he discovered Lord Wilsden. His Lordship was on horseback; he had arrived at the park the day before, and from his steward he had learnt the principal events which had formed a subject of interesting conversation in the village. Lord Wilsden was a man of most benevolent disposition, and he felt most deeply, that he was the unintentional cause of so much misery, by introducing a man, of whose character he knew but little at the festivities at the George inn. He was aware that many of the Silvershoe lasses were exceedingly pretty, but good himself, he was unsuspicious of others; and he was too young to have had much insight into the real character of those who assumed a virtuous exterior.

No sooner therefore did he see William, than he dismounted, desiring his servant to lead the horses on to the avenue leading to the park, there to wait for him.

When William had turned round to meet his Lordship, the latter extended his hand to his tenant, and by his countenance expressed how deeply he was interested and affected by the sorrows of others. William's pale face, though it was not as it had been of late, distorted by passion and frantic grief, told by its solemnity a tale of wo, deep and heartfelt; and Lord Wilsden, with a delicacy and feeling worthy his rank, and honourable to him as a man, was for a few minutes silent. Where he could offer no real consolation he was unwilling to wound, and it was William who first began the conversation, by expressing a hope that his Lordship was well, and that he was come to spend some time among his attached tenantry.

"Yes, Mr. Meadows," replied his Lordship, "I shall spend some time at Silvershoe; and I hope that before I quit it again, I shall have the pleasure of entertaining all my tenantry at the hall, upon an occasion they will, I am sure, rejoice at; I am going to be married, Mr. Meadows; and at Flitton, I intend to be united to the lovely lady Susan Melman, and I trust that Mrs. Meadows will, by that time, be so far recovered as to make one of our guests."

William heaved a deep sigh, as he congratulated his Lordship upon his approaching marriage, but expressed a doubt that Mary would take a long time to restore her to so much health as to enter into any festivity.

"I hope, Mr. Meadows, that your fears exaggerate the danger of your wife," replied Lord Wilsden; "and I can assure you, that the loss of Farmer Woodbine, and the indisposition of Mrs. Meadows, have thrown a damp upon my happiness which I cannot well define."

William again expressed his thanks, but he was writhing under the lash, for he felt that his Lordship was acquainted with all the circumstances of his own impetuosity, and Mary's imprudence. This conviction again discomposed his soothed feelings; and with that sort of despair which leads us into real difficulties, by tempting us on to avoid imaginary ones, he began a sort of defence of himself and his family. It was in vain that Lord Wilsden endeavoured to interrupt him; with a volubility and irritation which was distressing to his noble auditor, he entered into the details of all that had passed; with wonderful self-possession, he proceeded in his tale, till he came to the scene of Ware Hedges; the name of Colonel Ednor, however, appeared to shake his whole frame; regardless of the rank of his companion, and the connexion of the latter with the villain

who had robbed his soul of peace, he went on with his tale, imprecating curses upon himself and Ednor.

Lord Wilsden was astonished at his evhemence, and gently patting his hand upon William's arm, he said, "Mr. Meadows, let me entreat you will be more calm?" The voice of his Lordship at length arrested the frenzy of Meadows, whose clenched hand instantly fell, and the colour which had crimsoned his cheek fled likewise; he became suddenly pale, while his kindling eye gradually softened, and respectfully taking off his hat, he begged Lord Wilsden's pardon; saying, "he hoped his Lordship would permit him to depart, as he was ill company for any one."

Lord Wilsden was aware that grief is an imperative sovereign, and that it was useless to contend with William's anguish; he therefore left him, and proceeded to the village, while the farmer turned to the wood, to regain, if possible, that composure which the appearance of his Lordship had disturbed.

Lord Wilsden, in the mean time, slowly passed on, and on entering the village, he knocked at Mr. Grigs's door. The apothecary was at breakfast; his usual cheerful countenance was overcast with grief, and he received his guest with a solemnity that was unusual to him. From him Lord Wilsden learnt, that Mary was ill indeed, but that he hoped she would do well.

Lord Wilsden did not stay long with Mr. Grigs, but returned thoughtfully to the Hall.

William in the mean while was pacing to and fro in the wood, anxiously and frequently looking at his watch; and when the village clock struck nine he hurried on to the apothecary's, and found Mr. Grigs busy in his little room, designated a study, in which he usually compounded his medicines.

CHAPTER XI.

Her bloom was like the springing flow'r,
That sips the silver dew;
The rose was budded in her cheek,
And opening to the view.

But grief had like the canker-worm,
Consum'd her early prime,
The rose grew pale and left her cheek;
She dy'd before her time.

BALLAD OF WILLIAM AND MARGARET.

MR. Grigs welcomed William cordially, commented upon the beauty of the morning, and the powerful effect of the morning breeze upon the constitution. "I have heard you say so very often," replied William, peevishly; "but I have a more interesting subject to talk upon than the weather; I have brought you the letter you promised to deliver to Mary, and the clock has struck nine."

"Certainly," resumed Mr. Grigs, "I will fulfil my promise; but you have not breakfasted, I fear; and now, Mr. Meadows, you must excuse me, but I cannot help saying you must not interfere with my arrangements respecting Mrs. Meadows; she must be wholly and solely under my guidance still."

"Well, well," replied William, "only take the letter, and bring us together, and I will promise any thing."

"Hem!" replied Mr. Grigs, "take the letter now; oh no, Mr. Meadows, I must visit some of my poor patients before I go to the farm. Besides, Mrs. Meadows should not be disturbed before ten o'clock at least—but keep your mind composed, and don't be hasty in what you do."

Mr. Grigs might have spared the last remark, for William's spirits were fled, and his countenance expressed the deepest dejection.

About half-past ten the apothecary went to Underwood farm: Mary was up, and appeared so much refreshed, and her mind so composed, that after some preliminary discourse he told her, that William was well and at home:—"but he is very unhappy about you, Mary, as this letter," he continued, presenting it to her at the same time, "this letter will best testify."

Mary laid it on the table for some time without opening it; at last, summoning resolution, she broke the seal, and with many interruptions of sighs and tears, read the following epistle.

Mary, my dearest Mary,

When shall I have the happiness of seeing you here; when may I tell you all I have suffered, all the anguish I have endured on your account. Forgive me dear Mary—forgive me. I own, I do not deserve your forgiveness—for my folly in being the dupe of appearances. I cannot write all I feel; my head and heart both ache too much to allow me to dwell on subjects which confound me. Yet believe me, dear Mary, I shall never be

happy till I see you, and if you refuse me this pleasure, I shall be wretched for ever. For dear little William's sake, do not deny admittance to his father. Let me see you once more, that I may assure you, I am, and always shall be, your loving and affectionate husband,

WILLIAM MEADOWS.

"Let me see him directly," said Mary, endeavouring to rise as she put down the letter. "Oh, Mr. Grigs, let me see him; indeed I can bear it: do pray let him come."

"Well," replied the apothecary, "you shall, my dear Mrs. Meadows; you shall see him at tea time."

Mary was however importunate, and Mr. Grigs went to fetch William Meadows. The latter joyfully obeyed the summons, and was posting off in a great hurry, when his friend called upon him to stop.

"Bless me, Mr. Meadows, you walk so fast, I can't keep up with you: and I have something to say to you. Now don't you begin a long story about what has happened—walk a little slower, if you please; I am really quite out of breath—don't begin a long story, as I said before, about what has happened; but just go in as if nothing had been the matter. You will see a great change in Mrs. Meadows," he added with a sigh; "but take no notice of that."

William walked so fast that Mr. Grigs was frequently obliged to pause for want of breath; and by the time they reached Underwood farm, he was quite exhausted.

William prudently waited till the apothecary had recovered himself, and then followed him into the parlour.

At sight of Mary, Meadows started back, while she unable to rise from her seat, extended her hands towards him; and in a few moments they were encircled in each others arms. After gazing at her husband for some time, Mary burst into tears, while he, rising from his seat, paced the room, exclaiming, "What a fool! what an unnatural monster have I been!"

Mr. Grigs went up to him, saying, "Mr. Meadows, remember what I told you. You must be quiet, or you must leave the room: Why you don't take any notice of little William. See how he is scrambling to get at you."

William stooped and raised his lovely boy, and then sat down by his wife. Although they had been separated now for some weeks, and although each had much to say to the other, yet few words passed between them. Mary's sparkling eye wandered from her husband to her boy, and from her boy to her husband: if William attempted to move, she started, grasped his hand, and eagerly asked "If he were going."

"No my beloved Mary," replied William, "no, no,—I was but going to the window to see if George were coming."

Mary extended her hand, and with a smile told him he must not play truant again, "if you do," she added, as the tear gathered on her trembling eyelid, "if you do William, I shall die—I shall indeed."

William again and again assured her he would never quit her more, and Mary's spirits which had been much exhilarated, and were now much exhausted, wept as she received this assurance.

Mr. Grigs at this moment entered, and declared that Mrs. Meadows must compose herself, or else William must leave her, “and after dinner,” he added, “you must lay down Mary, you must indeed, and endeavour to get a nap.”

Mary promised she would be obedient, and when George came home to dinner, he had the felicity of finding a most happy party assembled in the parlour.

Mary refreshed by her nap, was at tea time quite lively, and when her husband took leave for the night, she requested him to get all things in readiness for her at home: she meant in two or three days to resume her usual occupations at the farm.

William thought she never had looked so beautiful as at this moment; her flushed cheek and sparkling eye were transcendently dazzling; twice he returned to bid her good night, and with a deep sigh he left Underwood farm. “If she should die,” said he with a shudder; but he quickened his pace, and in order to dispel dismal thoughts, he caressed Captain, his constant and faithful companion.

The next morning Mr. Grigs paid Mary an early visit. He found her feverish, restless, anxious to be gone,—to go back to Woodbine farm,—to be all day with William,—she was quite equal to the removal, and she wanted to depart immediately.

Mr. Grigs gently opposed her intentions. “Indeed, Mary,” he said, “I must be master a little longer; and you must be a little stronger before you are again removed. Betsy is such a good nurse, that I am surprised you should think of leaving her.”

“But William,” answered Mary, “I want to see William all day;—If he should not come to see me often, I shall die, Mr. Grigs;—indeed I shall.”

“Why now Mary, this is very extraordinary,” said the apothecary, “that you should suppose such a thing for one instant; there is much greater probability that he should neglect every thing in the world rather than you.” Mr. Grigs turned to the window to conceal a tear which dimmed his eye.

“There now *I* told you so, there is William posting along at such a rate. Bless me! I wish you could see him; don’t you hear him coming up stairs? Ah! Mr. Meadows, how do you do? how do you do? the farm is not ready for Mrs. Meadows yet; is it?”

“Not quite,” replied William, advancing towards the bed; but he started back, the hectic flush of the preceding evening, was fled, and was replaced by a delicate and sickly white.

He turned to Mr. Grigs, who understood his anxious inquiring look, and replied, by observing, that he should fetch that little rebel William, who was romping with Captain on the grass, while Betsy was in vain endeavouring to appease the ecstasies of both child and dog.

“Dear me,” he exclaimed, as he went down stairs, “Bless me, my nerves are all in a tremour this morning! I cannot think the reason.”

Mr. Grigs endeavoured, as much as possible, to deceive himself, as to the cause of his shaking nerves, but his efforts were vain; the truth would intrude itself on his mind, and the suspicious and alarming symptoms, he every day saw more and more confirmed in Mrs. Meadows of a rapid decline, preyed on his spirits. Mary rose about twelve o’clock and went down stairs, where William impatiently waited for her.

A smile and an illuminating eye expressed her delight. She never, perhaps, loved William so dearly as she did at this time: she could not endure that he should leave her for an instant; fearing, if he were a short time abroad, that he was gone never to return.

The third day after this, she was considerably worse, but still expressed the most ardent desire to go home. Again she recovered a little, and was so fretful at being refused permission to return to Woodbine farm, that she burst into tears, and said, “she knew very well she never should recover her health till she was there; and I think, Mr. Grigs, you are very unkind to me; and I am quite certain if I don’t go home, I shall never get well.”

“Well, my dear Mrs. Meadows,” he replied, a little agitated, “well, you shall go home to-morrow; and I will drive you gently in my gig. The weather is so warm, that I do not think you can possibly take cold; and William shall lead the horse, and we shall do very well, I dare say.”

Mary raised herself gently from her seat, and advanced towards the apothecary to thank him, but he had left the room as soon as he had given her leave to be removed.

“She will have it so;” he said with a sigh, “She will have it so. It is of no use; I can deceive myself no longer: she must die! All the physicians in the universe could not save her. God forgive me!” he exclaimed; “but I could find in my heart to say the worst death the Colonel could die would be too good for him. Oh dear me! I wish I was at York, or Lincoln, or any where but here: and yet,” he added, after a pause, “I should be wretched to leave her. I have known her ever since she was a child—ay, and loved her too; and if William—if William—had not married her, I am sure I should have been so happy, so proud to have married her myself; I would at this moment sacrifice my life to save hers.”

When Mr. Grigs arrived at home, he threw himself into his armed chair, and with the most poignant feelings, alternately upbraided Colonel Ednor and William, for blighting the sweetest flower that ever blossomed.

“Oh dear Mary!” he continued, “I never thought I did love you so dearly; but to see thee struggling so with death, I cannot bear it.”

He walked up and down his study with hurried steps; but being unable to calm his feelings, he again went to the farm, fearing he should see her no more.

The anxiety his countenance expressed, imparted itself to William; but the latter was not sufficiently versed in physical knowledge to attribute the beautiful hue of Mary’s cheek, the lustre of her eye, and the hurry of her spirits to fever. Therefore he called Mr. Grigs out of the room, to ask him what was the matter.

The apothecary said he was not well, and begged William would take no notice of him, but go to his wife. To George, however, he imparted the cause of his depression, and regretting her wish to go to the farm on the following day, as he was sure it would hasten her death; and yet, he added “to refuse her would kill her outright.”

Mary, at parting with William for the night, repeatedly said, “*Remember to-morrow*.”

“And this, dear William, is the last night of our separation; to-morrow evening, I shall rest in my own dear home. Oh, that to-morrow was come.”

William pressed her to his bosom; and after repeated adieus, they parted. As soon as William was gone, Mary complained of weariness, and retired to rest, after taking one look at her sleeping boy. Mr. Grigs had given her a composing draught, for he concluded that she would, without it, have little repose. She waked once in the night, and longed for morning; but sleep again overpowered her, and it was not till near ten that she awoke, and then she was all impatience. Scarcely would she be persuaded to take her breakfast in

bed; and having submitted to this, she insisted that little William's hat and tippet should be put on in the mean time, that he might be ready.

"For you know," Mary added, by way of excuse, conscious of her own impatience, "You know we *must* not keep Mr. Grigs *waiting*, because his time is so occupied. Oh Betsy! I feel so well to day!" and as she looked in the glass to put on her bonnet, she said, "Betsy, I wish William was come."

"But Mary," replied Mrs. Underwood, "*you* must keep yourself quiet, or you will fatigue yourself before you depart."

Mary did fatigue herself; and she was so exhausted, that she was carried into the whiskey; which she had never entered since its owner drove her, in all the pride of youth and beauty, to Clophill, when they met Lord Wilsden and Colonel Ednor. Alas! how was she changed! The old horse was scarcely allowed to walk at his usual pace, when he was left to himself. Mary smiled at her anxious friends who surrounded her; but as she nearly approached her own home, she changed colour, and by the time they reached the farm, her head sunk on Mr. Grigs's shoulder, as she sobbed out, "My father; my dear father."

William hastened to her and lifted her from the whiskey, carrying her into the house; he was about to place her in the armed-chair, formerly occupied by old Woodbine, when she clung closer to him.

"Not there dear William, not there; it might be ominous."

William looked at her with astonishment, for her countenance was expressive of anguish and the deepest grief. "Mary, dear Mary," he replied with a trembling voice, "be not so downcast, since you have again reached your own home. You said you should rest here to night, and here you are."

"Where is my boy?" she replied, "I am very weary, but where is my darling?"

Mrs. Underwood entered the kitchen at this moment with her little nephew in her arms; he was fast asleep. "Lay him in my lap," said Mary, "we will sleep together; and dear William, do not leave me; let me rest my head on your shoulder."

William put his arm round her waist, and Betsy having taken off her sister's bonnet, the head of the latter, sunk upon her husband's shoulder; her left hand was closely locked in his; her right, fell languidly over her sleeping infant: Betsy was kneeling at her feet, to prevent little William, who was feebly held by his mother, from falling. Twice did Mary open her eyes, and gently raise her head to gaze upon her boy; at length, sleep overpowered her, her heavy eyelids closed, and she sunk into a gentle slumber.

Just as Mr. Grigs alighted from his whiskey, he was summoned to attend on a poor woman, inhabiting a cottage at the end of the orchard. But after staying a short time with her, and finding there was no necessity for his immediate attendance, he hastily retraced his steps to the farm: he entered the kitchen softly, (for he had been apprized by the maid servant that Mary was asleep,) and approached the interesting group.

For an instant he stood motionless; when he exclaimed, "Merciful God!"

This ejaculation induced Betsy to put up her finger, as she said in a suppressed voice—"Hush! hush! she sleeps."

"She does indeed," replied Mr. Grigs with a heavy groan, "but she will never wake again. Alas! alas! she said she should rest here to night."

Thus perished the young, the beautiful, the lovely Mary Woodbine; the victim of Colonel Ednor's villanous intentions, and the perhaps well-founded, though pertinacious, suspicion of her husband, William Meadows. The original cause of all Mary's sorrows, may however be traced to the same source as those of Mary Gabriel and Susan Cowslip—*viz:* "Filial disobedience." Mary Gabriel left a kind and affectionate mother in declining life, to pine alone, and deplore with anguish the departure of her best loved child.

Susan fell a victim partly to the malicious tales of slander raised by Sally Greenly; but chiefly to that act of disobedience which induced her to leave the parental roof, and place herself under the protection of a man, with whose infamous conduct to poor Judy's daughter she was well acquainted.

But what shall we say for Mary Woodbine? That she should have deceived her father, and such a father too! so kind, so fond, so idolizing! Who could have thought it? Yet vanity, that bane of female virtue, le her to the brink of destruction, from which she was only rescued by her guardian angel in the person of old Judy Gabriel.

C'est le premier pas qui coute, says a French proverb; but it is not only so; the *first step* in life generally *decides* our future fate.

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Northumberland-court.