

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 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.

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 portraiture 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 conversation, 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 sprang 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 disappointed 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 ecstasy 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 remainder—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 cheek 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 luses 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*."

* 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

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 unsuspecting 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.

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 profiting 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 child, 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 countryman 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 bridemaide 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, beautiful 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 unsuspecting 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 beautiful 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 Amptill, 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!

* 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 curricule, 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 Amphill 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 written 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 than 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.