

THE
VILLAGE COQUETTE;
A NOVEL,
IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUCH IS THE WORLD."

VOL. III.

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

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THE
VILLAGE COQUETTE.

CHAPTER I.

Ev'n in the happiest choice, where fav'ring Heaven
Has equal love, and easy fortune given;
Think not the husband gain'd, that all is done;
The prize of happiness must still be won;
And oft the careless find it to their cost,
The *lover* in the *husband* may be lost;
The *graces* might alone his heart allure;
They and the virtues meeting must secure.

ADVICE TO A LADY—LORD LITTLETON.

THE first grief Mary experienced after her marriage, was the loss of Judy Gabriel, whose death was sudden and unexpected. She went to bed quite well one night, and when Betty Glover waked in the morning, the poor old woman lay stiff and cold by her side. Judy was attended to the grave by Mary and Betsy, and William and George. The former had indeed much cause to lament her death; for Judy was both willing and able to advise the young bride as to her conduct, and was in fact the only being, except her father, from whom Mary would receive reproof.

Towards William, Mary had hitherto conducted herself with much kindness and propriety, for she really loved him; yet she did not at all times comply with his wishes when they were in opposition to her own. More than once she had acted in direct opposition to his express desire, and this imprudence led as repeatedly to those trifling disagreements which imbitter the happiness of matrimony.

Lovers may quarrel, and afterward kiss and be friends; but when once the nuptial knot is tied, the case is totally different, and "tifting" *then becomes* a dangerous experiment.

William had unfortunately been spoiled at home; his mother and sisters, for whom he felt the warmest affection, had been used to anticipate his wants, and their kindness had made him unfit for a wife in general; for though he had been accustomed to Mary's fickle and absolute manner before they were married, yet he now often thought that her conduct was improper, and that her self-will was intolerable. He was, however, careful to hide these feelings; but in secret he brooded over her little failings till, as he thought, they made up in number what they wanted in weight.

The birth of a son obliterated for a time every sensation but that of love and delight.

Mary's unceasing attention, her affectionate care and anxiety respecting her little darling, doubly endeared her to her fond husband, and all was peace and harmony again among the inhabitants of the farm.

As, however, William's indulgence to Mary since the birth of her child, had greatly increased, she fancied herself ill-used, if by chance he put a negative to any wish

she might, from the whim of the moment, think proper to express. In the course of a few months their bickerings recommenced, and irritation on both sides was excited, which embittered not only their own, but the happiness of Mary's father.

At this critical period, the evil genius of Silvershoe, in the person of Colonel Ednor, again appeared in its vicinity.

After his interview with Susan Cowslip, he went to London, but the sight of her, revived certain recollections, and he resolved, after three years' absence, on taking a trip to that spot where he had first beheld Mary Woodbine.

As he liked an adventure, he changed his dress to that of a countryman, and taking his seat by the Ampthill coachman, he questioned him as to the inhabitants of Silvershoe and its neighbourhood.

The coachman gave him all the intelligence he wished: Mary Gabriel's death, Judy's death, Mary Woodbine's marriage, the birth of her son,—all was detailed to him by this annalist of the villages he passed through on his way to the capital.

Ednor asked who was the toast of the village now that Mary Woodbine was married.

"Oh," replied the coachman, "Mrs. Meadows is as pretty as ever; yet, I understand, they are not quite comfortable at Woodbine farm."

This was better news than the Colonel had anticipated,—and at Ampthill he took an obscure lodging, as a servant who was waiting the arrival of his master at that place. He staid here however but two days, for he found the sandy road between Ampthill and Silvershoe so exceedingly disagreeable, that he resolved on going nearer to the latter place.

To his great delight, he met Sally Greenly in the town, on the very day he had made this resolution.

She did not, he perceived, recognise him, but he followed her out of Ampthill, and addressed her in his usual tone of voice.

Sally turned hastily round, uttering an exclamation of surprise, when Ednor put his finger on his lips, and she was immediately silent; he explained to her in a few words, that he wished to get a convenient lodging near Silvershoe.

The girl smiled maliciously, and said, "herself and mother had been obliged to quit their own neighbourhood for a time, but that they had returned to Ware-hedges the last week."

"Could you not," said the Colonel, "accommodate me with a lodging, Sally? I would pay you well." Sally smiled again, and the Colonel offering her a pound note, she told him he should hear from her the next day.

With this answer he was perfectly satisfied, and on the next morning he received the following epistle, directed for the gentleman's servant at the Bull's-head public-house:—

My mother will let you lodge with us, but you must say, you are a cousin of ours, comed from Yorkshire, or else the people will wonder who you are. To night we will have a room ready for you; and I think you should call yourself John Greenly.

Colonel Ednor's face betrayed what his high spirits felt at being thus dictated to by Sally Greenly; but after ruminating a few moments, he submitted to call himself *John Greenly*,—and then went on reading the letter.

Mother says, she guesses what you want; and she bids me tell you, that if we get into a scrape, she hopes you will pay us well. She says too, that Mary Woodbine as was, and William Meadows, don't agree over and above much; and she says, she thinks they are not happy at Woodbine farm; and so she bids me tell you, that you may come when you like.—From your humble servant.

SALLY GREENLY.

“So,” said the Colonel, as he concluded this demonstrative epistle, “I find that the spirit of intrigue is not confined to great towns; there is as much finesse and address in this epistle as if it had been penned by the most experienced and best-schooled dame in the universe. I shall however profit by its contents.”

At the appointed time he made his appearance as Ware-hedges, as “John Greenly just comed from Yorkshire,” and was received by the dame and her daughter with many expressions of kindness.

During the day, however, he was teased with innumerable questions about relations and cousins, and uncles and aunts, by Sally, whenever any one of their neighbours came into their cottage, and he also was compelled to endure their expressions of fondness, of which they were not sparing, with patient and apparent gratitude.

In the evening he ventured to approach Silveshoe; and as he had assumed the dress and manners of a Yorkshire rustic, together with a flaxen wig, he passed unnoticed by many of the inhabitants of the village, amongst whom was George Underwood, to whom touching his hat, and making an awkward bow, he bade him. “Good evening,” and then passed on.

“This will do,” thought the Colonel, “if *he* does not discover me, I am safe.” So on he passed, amazingly pleased with his masquerade dress, and entered the village just as the sun was setting.

Woodbine farm-house was an old-fashioned, irregular building, spacious and commodious within, possessing every requisite for internal comfort. In the front was a small piece of ground with rails, to prevent the approach of the farm-yard gentry, which sometimes strayed from the posterior part of the house. Beyond this enclosed piece of ground was an orchard, with a common cart-road through it; and in the opposite direction was a foot-path, leading to a well-stored fruit-garden. At one extremity of this garden was an arbour, facing the west, and receiving the last rays of the evening sun.

A public lane was outside of this fruitful spot of ground, and from this lane, Colonel Ednor saw Mary and William amusing themselves with their little boy.

He stood still to listen to their conversation; for William, who had been tossing the child till he had almost terrified Mary, at length consigned him to the arms of the mother, whose glowing cheek, and sparkling eyes, as she followed its rapid ascent and descent, rendered her, in Colonel Ednor's fancy, the most bewitching being he ever beheld.

Maternal love beamed in her eye, as she pressed the lovely boy to her bosom; then suddenly turning to William, she said,—“I have promised Betsy to spend the day with her to-morrow.”

“I wish, dear Mary,” replied William, “you would spare one day for my mother! She has scarcely seen her grand-child; and she thinks that you slight her. If you loved me, Mary, you would love her.”

Mary’s smile vanished, and was replaced by a look of displeasure, as she replied—“Dear me, William, you expect me to be always at Meadow farm.”

“Always!” replied William; “you have spent but one day there since we were married.”

“I am sure I have,” said Mary, quickly,—“I have spent *two* there;—I well remember that the last was dull enough, and that you quarrelled with me the next day, because I *couldn’t* sing your mother’s favourite song.”

“Say, *wouldn’t*,” replied William—“you wouldn’t sing it, Mary, to oblige *me*, my mother, and my sister.”

“Well, then!” resumed Mary, “I *wouldn’t* sing it,—since *that* expression pleases you best. But, I am sure it must be tea-time, and my father must not wait tea for any one.”

Their altercations continued till they reached the door of the farm-house, when Mary endeavoured to recover her usual gaiety; but a cloud sat on her brow, and William was thoughtful.

Farmer Woodbine observed them; and though he prudently made no remark on the subject, yet his increased tenderness to his daughter, and a reduced portion of his usual kindness to William, imparted to the mind of the latter the idea, that his father-in-law supposed he behaved unkindly to his wife.

This was an unfavourable impression, and in order to dissipate the thought, he rose immediately after tea, and strolled towards the village, without any particular object in view, except that of losing sight of his care. He had not advanced many steps from home, when he was met by one of those gay spirits, who are the life and soul of thoughtless society, though they are pointed out by the wise as objects to be avoided by all who are anxious to do well in this world of probation.

Frank Lightheart accosted William with his usual gaiety; and, in fact, made himself so agreeable, that the latter consented to accompany him to the George inn, where they had no sooner arrived, than they were surrounded by a number of young men, surprised, but at the same time pleased, to see the *steady* William Meadows in their society.

Frank Lightheart was an excellent singer; his company was therefore courted by the villagers. On this account the landlord gave him lodging for nothing, being amply repaid by the idle customers who were induced to spend much time and much money at the George inn, by the sweetness of his voice.

In this society did William Meadows pass this fatal evening. It was the first he had ever in his life wasted in dissipation, and he returned home “*as happy as a prince*.”

Mary shrunk, as he approached her. She had never seen him tipsy; but her feelings were roused, when he addressed her in a style of language totally new to her; importing—“that he was not going to be led by the nose any longer, and that he meant to enjoy himself abroad, since he could not enjoy himself at home.”

On the following morning, he appeared to be ashamed of his conduct on the preceding evening; but Mary, instead of being silent about what had happened, reproached him with cruelty, and declared, “that tipsy men *had* always, and *would* always, be her aversion.”

This was ill-timed; for William, who was on the point of making an apology, took up his hat, without saying a word, and left her.

Soon after he was gone, Betsy entered, and found Mary in tears. With great volubility, the latter recounted all her troubles, but her sister mildly reproved her for not paying more attention to William’s mother.

Mary defended herself, by saying, that they were always complaining of her;—she did not like them;—she could bear none of them; they were all so stupid, and had no conversation.

In vain Betsy pressed her to go that very day to Meadow farm, saying, she would accompany her. In vain she urged her to receive William with kindness, when he returned.

“For your own sake, dear Mary,” said the affectionate and prudent woman, “do as I advise you. Think only, if you drive your husband from you by unkindness, what will become of my poor father! It will break his heart to see you unhappy. My dearest Mary, take no notice of what has passed. I am sure, if you would be a *little* kinder, you might be the happiest woman in the world!”

“I am sure,” said Mary, “before I was married, I said many things worse to him than all I said last night, and he was never affronted then, but used to coax me till I was good humoured again; and I never went or came, but just as I liked.”

Betsy sighed as she said, “That is very true, Mary, but the best of husbands are not *always* lovers; though for my *own* part, I cannot help saying, I have found George more attentive to my wishes since, than before I was married.”

“Ah!” said Mary, quickly, “that’s because you never contradict him.”

“Perhaps so, replied Betsy, smiling—“but is it not the better plan of the two? Believe me, you must sometimes give up your own will, if you wish to be happy. Why should you expect *always* to do as you like?”

“I *will* as long as I *can*, though,” was the reply of the thoughtless Mary.

At this moment they were joined by farmer Woodbine, who drawing Betsy on one side, complained that he was not happy; “William is not,” said the old man, “so kind as he should be to Mary, and he staid at the George Inn last evening till past twelve o’clock.”

Betsy endeavoured to quiet his mind; but suspicion had taken its abode in the breast of the farmer; and it was not to be removed by any argument she could use in opposition to the conviction, as he thought, of his own senses.

When the dinner hour arrived, William made his appearance accompanied by George Underwood, who had been listening to *his* complaints against Mary; he had however succeeded in dissipating the gloom of William’s mind, by laughing at him, and telling him, “that he thought every body knew that Mary was a spoiled child, and always would be.” The time of dinner passed very well, and in contemplating the smiles of his blooming child, William recovered his good humour, declaring, “that his boy was not half so pretty as his mother.”

Mary stole a sly glance at her sister, and with her usual thoughtlessness alternately teased and pleased William during the remainder of the day.—Several times an impatient “Pshaw!” burst from his lips; but Mary, unconscious how rapidly she was undermining her own happiness, continued to play the dangerous game, till her father at last said, “Mary, my dear, that is too bad!”

The colour rose to Mary’s cheeks, and darting at her father an expressive glance, she caught up her little boy and left the kitchen.

A silence during some seconds followed her departure; and the old farmer with considerable agitation, which he in vain strove to conceal, caressed Betsy’s little prattling girl. George and Betsy exchanged looks, but neither ventured to speak; and William with a heavy sigh grasped his father-in-law by the hand; then rising suddenly, he rushed out of the house followed instantly by George. Farmer Woodbine’s feelings now found relief in tears, which flowed silently down his venerable checks; but at length he sobbed aloud, as he patted his little grand-child on the head, exclaiming in a voice scarcely articulate, “As thou art now, thou little smiling cherub—such was she—she was my darling—but now she breaks my heart; she kills me by inches. Oh, Betsy, what can we do—to save her from misery, from wretchedness, and perdition?”

Betsy endeavoured to convince her father he was too much alive to these things. “You know, father,” she added, “Mary always has had her own way; she and William will make it up again, and all will be well!”

The farmer shook his head, and desired her to go to Mary, and persuade her to act differently towards her husband. “Tell her the consequences, Betsy, of thus incessantly thwarting him; tell her she will make herself, and him, and me, miserable!”

Betsy used every argument, she could devise, to convince her sister of her error; but the latter still trusted to her power over William’s heart, and refused to own that she had been wrong, declaring, that “William was so touchy there was no bearing him.”

The rest of the afternoon was spent in mutual complaints and reproaches; and with heavy hearts, George and Betsy returned to their own peaceful dwelling.

CHAPTER II.

KATHERINE. Love me or love me not, I like the cap;
And it I will have, or I will have none.

PETRUCHIO. Thy gown? why, ay; come, tailor, let's see't.
O mercy, God! what masking stuff is here?
What's this? a sleeve? 'tis a demi-cannon;
What! up and down, carv'd like an apple tart?
Here's snip and snip, and cut, and slash and slash.
Like to a censer in a barber's shop;
Why, what, o' devil's name, tailor, call'st thou this.

TAMING THE SHREW.

ABOUT nine o'clock on the following morning William was going to market, and Mary pettishly observed, that "if she had been asked, she would have gone to Amptill with him, as she wanted to make some purchases." "If you please, you can go now," replied her husband; "put on your bonnet, and the horse can soon be harnessed to the taxed cart, and you can take little William with you."

"Come now, make haste, darling," said old Woodbine. "Put on your things quickly."

"I hate to be hurried," rejoined Mary, as she went up stairs. "If William is in so great haste, he had better go without me."

William did not hear this remark, for he went instantly to prepare the taxed cart for the journey: Mary, however, was so long, that he became impatient, and called to her under her chamber window. Mary in a pet pulled the string off her bonnet, and this accident delayed her longer; still her patient husband waited, till the all-important business of the toilet was completed to her approbation.

The joy expressed by her child, as he struggled in his way to the chaise, and extended his arms to his delighted father, excited a smile, though she had resolved to be very grave, demure, silent and reserved during the day's excursion. But it was impossible to resist the noisy happiness of the two Williams. Before they got half-way to Amptill, Mary was in excellent spirits and high good humour. William Meadows was captivated by her smiles, and again felt all the joy and delight, when, as Mary Woodbine, she had bestowed an approving glance on his suit.

"Mary," said he, "I intend to treat you with a new gown and a new bonnet, and William with a new hat."

Mary was delighted with the proposal, and they entered Amptill, each with a smiling countenance. "Let us go to the shop at once," said Mary, "and, William, you shall choose the gown and the bonnet."

"Agreed," was the answer of the happy husband, and to the shop they went.

The shopkeeper complimented Mary on her good looks, and admired her beautiful boy. Then addressing William, he said, "Ah, Mr. Meadows, you are a lucky man, to have such a good-humoured, pretty wife! What shall I have the pleasure of shewing you, Mrs. Meadows? delightful day this."

"I want a gown, Mr. Calico," said Mary."

And the shopkeeper in an instant displayed his store of *new prints* just come from London; there were spots and stripes, and stars and leaves of all colours.

William fixed on a lilac leaf. "It is so delicate, Mary," said he, "and will suit you so well; and trim your new bonnet with lilac ribbons, and then, I am sure you will be smart."

"I do not like lilac," replied his wife, "I like pink."

"Well, just as you please," rejoined William, only "I was to choose the gown, you know."

Mary coloured, saying, "If I don't have the gown I like, I shall never wear it."

"Pink let it be, then," said William; and a pink gown, and a bonnet trimmed with the same colour, was also purchased.

"And now for little William's hat, I like a white beaver; don't you, William?"

"I think brown would be best," he replied, "but please yourself."

Mary observed "That brown was so dull and grave a colour, and she liked white; but"—

"You seem to like any thing, Mary, which I do not;" retorted William, so I need not stay with you: there's the money, and buy what you please."

Thus, the harmony with which they entered Ampthill was dispelled, and their ride home was silent; or if they did speak, it was to thwart each other, and contribute to mutual discomfort.

Mary, however, was impatient to display her purchases to her father, who admired them, but observed, that he thought William admired lilac very much.

"But he is not to wear them, dear father, you know;" she replied, as she displayed her finery, "and he ought to like me in any colour."

"So he does, my child," replied the old man; and at this moment William entered, and Mary, charmed with all her purchases, went to him, and said, with an arch smile, "You like me in any colour; do you not, William?"

"Yes," he replied, patting her cheek, "when you smile you would charm, though dressed in a hop-sack."

"I shan't try the experiment, though: and now, William, as you have let me have my way to-day, I will oblige you. Shall we go to Meadow-farm on Sunday?"

William's eyes sparkled with delight as he gave an answer in the affirmative; and Mary, conscious of her power, now ventured to tell William, that he ought never to contradict her; "never, never," she added playfully: "and so now, dear William, the next time you go to Ampthill, buy me a lace cap."

"You joke," he replied; "I never heard of such a thing. What would people say, at seeing farmer Meadows' wife in a lace cap?"

"The landlady of the George-Inn has one," answered Mary; "and if you loved me, William, you would not refuse me."

An altercation of some length ensued, which ended in Mary's refusing to go to Meadow-farm on the Sunday.

William made no reply to this peevish retort, but as soon as tea was over, he took up his hat, and again repaired to the George-Inn. Friday and Saturday passed without much recrimination; and on Sunday, Mary, to oblige her father, who had urged her with tears, told William, that she intended to dine with his mother and sisters.

“There now, dear father, am I not a good girl,” said she, smiling at him; “and, William, if you would not thwart me so much, I should never be cross; but you tease me so, and won’t let me have my own way.”

“The least said, dear Mary, upon this subject, is soonest mended,” observed old Woodbine, with a smile; “not one word more.”

Mary playfully kissed his cheek, and then seizing her little William, who was on the floor scrambling to get into his grandfather’s lap; she ran to adorn herself in her new pink gown and bonnet. When she came down stairs, the flush of exultation was on her cheek, she thought she looked so well in pink; and her boy was so pretty in his white beaver bonnet.

The distance of Meadow-farm, was only a short walk; with a light heart, and quick step, she proceeded with her husband across the orchard; followed by the eyes of her delighted and admiring father. She turned round twice to nod to him, bidding little William shake his hand to his grandfather, in token of adieu.

Old Mrs. Meadows was surprised to see them. “Well!” she exclaimed, “this is, indeed, an unexpected *favour*.” Mary’s countenance fell at this cold reception, and William said, “unexpected pleasure too, I hope, mother.”

“Yes,” replied the old lady, looking at her blooming grandson, “pleasure too. Ah, William, you were just such another rosy-cheeked cherub, as this boy is, at his age.” Still Mrs. Meadows took not much notice of Mary, except that she eyed the new gown and bonnet, and thought them both too smart. She did not say so, but her manner intimated it. Mary saw this, and the afternoon was spent in those slight, but wounding expressions, which imbitter the happiness of life, and throw a shade over those hours which might have been gilded with the sunshine of good humour.

At night, when they returned home, they crossed the little bridge over the small streamlet to which we have already alluded. The moon shone calmly and clearly, and was reflected in the still water with magic sweetness, the willow tree scarcely waved its long taper leaves and branches, and as they passed beneath its graceful foliage, William heaved a deep sigh.

“I remember” said Mary, echoing back his sigh, “you once said, I need not fear to sit under the willow; I am sure I may wear it now, for you seem to love every body better than me. You took part against me all day, and your sister was always right and I always wrong.”

“Nay, Mary,” replied William, “you may thank yourself for every thing which has happened unpleasantly to-day. For you contradicted my mother, almost every time she spoke.”

“Yes,” resumed Mary, with some asperity, “I did contradict her, because she always takes a delight in contradicting me; and when I went into the house, she never said she was glad to see me, till you put the words into her mouth: I hate to go there, and I’ve a great mind to declare, that I never will go again.”—

“That’s as I please,” said William, “and Mary, I would advise you to mind a little what you are about; you have tired my patience nearly out, and perhaps you may live to repent your present conduct. I have brooked your ill humour long enough, and if you *won’t* please me, I know what you *shall* do: I know, too, what I shall think if you don’t mend your manners. The pink bonnet and gown, were not bought to please me; if that was the case, you would make yourself agreeable in other respects. I suppose you mean

to please *somebody* with your flaming pink bows, though that somebody is not me, that's very clear."

"What do you mean, William," said Mary, bursting into tears.

"That I suppose, there is somebody you like better than your husband, or you would do your duty to him: I have for your father's sake, endured your behaviour to the utmost, and I neither can nor will put up with your whims and fancies any longer: now you know my mind, and you had better act accordingly."

Mary was dumb, and he said no more. He had indeed said enough to one whom his own foolish fondness had spoiled, and who was, therefore, less to be blamed than himself.

Had he treated her rationally before marriage, and been

"To her faults a little blind,
And to her virtues very kind,
And clapp'd his padlock on her mind,"

after marriage, Mary would have been quite a different creature. The language he had just used was not calculated to effect an amendment in his wife; he had wounded her feelings without convincing her judgment.

At the orchard-gate he left her, and joined the party assembled at the porch of the George inn.

When Mary entered the kitchen, her father was asleep in his elbow chair; so she glided softly up stairs, undressed her weary infant, and having hushed him to a sound sleep, she sat down beside him, and wept silently for some time.

Mary possessed an affectionate heart, and if she had been gifted with fewer attractions, she might have been perhaps more amiable. But accustomed to homage from her infancy, why should it be expected that she should bear with equanimity and coolness the most dangerous and intoxicating power, that of power over the hearts of her fellow-creatures.

When supper was ready Mary descended to partake of the social meal with her father.

"Where is William?" he inquired with anxiety.

"He will be in by-and-by, father," was Mary's reply, and farmer Woodbine made no further remark. At half-past nine, he went to bed, and at ten Mary followed his example. William returned at eleven, and the next morning he behaved with much coolness towards his wife,—saddled his horse, and without saying where he was going, he left the farm.

"Do you dine at home, William?" said Mary. "No!" was the laconic reply.

William Meadows was a spoiled child as much as Mary, and he wanted equal management as herself.

CHAPTER III.

Those, that do teach young babes,
Do it with gentle means, and easy tasks:
He might have chid me so; for in good faith,
I am a child to chiding.—OTHELLO.

WILLIAM'S visits to the George inn were well known to Colonel Ednor, who had overheard all that had passed between young Meadows and his wife in the garden: he had on that evening loitered about the farm till he saw William join Frank Lighthouse, when he followed them to the George inn; and though he kept in the porch, he overheard much raillery, which was bestowed on William's domestic habits and pretty wife, whose petticoat government was much talked of in the village.

Besides, Sally Greenly had been maliciously busy in making inquiries of all that passed at the farm; and there are always news-mongers in abundance to carry bad news. Sally had learnt from a neighbour, who had followed them unperceivedly when they went home on Sunday night, the account of William and Mary's quarrel, which was indeed bitter enough. This was considerably exaggerated to Colonel Ednor; and his wicked heart rejoiced in the misery, which he hoped would contribute to the attainment of his infamous ends.

He had forbore to visit Silvershoe, since the first day of his appearance there; for at the inn he had excited some little surprise by an exclamation of delight, which partook not of his assumed Yorkshire dialect. But on the Monday he ventured to approach the farm, at a time when he knew Mary would be alone, having watched William for some distance, on the road to Ampthill. He saw her standing at the door of the house, with her child in her arms; and though a smile animated her features as she played with her baby; yet, he imagined there was an expression of discontent upon her brow, which did not seem to be in unison with the more playful expression of the lower part of her face.

Colonel Ednor was at a loss how to accost her; and while he was laying various schemes for the accomplishment of this purpose, she went into the house; but soon re-appeared equipped for a walk.

"I shall be back to tea, tell my father," said the victim of her own capricious temper, to the servant who came the length of the door. With a loitering step Mrs. Meadows strolled towards Clophill, nor stopped till she found herself near Beaumont's tree.

An involuntary sensation made her start, as soon as she perceived where she was, and she hastily turned, and retraced her steps towards home. Her thoughts were carried back to events of former times, when William presented himself to her imagination,—fond, kind, imploring; ay, and forgiving, too:—how was he altered!—Alas! she was compelled to acknowledge, that her own folly was the cause of this lamentable change; a heavy sigh escaped her, and she resolved to be more discreet for the future.

Whilst her thoughts were thus occupied, she was accosted by a peasant, who asked her the road to Silvershoe.

"The road is before you, honest friend," she replied,—“you can't mistake it.”

“Mayhap you be going thick way yoursel,” replied the man, “and I’ll e’en accompany you. This is a foine country.”

Mary made no reply, and the stranger went on—“That’s a foine baby, too;—is it your own?—let me carry it for you a bit.”

Mary turned round to look at the stranger who thus intruded himself, and begged he would leave her, and not be troublesome.

“Troublesome! noa, noa; not for worlds; I would not be troublesome to Miss Mary Woodbine.”

Mary started, and with a beating heart and pallid cheek, in a moment recognised Colonel Ednor; still, however, she had presence of mind to pretend not to know him; she only quickened her pace, till being out of breath, she was obliged to halt a few minutes.

Ednor kept pace with her; halted when she halted; and proceeded when she proceeded. Mary’s agony became intense, as she approached the village; but who can paint her dismay, when, upon hearing the sound of horse’s feet, she turned round, and discovered her husband approaching.

The villain by her side instantly fled, and Mary, overcome by a variety of sensations, sunk to the ground with her child in her arms. The varying hue of her husband’s face, his fixed gaze at her, as he remained immoveable on his horse; his sudden and fierce spurring of the generous animal, and the rapidity with which he passed her, wound up the sum of ills which Mary now foresaw would be heaped on her aching heart.

Just as she was rising from the ground, she was joined by George Underwood, who seeing her thus prostrate, hastened to her assistance, and earnestly inquired what had happened. Pale and trembling, Mary could only reply, “that she was miserable, and should be miserable for ever.”

George could get no explanation from her, but he kindly carried her baby, and accompanied her to the farm. William’s horse was roving at large in the orchard, instead of being housed; and his bleeding sides gave proof of the intemperate conduct of his master. Poor Mary shuddered; but when she entered the kitchen, she summoned all her resolution to her aid, and advanced, with a languid smile, towards her husband, holding out her child;—but he started from his seat, and fiercely bade her—“Begone!”

Mary now sunk upon her knees, and, in tones of agony, shrieked out—“Oh, William, I am innocent!—do not—do not spurn me thus. Forgive all my past *folly*, but never believe I could wrong you.

“Who was that man with whom you were walking?” asked William, fixing his eyes sternly upon her—“and why did he fly when I came near?”

Mary’s tongue refused to perform its office, and he repeated the question with sparkling eyes, and in a voice which thrilled through her soul, he bade her, “if she dare, confess her crime, and name the wretch,—the villain! who fled at his approach.”

“Oh, William!” replied Mary, retreating from him,—for his frantic gestures terrified her—“Oh, William! pray be calm, while here, before heaven I swear, I am not guilty of any *crime*, though great have been my follies; I am innocent, dear William—oh, believe me. The man was an impertinent stranger, who asked the road to Silvershoe, and wanted to take my baby from me.”

William Meadows, with a smile of cool contempt, bade George attend to her. “You hear she gives a good account of herself; and I dare say, you are fool enough to

believe her. I was fool enough *once* to believe all she said; but I am wiser now. You see how cool I am;—you see I am now capable of judging:—I am not now misled as before by a fond, weak, foolish, affection. Give me the boy,” he continued, fiercely,—“thou serpent,—thou second Eve; thou base, false, wretched woman, never shalt thou see him or me again.”

As he said this, he darted out of the kitchen, leaving Mary senseless, who, in the struggle to retain her child, had fallen prostrate on the floor.

George followed him, and by dint of persuasion and entreaties, at last induced him to go to his home. There he learnt the cause of his rage; and, having despatched Betsy to her sister, he so far quieted William’s agitation, that he consented to pass the night at Underwood farm.

Mary lay for some time in her fit of insensibility; and the terrified maid-servant having called in one of the men, they raised her from the floor, and placed her in a chair. Just as she opened her eyes, farmer Woodbine entered the house, in company with Betsy, who had overtaken him at the entrance of the orchard.

The poor old man, whose mind had been of late much harassed by the disagreements between his daughter and her husband, stopped short at the door. Betsy encouraged him to enter, and placed a chair for him, saying—“My sister will be better by-and-by, father; she was frightened at William—’s horse.” The old man shook his head,—and Mary’s first words convinced him, it was William himself, not his horse, which caused the agitation of his much-loved daughter. “My child! my child!” said Mary—“I shall never see it more;—he told me so;—and he is gone, too;—all—all is gone:—Oh, my child!—my child! But I am innocent, dear father;—innocent,” she continued, as she sprang from her seat, and dropped on her knees—“innocent!—I have been silly and foolish—but I am innocent. Oh, my dear father! what will become of me? William is gone, and has taken my child with him.”

“William,” said Betsy, “is at my house, and little William is there, too, dear Mary.”

Mary’s joy at this intelligence was expressed by a shriek, which startled old Woodbine: she clung round her sister’s neck in an ecstasy; no friendly tear, however, relieved her woe-fraught heart,—but the loud hysteric laugh betrayed her excess of agony.

Farmer Woodbine had sunk upon a chair,—but he now rose, and was leaving the house in search of William, when Mary flew towards him, and entreated, that—“he, too, would not forsake her.”—“Forsake thee, my child!” said the poor old man, whose grief found relief in tears—“Forsake thee! never, never! I was going to fetch William home.”

“Oh, he will kill me quite,” replied Mary, “by another such look as that with which he left me.”

The old man sighed, and pressing his daughter to his bosom, soothed, consoled and comforted her, till at length her highly-wrought feeling relaxed, and the melting balmy tear trickled down her pallid cheek.

Betsy sent one of the farming-men to her own house, desiring that the little boy might be sent back to its mother, and George at length persuaded William to comply with this request. The sight of her babe almost reduced Mary to her former state of insensibility; but she was at length brought to some degree of composure, and persuaded to go to bed; Betsy promising to spend the night with her.

It will be necessary, for the exposition of one or two things noticed in the previous part of our narrative, and for the better applying to particular persons some portions of intelligence, we have to communicate in the sequel, to commence the following chapter with a review of some little matters that were antecedent to the marriage of Mr. William Meadows and Miss Mary Woodbine.

CHAPTER IV.

Trifles, light as air,
Are, to the jealous confirmation strong
As proofs of holy writ.———
* * * * *
Dangerous conceits are in their natures, poisons,
Which at the first, are scarce found to distaste;
But with a little, act upon the blood,
Burn like the mines of sulphur.———
* * * * *
O that the slave had forty thousand lives;
One is too poor, too weak, for my revenge!
Now do I see 'tis true.———OTHELLO.

WHEN William Meadows told his mother and sisters, that he was going to be married to Mary Woodbine, they expressed much disappointment and regret; and Mrs. Meadows declared that Primrose's daughter was worth twenty such flirting girls as Mary Woodbine; "howsomever," she continued, "you must do as you like, William, and as you makes your bed, so you must lie on't, that's all!"

Mary's behaviour was not calculated to obliterate the unfavourable impressions of her mother-in-law; her conduct towards her was indeed repulsive, rather than conciliatory; and the pointed manner with which she avoided all intimacy at Meadow-farm, drew forth many reflections from the old lady and her daughter, which by being frequently repeated to William, imperceptibly led him to scrutinize and consequently to discover faults which might otherwise have escaped his notice.

Thus is domestic happiness often blighted by the selfishness and interference of those, whose duty it should be to cement the bonds of union and family love. The flinty rock is worn by the continual droppings from the pellucid fount; and the human heart though apparently callous to the tale of envy, or the complaints of selfishness, yields at certain moments to the repeated whisperings of those imprudent, not to say, evil, spirits, which every where infest the path of life. Ill betide the busy meddler who widens the breach between husband and wife.

Mary's conduct was in many instances highly improper, but the light in which it was viewed by William's relations made it criminal. Of this she was well aware, and in the pride of innocence, she was little careful to avoid giving them cause for their illiberal animadversions.

The events of the memorable day we have just recorded, were no sooner known, than Meadow-farm became a scene of busy and sorrowful confabulation. The tale of William's supposed wrongs which had been conveyed through the lips of at least half-a-dozen persons before it reached the ears of Mrs. Meadows, was strangely misrepresented.

Slander is like a snow-ball, it gathers as it proceeds. William's farming-man had walked directly to the George inn, after he had fetched little William Meadows, to his mother; and there by his prating collected a group of eager listeners around him.

This officious and talkative clown, told "how his measter had comed whoam in a great passion; how he had kicked his wife, and swore he never more would live with her, and how he had left the farm in a passion."

But in reply to a question from one of the company, which implied a wish to know *why* all this happened; the bumpkin was at a stand-still; when one of the listeners took up the thread of his narrative, and declared "he saw Mary walking along the road we a strange man, and that whiles they were talking together William comed up and caught um, that Mary fell in a fit and the man attempted first to help her, but that William sent him flying over the hedge in a giffy, and threatened Mary, by holding up his whip; that she conscious of her guilt, entreated his pardon, but that he knocked her down and—

"Ah but," said one of his auditors, "you said she was in a fit, how could he knock her down then."

"Why, man," replied the other, "she had got out of her fit, which was only a sham; and then William he rode off to the farm, and I knows no more about him."

This man who belonged to Meadow farm met the ploughman on his return home, to whom he communicated the whole affair, with a strict charge of secrecy: but the ploughman met the dairy maid; and the dairy maid went home with a story so marvellous, that the other servant maid exclaimed, "Mercy on us! will he be hanged?"

These words caught Mrs. Meadows' ear, and entering the kitchen she desired the maids not to gossip so much, but mind their own business.

"And who is this, that is to be hanged?" said she.

The maids looked at each other, but did not reply—The good wife's curiosity was now excited, and in an angry tone snatching a broom out of the hand of one of her serving women at the same time, she commanded her to say, "who was going to be hanged?"

Still however, she could get no answer, and the maid who was farthest from her ran out of the kitchen: her companion would have followed her example, but her mistress caught hold of her, "What is the matter with you? Who were you talking about?" said she.

Poor Jessy stammered out, "We were—only talking about—about—young Mr. Meadows."

"Is the girl mad?" said Mrs. Meadows.

"No," replied Jessy; "young master caught his wife with another man walking—and he—he—he shot him; and he—he—he, is gone away, and nobody knows nothing about him."

A scream from her mistress cut short her farrago of lies, and brought young Primrose and his wife into the kitchen. All now was a scene of confusion; and farmer Primrose set off for Woodbine farm, where from Betsy Underwood he learnt the truth. He then hastened home to quiet the apprehensions of his wife and mother-in-law, and the latter was persuaded to go to rest, instead of going in search of her injured son.

Not a spinning wheel turned with its usual alacrity; not a furrow was ploughed in the direct line on the following day. The blacksmith's iron cooled; the woodman's axe stopped before it reached the tree he was felling. In short, the events we have detailed, caused a sensation so violent and extending so far, that Colonel Ednor, though he smiled at the exaggerated accounts Sally was constantly repeating to him, thought it the wiser

plan to avoid the consequence which he judged might possibly from these reports, be his lot, provided he and William met.

For the next two days therefore he did not quit the cottage.

William in the mean while, was a prey to the most lively suspicion. The assurances of George and Betsy that Mary was innocent in reality, made little impression on his mind, though he seemed to yield to their opinion; and with slow and sullen step he approached his own home.

Old Woodbine saw him enter the orchard, and turning to his daughter by a look, for he could not speak, imparted this circumstance.

Mary did not move from her seat; but closer pressed her smiling babe to her heaving bosom. The sight of her husband brought the colour to her check, but it soon fled, and she sat pale and motionless, like a criminal awaiting her doom.

William took no notice of her, but extended his hand to the old man, then passed through the kitchen, and went up stairs.

The extreme grief visible in Mary's countenance, her pallid cheeks and lips, spoke conviction to William's jaundiced mind, and he resolved to extort the truth from her by threats, if she refused to answer to his interrogatories. Having therefore walked about the room for a few moments; he endeavoured to chase away every softer feeling, which he imagined might impede the justice due to him; and at length he went to the top of the stairs to call his wife.

Twice did his quivering lips refuse their office. Then summoning all his courage, he pronounced the word "Mary." She started from her seat, looked anxiously at her father; extended her babe towards him, then as quickly withdrew it, saying—"No, he will not take it from me."

With a trembling step and a beating heart, she ascended the stair-case, and entered that apartment where William was impatiently awaiting her; as she entered, he closed the door and turned the key. The first words he spake, convinced her that all her happiness was now at stake.

"Mary," said Meadows, in a mild and determined tone, "tell me, as you value your own happiness and mine, tell me who was that stranger you were walking with, who fled at my approach?"

"Oh, dearest William," replied Mary, he was a traveller, who was impertinent and troublesome; and on seeing you, he made off."

"It is false!" rejoined William, turning deadly pale; "if he were a traveller, how should he know me? and fly when I came near?"

"Mary was confounded at this unexpected reply, and knew not what to say.—For an instant, only, she thought she would tell the truth; but the dread of what would follow, closed her lips.

"Speak," cried William, his voice rising as he spoke, "you dare not deny your guilt any longer!—Oh, Mary!" he continued, his voice suddenly softening, "what have I done to you, that you should thus abuse me? But you are, and will be, the greatest sufferer. I do not wish, while your poor old father lives, to quit the farm entirely. I shall superintend its concerns; but never, never more, shall call it *home!*"

"Oh, God!" cried Mary, "what will become of me if you forsake me, William? Oh, I am innocent! dearest William, I am, indeed, indeed! Do not kill me quite; for the sake of this dear babe, do not cast me off on mere suspicion."

“Suspicion!” echoed back her husband, in a high tone, “mere suspicion! but I will be calm; my purpose once fixed, Mary, no power on earth shall change. Yet I shall not suffer you to become the sport and contempt of the village. I shall watch every movement; and for the sake of that venerable old man, whose silver hairs you will ‘bring with sorrow to the grave,’ I shall dissemble my feelings. I have made my arrangements with George; and there, in his peaceful home, there I shall dwell.”

Regardless of the agony of his wife, William thus made known his intentions; and then, very deliberately left her and the farm, saying, as he passed through the kitchen, “that he should dine with George.”

Poor Mary’s spirit, which had been bowed to the ground by this interview with William, rose, as she fondly hoped, that by her future good and prudent conduct, she should obliterate the remembrance of the past. Alas! she foresaw not the extent of her sufferings, nor the consequences of her former folly.

Old Woodbine drooped under this domestic misery. His venerable face, which was wont to greet with smiles all who approached him, now sunk dejected upon his bosom. Heavy sighs bespoke his internal suffering; and Betsy saw, with grief and dismay, that he would sink under this calamity. For the next two days, Mary never left the farm; nor did William, when she went out of the house for the performance of her duties, fail to watch every movement. Yet he spake not to her; nor did he take any notice of his little boy, whom the servants occasionally brought to him.

Thus passed two days: on the third, having business at Ampthill, William mounted his horse, and with a brisk gallop, set off for that place; but he started not from his own home; he was now in the habit of putting up his horse at Underwood farm, so that Mary knew not of this journey.

Having completed his business, he was returning to Silvershoe, at a brisk pace, and was not far from Ware Hedges when he saw, or fancied he saw, the man who had caused all his trouble, pass down a lane leading to Ware Hedges.

Scarcely believing his own senses, he hastily turned his horse’s head that way, resolving to be satisfied on a point of so much importance to his peace. He soon overtook the object of his pursuit, and instantly recognised him, as the peasant who had fled at his approach. Pushing on his horse, he got before him; then dismounting, he tied his panting beast to a gate, and fiercely approached the astonished villain, who began to think this adventure might not terminate to his advantage, and that all the wrongs he had heaped on womankind, were about to be revenged, by the enraged husband who stood before him. He therefore again attempted to fly from the wrath and peril which William’s countenance so strongly foreboded: but his pursuer was naturally swift of foot, and at this moment, his speed was accelerated by the thirst of revenge, for the flight of his adversary was, in his eye, an additional proof of his guilt.

William soon overtook the fugitive, and instantly proceeded to make use of his horsewhip; but his opponent, unused to such chastisement, turned, and grappled with him. In the struggle, his hat, and with it his wig, fell to the ground, and discovered to the now petrified William, Colonel Ednor!

For one instant, poor Meadows stood motionless; and the villain, profiting by his amazement, again attempted to escape; but the lightning’s flash was not more rapid, than the pursuit of William; again he closed with Ednor, and at last, threw him to the ground; while his whole frame convulsed with passion, shook his prostrate enemy. Speech was

denied him; but Ednor saw that his life was at stake, and ventured to say, "You are mistaken, Mr. Meadows; I never wronged you; and Mrs. Mead—."

"Ah, wretch!" exclaimed William, still holding him to the ground by the collar, "villain!—cowardly, dastardly villain!—but you shall not live to do more mischief!" Suddenly springing from his stooping posture, he assailed the prostrate Colonel with a succession of blows; and his rage was so great, that he was just going to stamp upon his foe, when he was interrupted by the approach of Sally Greenly with a number of rustics, who advanced to Ednor's relief.

Sally had seen their first meeting, and auguring ill from the encounter, she called some labourers from a neighbouring field, to assist in rescuing her cousin, whom William Meadows was cruelly beating.

They instantly obeyed her summons, and two of the strongest of them seized William's arms, while other two raised *John Greenly*.

"Greenly?" said William, "that is the villainous Colonel Ednor! who broke poor Judy Gabriel's heart, and drove her daughter mad!—who enticed Susan Cowslip away from her home!—and who now has come here again to seduce my wife!—Let me alone, that I may punish him for all his wickedness."

The astonishment of the rustics was not to be expressed; they all let go their hold of Ednor, as if they feared contagion from his touch. Those who held William, let *him* loose also; but they made a circle round Ednor, and would not allow the former again to approach the now abashed Colonel; and Meadows, thus disappointed of glutting his revenge on this worthless being, mounted his horse, and was soon out of sight.

When he was gone, the rustics, one by one withdrew, leaving Ednor to his fate. With difficulty Sally and her mother conducted him to their cottage.

Having despatched a lad to Ampthill for a surgeon, old Dame Greenly put Ednor to bed. When the apothecary came, he declared his patient to be in a dangerous condition, and then inquired the particulars which led to the cruel maltreatment that had reduced John Greenly to so precarious a state.

Sally then gave a most elaborate and false account of the circumstances, and the apothecary, saying that he would call again in the evening, departed.

Ednor had been purposely silent during the visit of the medical gentleman, for he felt more inclined to give vent to the feelings of his heart in threats and invectives, than to personate a Yorkshire peasant:—but when he was left with his hostess and her daughter, he declared that he would prosecute William for an assault, and that "Master Meadows should rue his behaviour on that day during the remainder of his life."

CHAPTER V.

Alas! why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame;
These are portents; but yet I hope, I hope,
They do not point at me.—OTHELLO.

WHEN William arrived at the door of his own house, his horse was covered with foam; and himself was panting with rage. Upon entering the kitchen, Mary rose from her seat; and Betsy, who was there likewise, was as sudden in her movement as her sister; for William's countenance and manner, evinced the most frightful prognostication.

Mary retreated, as he advanced towards her. "*Now*," said he, "I have proof of your guilt beyond contradiction, you base, wicked, woman. The unknown traveller," he continued, striking his wife, "was Colonel Ednor—I have seen him, and laid him as low as you now lie."

Mary's shriek, at hearing the name of Ednor, was followed by her fall,—partly the effect of William's blow,—partly the effect of her own acute feelings. As she fell, the child lost its hold, and rolled towards William; terrified, it cried, and stretched its little hands to its enraged father. Insensible, however, to every kind feeling, Meadows regarded it not, but continued to pour forth a volley of invectives, in abusive language, on his prostrate wife, who, half raised, and with clasped hands, mutely implored his pity. In vain Betsy urged him to mercy; in vain she entreated him to spare her poor old father, who sat motionless in his chair, gazing alternately on the agonized frame of his beloved daughter, and on the helpless innocent babe, whom Betsy had consigned to his feeble arms, and who nestled closely to his bosom.

"Lie there!" continued William, addressing his wife; "lie there till your paramour can come to raise you, and that will be long enough, I trust!"

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Betsy, shuddering—"you have not murdered him?"

"No," rejoined William, fiercely—"I was interrupted, or I had done it; but he will not, I *fear*," he continued, turning to his wife, with assumed composure, and with a bitter smile,—"*he will not, I fear*, be able to take a walk with you *very soon* again."

Mary had crawled towards William, and was about to clasp his hand, when he sprang from her, exclaiming—"Touch me not, viper.—Oh, I shall go mad! but I deserve it all:—Yes,—I was told how it would be, before I married; and yet I persisted. I was bewitched: you and that old hag, Judy, bewitched me."

He stopped short, and, totally overcome by the agony of his feelings, he dropped into a chair, and burst into a loud laugh. Mary, more terrified at this frantic demonstration of his grief, than at all his previous threats, suddenly rose, and throwing herself at his feet, clasped his knees, notwithstanding all his efforts to free himself from her grasp, and protested most solemnly, that he was deceived by appearances.

"Hear me, William," she continued; "the terror I felt on discovering the peasant was Colonel Ednor,—and the dread lest he should be recognised by you; and that you should imagine from my former folly, that I knew him to be in disguise, caused me to fall when you came to us. I dared not tell you, nor any one else, 'twas he—indeed, William, I

have never seen him before nor since that day; nor does he know that I had discovered him.”

Mary’s protestations were often interrupted by William, but she still persisted in her story; and her agitation was so great, and her manner so forcible, that William was staggered; but, fearful of being again deceived, he pushed her from him, saying—“It were strange indeed, if you had not your story ready; but it is all in vain: your very humility is a proof of your guilt; for when, before, were you not loud and vociferous in your defence, and reproachful and taunting in your reply?—No—no—I tell you I have been warned of this.”

“Ah,” said Mary, “may those who have thus poisoned your mind, live to repent it! I have enemies, and I know them; but, dearest William, believe them not;—I have been silly, foolish, and head-strong, but no more: believe me; indeed—indeed you will be sorry for this day’s behaviour.”

At this moment two strangers appeared at the door; they were constables who had come to arrest William Meadows on a warrant issued by Justice Grievall. This circumstance naturally leads us back to Ware-hedges, where Ednor now lay very ill.

It seems that, immediately on the medical man’s seeing in how dangerous a condition his patient appeared, he thought it comported with his duty to hasten to his neighbour Grievall, with whom he conferred on the manner, the magnitude, and the consequences of the assault that had been made on John Greenly.

And here it may not be amiss to observe, that this apothecary bore William Meadows no good will, from the unshaken opinion the latter entertained of the abilities and skill of his friend Mr. Grigs; and by his credit and influence in the village, the Amptill apothecary had never been able to get one patient in Silvershoe. This was an unpardonable offence, and he rejoiced in an opportunity of being revenged on William for the contempt,—for such it was considered by Mr. Squill,—with which that ignorant young farmer had presumed to place Mr. Grigs’s knowledge of physic in competition with a man who had served his time in London, under one of the most celebrated practitioners of the day.

The Justice, too, though a good sort of man, thought farmer Woodbine and his son-in-law often encroached on his office,—as it seldom happened that an inhabitant of Silvershoe was brought before his worship;—for, what with the peaceable disposition of the parson, and old Woodbine, and the active and judicious service of William Meadows, and George Underwood, few villages boasted of so much order and good conduct as Silvershoe.

Now and then, indeed, at the George inn, disputes would arise, but the morning generally dispersed the ill effects of the last night’s draught of ale.

The justice, therefore, having pushed his spectacles upon the top of his head, pricked up his ears, and listened with an unusual share of attention, as the apothecary added circumstance to adjunct, and adjunct to circumstance, in the relation of dame Greenly’s narrative; and, when the whole of the detail was gone through, embellished in its progress with an adequate sprinkling of adjectives, raised to the superlative of cruelty and barbarity on the one side, and on the other, palliated with every adverbial indicative of innocence, peace, honesty, and goodness, the worthy Justice muffled himself up in his great coat, and repaired to the cottage of dame Greenly, to take the deposition of her dying nephew.

Ednor, who wished the Justice far enough off, took advantage of the indisposition he actually laboured under, and pretended he could answer nothing.

Dame Greenly was, however, sufficiently voluble in speech, and detailed so many atrocious circumstances on the part of Meadows,—and so much of goodness and innocence on that of her nephew John Greenly, that Justice Grievall, without a moment's hesitation, issued his warrant, and in execution thereof, we find a couple of constables at the door of the farm-house.

These "Catch-polers," as the people of Silvershoe termed Justice Grievall's messengers and assistants, were recognised by William, who had frequently seen them at Amphyll; and he rudely asked them, "what they wanted there?"

"Why, Maister Meadows," said one man, "you see we have got a bit of a warrant from Justice Grievall, which commands us to take you up for assaulting John Greenly, Dame Greenly's nephew, who now lays in a dangerous state at her cottage."

Mary started from her knees and clung to William; who endeavoured to shake her from him, as he said, "John Greenly! there is no such person—It is true, I have nearly I believe quieted Colonel Ednor, who lies there perhaps in a dangerous state: so much the better; and as for myself, as to what becomes of me, that is no matter. I am ready to go with you; I am alike indifferent to die or live."

"Oh, merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Mary, "are you going to prison? then let me go with you: you shall not, shall not leave me behind you, William; oh dearest William, do not shake me off; let me go with you? What will become of me! With you I shall be safe. Let me—let me go with you. Oh, if he should die!"

The meaning of these last words, was perverted by William; and darting at her a look which chilled her inmost soul, he wrested himself from her grasp, and Mary fell senseless at his feet. He instantly quitted the farm in company with the two constables, and was fortunately met by Mr. Grigs at the entrance of the orchard.

To the good man's questions, William made no reply; but bade him go to the farm where he was wanted.

Mr. Grigs had been in London two or three days, and on his return home, he heard an imperfect account of the unfortunate events, which had taken place at the farm, during his absence. It was on his road to the capital, that he had had the interview with Susan Cowslip.

"Bless me!" he ejaculated, "how unfortunate! that I should be away!—dear me, dear me—why can't people be a little more patient? William is so impetuous. To be sure, Mary is rather imprudent: rather so, I must confess; but then William spoiled her, and now he is tired of the spoiled child, he himself helped to make capricious and selfwilled."

With these thoughts, and many others of the like nature, Mr. Grigs proceeded to Woodbine farm, and met at the entrance of the orchard, as already described, William and the two constables.

William's repulsive manner, checked *many* inquiries: Mr. Grigs was a peaceable man, and he never pressed his services where they were likely to be rejected uncourteously, and he therefore hastened to the farm repeating as he went,

"Why he is quite an altered man! hem! why I am sure he looks older than I do. His eyes sunk, his cheek hollow—no colour in his countenance; and then how stern he was! What can be the matter! dear me—dear me. I wish I had not gone to London: there is always something happens, when I am away."

The scene which presented itself when he entered the kitchen at Woodbine farm, called forth all his sympathy.

Poor old Woodbine was still seated in his armed chair; his little grandchild in his arms, unconscious of the misery around it; the lovely babe was crowing and playfully twisting its little fingers in the silvery locks of its agonized grandfather.

On the floor lay Mary with Betsy chafing her hands, while the maid was sprinkling her face with cold water.

His exclamation as he entered, caused Betsy to turn round. "Oh, Mr. Grigs," she cried, bursting into tears, the first she had shed; "you are just the person I wanted to see."

"What does all this mean?" said Mr. Grigs.

"I cannot tell you now," was Betsy's reply. Mr. Grigs did not repeat his questions, for his attention was directed to farmer Woodbine, whose changing countenance foretold approaching indisposition. He therefore hastily advanced towards the suffering old man, and taking the child from his arms, gave it to the servant who stood near, amazed at so much misery.

"Mary will be better," he replied, "by-and-by, Betsy, don't be alarmed about her; but call some of the men, that we may convey your father to bed—poor old soul! I am under great apprehensions on his account—send for Betty Glover. Oh dear me! 'what does all this mean?'"

The commands of Mr. Grigs being obeyed, poor old Woodbine was put to bed under the charge of Betty Glover; and by this time, Mary was restored to her senses.

Language fails to describe her feelings, as she told her sorrows to her kind and never-failing friend Mr. Grigs.

"Compose yourself, my dear Mary," said he, as she concluded her mournful tale; brushing the tear from his eyes at the same time: "I will go to Ware-hedges and ascertain the state of the Col—the—the patient; and in the mean time keep up your spirits, for the sake of little William. Here, girl, bring the baby here. There now, Mary, there's a smiling cherub for you: be sure you take care of it, while I and George go to Ampthill; and I shall take one of your men with me, and send you word how we go on."

Mary was in some degree consoled by the appearance of the worthy apothecary, who by presenting her babe to her, had diverted her thoughts from resting solely on her husband, and her apprehensions on his account, lest Colonel Ednor should die. Her father too, now shared some of her anxiety, and she repaired to his bed-side; but he had sunk into a deep sleep, and after contemplating his much-loved features, now o'erclouded by grief, she, on tip-toe, left the room, and placing herself at the kitchen window, impatiently awaited the return of the man Mr. Grigs had promised to send back to her.

Frequently she entreated Betsy would go to the lane, and see if he were coming; but for herself, she protested, that as William would not let her accompany him to prison, she would not cross the threshold, till he returned.

Hour after hour passed heavily away, and no messenger came. At seven o'clock her agitation became so great, that Betsy was terrified.

"He must be dead or dying," said she, "and what will be the consequence?"

A shriek followed the picture, her imagination had formed, of William tried for murder. Her feelings were now wrought up to so high a pitch, that they almost bordered on insanity; when Mr. Grigs again appeared before her. But he came slowly into the

kitchen, and called for a glass of ale, as he seated himself and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

Betsy looked at him earnestly, and by an expressive shake of the head, he unobserved by Mary, whose attention had been momentarily diverted by her child, intimated that there was some cause for apprehension.

Mrs. Underwood left the kitchen, to relieve her oppressed heart, and Mary dreading, yet anxious, to hear the result of his journey to Ampthill, advanced towards Mr. Grigs, without articulating a single word, but her countenance wanted no help from her tongue. Mr. Grigs understood her, and, after requesting a few minutes to recover his breath, for he had been riding very fast, he desired Mary to take a seat, and then proceeded to detail the particulars of his journey, as they are related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow.— HAMLET.

“AFTER I left you, Mrs. Meadows, I thought I would call at Dame Greenly's as I went along: when I tapped at the cottage-door, the old woman (what a disagreeable old woman it is, hem!) the old woman positively refused to let me see the — the patient. However, I at last persuaded her to admit me; and I found the—hem! the patient not quite well *certainly*: he appeared very low,—and I—I—thought, I had better not intrude too long on him; so I left him, and went to Amphill. There, I found Mr. Squill giving in his deposition, and a frightful deposition it was, to be sure: don't be so agitated Mary, my dear—now, pray don't. So, when he had finished all he had to say, Justice Grievall began a long discourse to William, who was not however, in a humour to be lectured, and he begged he might instantly be put into confinement.”

Here poor Mary burst into a flood of tears, and Mr. Grigs for some time exhausted his rhetoric in consolation, heedless of the entreaties of his agitated auditor that he should go on: but he at length proceeded in his tedious tale, in the following words:

“When William turned round to the jailer, he espied me; but really I was quite surprised, for he took no notice of me, no, none at all; however, I advanced to the Justice, and offered myself as bail for the prisoner, for—hem! for William; but indeed my dear Mrs. Meadows, if you weep so, I cannot go on, I can't indeed. So as I said before, I offered myself as bail, and so did George: saying at the same time, that I had seen the patient, and that although he was certainly *ill*, I did not conceive there was any immediate danger.”

““Will you, upon your oath, Mr. Grigs,” said the Justice to me, ‘will you swear Mr. Grigs, that there is no danger?’ An oath, you know is a sacred thing Mary, and so I hesitated; for there is no possibility of saying how things may turn out, you know. The wound—the bruise I mean, in the head may be attended with serious consequences, for *you* understand that the Col—the patient is injured in the head, but I forgot you do not comprehend these matters.”

Mr. Grigs might perhaps have described to Mary, the whole anatomy of the pericranium, when her changing cheek recalled him to subjects of deeper interest than Colonel Ednor's skull.

“Bless me, Mary, my dear Mrs. Meadows,” he resumed, “don't be so agitated.”

“But,” said Mrs. Meadows, “Is William really in confinement, Mr. Grigs? If he is, I will, I must go to him.”

“That is quite impossible, Mary,” said the garrulous apothecary—“quite impossible. But I am sorry to say, that he is detained till the Col—the *patient*, is pronounced out of danger, as Justice Grievall said in cases of mur—hem! in cases like the present, he could not admit a prisoner to bail.”

Mary's grief now became extreme, and Mr. Grigs in vain essayed to calm the agitation of her spirits; she gave herself up to despair, and walked about the kitchen in a distracted state, followed by Mr. Grigs; who used every argument in his power to induce

her to resign herself patiently to misfortunes, which she did but aggravate by her present mode of conduct.

The entrance of Betsy, caused some interruption to his well meaning, but ineffectual, attempts, to rouse Mary from the contemplation of her own immediate sorrows; and upon his making some inquiries after farmer Woodbine, he received so alarming an account, that he hastened up stairs, and found the poor old man just rousing from a kind of stupor. The first word he articulated was "Mary," and Betsy ran to fetch her sister. When the latter approached the bedside, he extended his trembling hand to his beloved child, and feebly grasping hers, he said, "*My Mary,—My Mary,—My dear child,* how pale you look! Where is William? where is George? I want to see them."

In an agony, Mary threw herself upon the bed; and Mr. Grigs, the only one present who was at all able to collect his thoughts, replied that "William and George, were not at home; but that they expected them shortly."

A slight convulsion passed across the old man's countenance, and in a few seconds he entreated to be raised in bed, and supported by pillows: his wishes were immediately gratified; and he then begged little William might be brought to him.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Grigs, feeling farmer Woodbine's pulse, "this is really very unfortunate. Betsy, my dear," he continued, drawing Mrs. Underwood to the other end of the room, "you must entice Mary away; for I perceive such an alteration in your father, that I fear"—here he was interrupted by Betsy, who burst into tears, and ran out of the room; but was quickly recalled, for Woodbine entreated she would return.

Little William Meadows being placed on the bed, beside him, the old man endeavoured to raise his grandchild to his lips, but his strength was unequal to the task; and Mary, starting from her reclining posture, held out her child to him.

"Heaven bless thee, sweet babe;" said the venerable grandfather: "Heaven bless thee, Mary, Betsy, my children; God preserve thee;" then looking steadily at Mr. Grigs, who was standing at the bottom of the bed, but who soon was by the bed-side, "Mr. Grigs," he added, "be a friend to them;—to her:"—he added, pointing to Mary, "for *I* feel, and *you* must know, that all will soon be over with me."

A shriek from Mary interrupted him. "I have killed my father!" said she, wringing her hands; "I have killed my father, and driven my husband to prison! Oh, what a wretch am I!"

"Mary, my dear Mary," said Mr. Grigs, "do be pacified; see how you distress your father."

He said no more, for a sigh, so deep, that it startled Mary from her selfish sorrow, again drew her to the bed. Old Woodbine fixed his eyes on her; she took his hand, but it was cold! and returned not the warmth of her pressure:—his eyes, too, gradually lost all expression; and Mr. Grigs, raising Mary from the bed, upon which she had sunk senseless, from the conviction that her father had fallen a sacrifice to affliction and grief, she was conveyed to her own apartment, where Mr. Grigs used every possible means to restore her to sensation, but for a long time without effect.

Such an accumulation of sorrow was more than his compassionate heart could endure. As he chafed Mary's hands, and exhausted his medical skill for her recovery, the tears of sympathizing pity, fell copiously from his eyes.

Betsy, thus called upon for exertion, took her nephew from the side of her lifeless father; and while Betty Glover was performing the last sad offices of the dead, she hushed the lovely babe to sleep upon her heaving bosom.

When Mary, whose grief was far more poignant than that of her sister, because it was accompanied by the pangs of remorse, was restored to sensation; she was, with difficulty, prevented from again relapsing into insensibility. The cries of her infant roused her however, and she yielded to Mr. Grigs's reiterated request, that she would go to bed.

"For little William's sake, Mary, you must not give way to this exorbitant grief: and see, there is poor Betsy nursing the baby, and you are sitting there without exerting yourself at all."

At this moment, George Underwood arrived; he looked exceedingly weary, and was quite out of spirits. The new misfortune which had befallen the family, in the loss of his father-in-law, during his absence, quite overcame him, and he wept like a child.

To Betsy he related all that had happened since Mr. Grigs's departure.

"William," he said, "was so altered, that he did not appear like the same man. His behaviour towards Justice Grievall had irritated the latter exceedingly; and Mr. Squill, maliciously added fuel to fire, by aggravating every circumstance he proceeded to state."

William had refused to offer bail before Justice Grievall had objected to it; and that, in fact, if Colonel Ednor did not get better soon, matters would go hard with his assailant.

George then lamented Mary's former conduct and folly, to which all their present misfortunes might be attributed as their real source.

"If," he added, "if Ednor should recover, I very much question, whether William will ever return to his own home; he appears exasperated beyond all description; and I candidly confess to you, my dear Betsy, that in his present temper, I am not over anxious that he should be under the same roof with Mary."

On the following day, when Mr. Squill went to the cottage, Colonel Ednor was gone! and dame Greenly and her daughter, were clamorous in their grief; declaring that their house had been attacked in the night, and that her nephew had been forcibly conveyed from her roof.

"Well, well," replied Mr. Squill, "all this is very fine, dame; but you know there is no longer any necessity for your keeping up this farce. *Colonel Ednor* is gone of his own accord! he knows best why he came here: and betwixt you and I, dame, no good intent brought him to this part of the world. But that is neither here nor there; we must nevertheless make some inquiries after him; and William must be detained a day or two longer at Ampthill. I understand there is sad grief at the farm; and that old Woodbine is dead."

"Ah, well!" said Sally, "I always thought that family would have a downfall; they were all so proud."

"Yes," replied Mr. Squill, "and so conceited, and ignorant, that they never called in my assistance, but always trusted to that bungler, Mr. Grigs; preferring him to me, who studied under the great doctor Drinkwater. Well, for my part, they have brought their misfortunes upon themselves and nobody pities them; and so, dame, they must bear them. But the time flies, and I have many patients to see: so good-bye."

The misfortunes which had befallen the Woodbine family, were, notwithstanding Mr. Squill's observation to the contrary, deeply felt in the village; and Mr. Norton, the

clergyman, no sooner heard of the death of the farmer, than he repaired to the scene of sorrow with the hope of contributing consolation. He was startled at the wan countenance of Mary, and the deep dejection of Betsy; and having spoken peace and comfort to the afflicted sisters, he asked George to explain all the circumstances which had preceded so many melancholy events.

The clergyman listened with profound attention to the tale of woe which George related. Then desiring that he would, on no account, leave Woodbine-farm, he went home to get his horse, and set off for Ampthill.

When he arrived at that place, he repaired to Justice Grievall, and demanded a constable might be sent for, to fetch dame Greenly and her daughter to Ampthill.

Justice Grievall, for some time, refused; declaring that the disappearance of Colonel Ednor was so suspicious, that he had just given orders that William should be conveyed to Bedford jail, until this mysterious affair should be cleared up.

Mr. Norton strenuously opposed this proceeding; and insisted that dame Greenly and her daughter should appear before his worship, and swear, if they dared, that Colonel Ednor had been conveyed away *forcibly*.

The general voice, and the murmurs which had already reached his ears, respecting his conduct on this business, induced Justice Grievall to send a constable for dame Greenly, agreeably to the wishes of the clergyman.

Mr. Norton in the mean time, went to the place of William's confinement; he found him gloomy and sullen, refusing all consolation and explanation, and earnestly entreating to be left alone. Finding that the mind of the prisoner was not tuned to comfort, and that his presence rather irritated, than soothed, the unhappy man, Mr. Norton left him, hoping that he would in a short time become more composed, when he found that every exertion was used for his release.

But William longed for the solitude of a prison; and his removal to Bedford, was a circumstance he ardently desired. Life and death he contemplated with different feelings: the former had now lost every charm, and the latter, he sighed for, as a sovereign balm to his woes.

Dame Greenly and her daughter willingly accompanied the constable, for Mr. Norton had desired the latter not to say that he was in the town; depending therefore on the good disposition of Justice Grievall and doctor Squill, they repaired to Ampthill.

They were followed by hisses as they went along, for nearly all the inhabitants of this country town, thought that Ednor had met with his deserts, and that William was justified by his suspicions, whether they were real or imaginary, in the chastisement he had bestowed on the infamous villain, whose character was known and reprobated in that part of the country.

With an air of assurance the dame and her daughter entered the library of Justice Grievall. The appearance, however, of parson Norton, changed the expression of their countenances; and they looked at each other, then at Justice Grievall, who bade them speak the truth boldly, and fear no one.

Thus encouraged the dame stated in a long round-about story, "That her cottage had been attacked in the night, by armed men, who had fired in at the window, and that a ball had passed just by her ear; that the Colonel had entreated for mercy, but, that the men seized him and carried him away, and that one of them had left his hat behind him, which she had brought with her."

The hat was produced, and bore the initials of William Meadow's. At this part of her narrative, her eyes met those of Mr. Norton; hers instantly fell, for he fixed his on her sternly, and said, "This you will swear to; and by the hat, you mean to insinuate that William Meadows was one of those who carried off the infamous Colonel."

Dame Greenly in her confusion, replied in the affirmative, although, the more wily and collected Sally, by nods and signs, intimated that she should say *no*, to this question.

Her answer, however, was sufficient to satisfy Mr. Norton and all present, that the whole was a falsehood; and he turned towards the Justice, and desired that the jailer who had William in custody might be sent for.

Upon the appearance of this man, he was asked, how he could be so imprudent as to allow William Meadows, his prisoner, to be out at night?

The man looked with astonishment at Mr. Norton, who put this question to him, and dame Greenly saw that she had in her zeal to second Colonel Ednor's views, gone far beyond the mark.

Justice Grievall could no longer refuse to listen to Mr. Norton, as the jailer swore that his prisoner had never been out of the dark-room, since he had been first confined in it.

Mr. Norton had not done with Sally and her mother, but in the presence of all those assembled, he severally reprimanded them, adding, "This is not the first time that I have had cause to protect the Woodbine family, against your base and wicked contrivances. You have not forgotten your cruel slanders against Mary Woodbine before she was married, and this same Colonel—For shame, for shame.—Were you not compelled to quit the neighbourhood in consequence of your malicious conduct at that period? And the first time your return becomes public, it is on an occasion of a similar disgraceful nature. I should hope to hear soon that you have again been driven from the neighbourhood, by the contempt and just indignation of your more worthy neighbours.—Go, base as you are, and never let me see your faces again."

The Dame and her daughter were quite abashed at this public and severe reproof, and hastened out of the Justice's apartment, amidst the murmurs of all present; and when they came into the street, they were assailed by groans and hisses. They remained but a few days longer at Ware-hedges, and then decamped, no one knew whither.

Mr. Norton now had free permission to liberate William Meadows; and, accompanied by Mr. Grigs, he went to communicate to the prisoner the good news of his release.

William however evinced no signs of joy at this intelligence; on the contrary, he appeared unwilling to leave the place of his confinement; but Mr. Grigs was copious in his expressions of congratulations both to the prisoner and his liberator. There was, however, something so extraordinary in William's manner, that the benevolent doctor called Mr. Norton out of the room, and with many excuses for taking such a liberty, entreated the clergyman to invite William Meadows to *his house*.

"He has been used to pay more respect to you than to me," said Mr. Grigs, "and I think really he stands in need of some one to superintend his actions at present."

Mr. Norton readily consented to ask Mr. Meadows to his house, and in the course of half an hour, William was seated by the side of Mr. Grigs in his whiskey, while Mr. Norton rode his own horse, by the side of the apothecary's vehicle. They left the town

amidst the shouts of the inhabitants; and, at a brisk pace, set off for Silvershoe. William's gloom increased as he reached his native village, and with difficulty was he persuaded to stop at Mr. Norton's. But the clergyman was so pressing, that he knew not how to evade compliance: therefore he got out of the whiskey and followed his reverend friend into the parsonage.

CHAPTER VII.

What have you done? A rising smile
Stole from her thoughts, just redd'ning on her cheek,
And you have dash'd it.

ISABELLA, OR THE FATAL MARRIAGE.

THE news of William's return was conveyed to the farm by Mr. Grigs, and his countenance as he entered, communicated the pleasing intelligence before he opened his lips. Mary caught his hand and pressed it to her heart—then holding her child towards the doctor, she said in broken accents, "Oh that he too could thank you!"

Mr. Grigs was overcome, and he suppressed the rising tear, exclaiming—"My dear Mary, this is too much—be composed."

Her first joy having thus found vent, certain feelings returned, and chased the smile from her flushed cheek.

"Where is he?" at length she inquired, "why does he not come home? Oh, Mr. Grigs, when will he be here? I will go and meet him."

"Stop, Mrs. Meadows," replied Mr. Grigs, "William is at Mr. Norton's. He has some business to settle, business of importance, which will detain him late; and perhaps he may not return home to-night: but you must excuse this, Mary, because just now, his!—just now—his mind—has much to—to——"

Mr. Grigs knew not what to say, for Mary's countenance expressed so much despair, that he feared to proceed.

She, however, assumed composure, and made no observations on his communication, though her manner shewed how deeply she felt this unwillingness on the part of her husband to return home, after his release from confinement.

Mr. Norton in the mean time was endeavouring to convince William, that his conduct had been precipitate and unjustifiable. "You acted," he continued, "upon mere suspicion: what proof had you of your wife's guilt? and why do you still brood over your imaginary ills, till they assume the form of reality? Believe me, Mr. Meadows, when I declare solemnly to you, that I think you wrong your wife. No one can deny, but she has been capricious and wilful; but her very conduct towards you, before you were married, convinces me, that she is innocent of the crime you suspect. I entreat you to pause before you proceed to any rash act, of which you may repent during the rest of your days."

William listened patiently to the clergyman's arguments; but they evidently wrought no conviction on his mind, already a prey to the dreadful passions of jealousy and revenge.

"You will sleep here to-night," continued Mr. Norton: "a bed is prepared for you; and to-morrow let me have the pleasure of accompanying you to Woodbine-farm. But I have an event to communicate, which I had nearly forgotten. Farmer Woodbine has paid the debt of nature."

William started from his seat, exclaiming—"Dead! Woodbine dead!—when did he die?"

"The very day you were at Ampthill; the day before yesterday. You will therefore easily imagine how much your presence is required at the farm, to administer consolation

to your afflicted wife, whose health has received a great shock from such an accumulation of sorrows. But I will intrude no longer on you at present. I will, however, see you before I retire to rest.”

Mr. Norton left the room after saying this, leaving William, with feelings, in some degree softened. The death of his venerable father-in-law, whom he highly respected, was an unexpected blow, and struck those softer chords of the human heart which dissolve it into tenderness.

Unconscious of the passing hours, William sat musing on the events of the last few days, while the tears imperceptibly chased each other down his manly cheek.

In this state Mr. Norton found him, when he came to wish him good night; and as an earnest, that he intended to remain in the village, William said, he should attend the old man to his grave on the following Sunday.

William Meadows, early the next morning, took leave of the worthy vicar, and, accompanied by George, went to Underwood farm, firmly refusing the most pressing entreaties of his brother-in-law and his wife to return to his own home.

Mary, in the mean time, with a composure which astonished her friends, submitted to her hard fate. She seldom spoke, except to her little boy—but then her tones were so mournful, that they drew tears from all around her.

George described her situation to William, in the glowing language of a sensitive nature.

“If,” said he, “William, you could but see her, I am sure your heart would be softened, and you would be convinced that you wrong her. She is so altered, you would hardly know her; and Mr. Grigs is fearful, that her grief, which is now so solemn, so deep, and so still, will injure her health to that degree, that she may go into a decline.”

William listened sometimes with emotion, but oftener with impatience, to the picture of his wife’s distress; but he never shewed the least inclination to see her.

Sunday at length arrived, the day on which the remains of farmer Woodbine were to be committed to their parent earth. He was to be buried at Flitton, the parish to which Silvershoe was an appendage; and the greater part of the inhabitants of the latter place assembled before the farm, to evince their respect for the deceased.

Flitton is about one mile from Silvershoe;—and the long train of mourners being arranged, and the bearers having approached the coffin, Betsy and Mary, who resolved to follow their parent to the grave, appeared. George Underwood supported his wife,—Mr. Grigs, Mary; for William would not allow his wife to know that he was present, and he had consequently not been mentioned at the farm since the day of his arrival at Mr. Norton’s.

He joined, therefore, the group of unallied mourners, who, from affection to farmer Woodbine, followed his corse. Thus unknown, and unnoticed, he walked immediately behind his wife: for a long time he resisted the impression which her feeble steps and tottering frame made on his heart; but his natural disposition was mild and affectionate; and as he advanced, concealing his face, tears of tenderness at length began to flow.

Still, however, he did not make himself known, resolving to continue the part which he had begun, of an inexorable and *just* judge.

The mournful company increased as it proceeded; children quitted their play, and in silence watched the solemn procession: here and there one, a little older than the rest,

would be seen putting up a finger to impose silence on some little child, who, in a whispering voice, would ask, whose burial it was?

When the funeral procession reached Ware-hedges, William could scarcely command his feelings:—the recollection of all that had passed there, and the various emotions which this retrospective view presented to his imagination, were almost too powerful for him. He looked on every side, expecting to see rising before him, the form of him whose presence at Silvershoe had embittered his happiness.

The train, however, passed uninterruptedly on, and his attention was again fixed on his trembling wife.

Mary, with a resolution which did her honour, walked the whole way without one expression of complaint;—when, however, she drew near the church, a groan burst from her agonized bosom,—and the wind caught her hood.

Mr. Grigs gazed with feelings of inexpressible grief and alarm on her pale countenance, which resembled that of a marble statue, chiselled by the hand of some eminent artist, as the image of despair. Her eyes were fixed in their sockets;—no friendly tear bedewed her cold cheek, which sunk and hollow, betrayed the ravages that grief and sorrow had made on her youthful and erst beauteous frame.

Mr. Grigs began to say something to her, but she motioned for him to silence; and he instantly turning towards William, whom *he* knew, darted at him an expression of indignation and anger, which shewed how deeply he was affected.

Betsy wept the greater part of the way;—she had lost a friend indeed, in her father, but she was supported by a fond and affectionate husband.

Mary, alas! in her sorrow, was obliged to a stranger for assistance; and he who should have offered his sheltering arms to her, followed her unknown and almost unpitying. The funeral service being nearly completed, heavy groans burst from Mary's bosom; and, when those thrilling words stole upon her ear—“*Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,*” she sprang forward, and would have fallen into the grave, if Mr. Grigs had not rushed forward and caught her. But she was cold and senseless without the smallest trace of life.

A scene of anxious confusion followed, and Mary was carried into a farm-house not far from the church-yard. Here Mr. Grigs used every means in his power to recal the fleeting spark of life. While William frantically implored him to save her. No one, however, paid any attention to his clamorous grief,—and Mr. Norton having consulted with Mr. Grigs, they agreed that Mary should be carried to Underwood farm, so soon as she was able to be removed.

“Then,” Mr. Meadows, “you may go to your own home,” said Mr. Grigs. “We will take care of Mrs. Meadows, if she *should* recover; but I very much doubt whether she will ever trouble you again.”

Mr. Grigs spoke this with some asperity. But he was so indignant and so enraged at the conduct of William, that he desired him to leave the room, lest Mrs. Meadows, should be again reduced to a state of insensibility, by the sight of her obdurate and hard-hearted husband.

William absolutely refused compliance, and declared he would not leave the room, till she gave some signs of returning life. Mr. Norton, however, persuaded him to retire into the next apartment.

Mary gave slight symptoms of existence, long before she was restored to complete animation; and the indefatigable Mr. Grigs never left her, till he had accomplished the desired end of restoring her to life, for so it may be called. She was however, so weak, and so low, that the slightest movement in the room alarmed her; and when the door opened, she drew her head under the clothes, and entreated Mr. Grigs "not to let *him* come into the apartment."

"No, my dear Mary," replied the apothecary, "nobody shall intrude on you; no, no one: don't be alarmed, only take this little drop of medicine, and then compose yourself."

"I will do any thing you wish," she replied, "only don't let *him* come in;—hush! was that his voice? don't leave me. Is Betsy there? don't leave me, Betsy."

Mr. Grigs repeated his promise, that no one should come into the room, except Betsy and himself. "And mind," added Mary, sobbing, "that he does not take my darling William away."

In this state of restless anxiety, did Mary pass the evening; and when Mr. Grigs left her, Betsy took her seat by the bed-side, watching every movement of her unhappy sister; who, starting from uneasy slumbers, desired repeatedly she would "lock the door, and not let *him* in."

Thus, heavily passed away the night; and in the morning, she appeared but little refreshed; yet, Mr. Grigs pronounced her better, "Considerably better: and," he added, "if we can but keep that headstrong William out of the way, she may recover; but if she suffers such another attack, all the physicians in the world cannot save her. I think we might, in a post-chaise, remove her. She pines for her child, and I should be more upon the spot, if she were at your house, Betsy, than here."

This proposal met Mrs. Underwood's wishes, and as the distance was fortunately short, Mary, who was lifted into and out of the chaise, bore the fatigue very well. Her agitation however, as she approached Silvershoe, caused some alarm to her friends; but she was so gentle, and so docile in their hands, and exerted herself so much, that she was carried into the house without any further ill effect than that of extreme weariness and a kindly shower of tears.

"And now, Mrs. Meadows," said the delighted Mr. Grigs, "now you shall see your little boy, if you will promise to be very good, and smile upon us a little."

The sight of little William did wonders, for although Mary was too weak to nurse him, yet her spirits were revived as she saw his little arms extended towards her.

William had with difficulty been prevented from forcing himself into the presence of his wife, but Mr. Grigs declared "that unless he wished to kill her, he would not persevere in his ill-judged intentions."

"You take upon yourself too much, Mr. Grigs," said Meadows, "I must, and will see her."

"Go then," resumed Mr. Grigs, in great agitation, "go and see *her*, whom you have reduced to the brink of the grave, and complete your barbarous work; but I will not stand by and see her murdered." When he had said this, he rushed out of the house, and went to Mr. Norton, who instantly repaired to farmer Underwood's, fearing to learn the result of Mr. Grigs's sudden departure.

William however, had been thunderstruck at the vehemence of the usually mild apothecary; and he hesitated, having it now in his power to go to his wife, whether he had not better defer his visit for a time.

In this frame of mind, he was found by the vicar, who had little difficulty in persuading him to go to Woodbine-farm, at least, until the following day.

George had been absent since the funeral of farmer Woodbine, on particular business, and did not return until Mary had been one day and a night an inmate in his house. He was delighted to find her better, and then went to Woodbine-farm, but his brother-in-law was not at home. George then went to the inn, but he had not been there; indeed, he had not been seen in the village since the morning. The impetuosity William had displayed upon the whole of this unfortunate affair, made George rather uneasy at not finding him, and he lingered about the farm till past ten at night; hoping to see him, before he retired to rest: but he waited in vain. Then, with a melancholy presentiment, he returned home; and communicated to Mr. Grigs, the terrifying news, that William was no where to be found.

“Bless me!” said Mr. Grigs, “I never knew any thing so extraordinary. He really has a mind to kill us all. Oh dear me! what can be done? It is so silly of William, if it were not for poor Mary, I should not trouble my head about him; but for her sake he must be found: but I shall not go after him to-night, I can tell him.”

George, too, felt so indignant, that he said he should go to bed, and not trouble himself about the impatient William.

The next morning, George received a letter from Meadows, saying, that he had absented himself till Mary should be better: that “he could not endure to be near her, and not see her:—that when she was well enough to return to her own home, he would be there to receive her:—but that if she died, he intended to take vengeance on the villain; on her murderer! for such he looked upon the villain Ednor!”

“There now,” said Mr. Grigs, as he read this portentous epistle; “there now, did you ever know the like? What is to be done now? how is he to know she is better? and how are we to get her to Woodbine-farm? Oh dear me! that people will be so impetuous. But I hear Mrs. Underwood’s voice. Ah, Betsy, my dear, how do you do this morning? how is Mary!”

“She has rested ill to-night,” replied Mrs. Underwood, and she is exceedingly low-spirited. Oh, Mr. Grigs! where is William? I do not think she will get better, till she sees him.”

“Hem! Hem!—Why Mrs. Underwood, you see,” rejoined the apothecary, “you see that silly man—he is so silly—pshaw,—nonsense,—I could almost hang myself.—He is gone away, Betsy my dear; and nobody knows where.”

“Gone!” exclaimed Mrs. Underwood, turning pale, “gone! good gracious! what is to be done?”

“Ah! that’s the very thing;” added Mr. Grigs, walking up and down the room; “that’s the very thing. What’s to be done? I am sure I don’t know; but this I know, I wish William had never been born.”

A long consultation followed, but no good resulted from the deliberations of the agitated parties; and this day passed on, in silent and melancholy meditation on the part of Mary, who never mentioned her husband, but lavished the tenderest expressions on her little boy. At night, however, she asked Mr. Grigs when she might go home.

“Soon, my Mary,” was the reply; “but you must be patient awhile; I think you look a little better to-day. That’s right now, give us a smile:—but I am engaged a little

this evening.—So God bless you.—Ah, this little cherub I see fast asleep,—he really is a beauty, Mary.—But good-bye.”

Mary sighed as he left the room, and complaining of weariness, she went to bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

How could you promise love to me,
And not that promise keep?
Why did you swear mine eyes were bright,
Yet leave those eyes to weep?

BALLAD OF WILLIAM AND MARGARET.

ABOUT ten o'clock the next morning, a boy brought a letter from William, desiring to know how Mary did; and describing the state of his feelings as beyond all endurance.

"Tell the person who sent you," said George, "that unless he returns home, his wife will die."

"Lord, Sir," said the boy, "I darn't tell him no such thing; the gentleman looks half mad now, and his horse is always saddled and—"

"Where is he then?" inquired George.

"Why, I left him at Luton; but he said, as I was to bring a letter, and he would send for it, as he was going further on."

"Stop, boy," resumed George, "and I'll go with you part of the way;" and after giving some necessary directions to his wife, Underwood set off, desiring as he quitted the house that she would let Mr. Grigs know where he was going.

When our travellers were about two miles from Luton, the lad rode closely up to George, and in a whisper, said, "I saw the gentleman go into the hovel a good way on— upon the downs."

"Well, then, my lad," replied Underwood, "go straight on your way; I suppose, although you pretend ignorance, you know who the *gentleman* is?"

"Why, yes," said the boy, "I an't seen farmer Meadows so often at market, as not to know him; only, as he was so odd, I pretended I had never seen him before."

"Very well," resumed Underwood, "you may be off."

The lad doffed his hat, and set off full canter for Luton, while George rode across the downs, and got to the hovel unperceived by William. He fastened his horse to a stake that was near the cottage, and tapped at the door. No one answered: he tapped a second time, and then without further ceremony entered: he was met at the door by an old woman, who asked him his business.

"I am tired," said George, "I want to rest a little."

William, who was seated with his back to the door, and resting both elbows upon his knees, while his dejected head was supported by both hands, started at George's voice, and advancing towards him, asked, "What he meant by coming there?"

William's countenance was pale and sallow, his cheek sadly sunk, his dark eye hollow and wild in its expression, his fine arched eyebrows were drawn nearly together; his black hair hung about his face in great disorder; his speech was rude, and his manner so appalling as he advanced towards his brother, that the latter retreated a few steps.

"I came, William, to impart comfort to you, to lead you to your own home, and to tell you that Mary is somewhat *better*."

William smiled; but his smile terrified George. "She will live, then," he said; "are you certain she is better? I have sworn never to return to Silvershoe till she can welcome

me to my home; but that is impossible, she never can welcome the wretch who has so cruelly used her.”—“No,” he cried with vehemence, “she must curse me as the cause of all her sorrows. If she does not recover, George, the villain who urged my soul to madness, shall not live to triumph in her death and my misery. No, no, I will follow him to the end of the earth, but I will be revenged. Oh, Mary—Mary, my dear Mary.”

George seized William’s arm, for he thought he was going to escape, saying at the same time, “This is downright folly, William; Mary will recover; but Mr. Grigs says that unless you return to the farm, she never will.”

“Mr. Grigs is a meddling fool,” said William, “and so you may tell him from me. If I had seen her, I should not have left home. But to be close to her,” he added, struggling with his tears, “and not to see her, was more than I could endure! Oh George, George,—but go—I will promise not to leave this hovel, but home I will not go.”

George used every argument in his power, to induce Meadows to accompany him home; but the latter was obstinate, and muttering curses on Colonel Ednor’s head, he ran out upon the downs, motioning to George not to follow him.

Underwood did not attempt it, for he was afraid of driving him to some act of desperation; he therefore, with a heavy heart, retraced his steps, and entered his own home just at dinner-time: he was vexed and harassed, and was no ways sparing in reprobatng the conduct of William, which he said resembled that of a madman.

Mr. Grigs came about two o’clock to hear the news, and his grief and disappointment was great. “Not,” said he, “that I care much about William, he has brought his troubles upon himself; I think of poor Mary: but I have not seen her to-day. How is she?”

Mr. Grigs went up stairs, without waiting for an answer, and returned with a countenance expressive of grief.

“I can’t think what has agitated Mrs. Meadows so? she is all in a tremor, and is so flushed, and her pulse is all in a flutter; she seems quite flurried, and she talks and smiles, and is quite odd. Has any thing happened to-day?”

He was answered in the negative. “It is very strange,” he resumed, “I shall look in again, in the evening; I don’t like this change.”

About eight o’clock Mr. Grigs again saw Mrs. Meadows, who appeared more composed and he left the house in better spirits. Betsy’s little girl being unwell she did not sleep in Mary’s room this night; but the maid did. The latter soon fell into a sound sleep, and Mary having quite ascertained this, and waited till the house was quite still, gently raised herself in bed. She then got up and softly put on her clothes, and having again and again looked at her child, she went towards the door.

“I will take him with me,” she said in an under voice—but just as she was going to raise him, she started back, exclaiming “No—no, no, the night air will kill him.”

She then retreated from his little bed, with her eyes still fixed on the lovely boy; gently she unclosed the door, as softly shut it—and gliding down stairs she entered the kitchen. All was still and solitary—the rush-light she held was nearly extinguished by the opening of the kitchen-door, at the foot of the stairs, and she deliberately lighted a candle which stood on the kitchen-table.

While she was thus occupied, she fancied she heard an odd noise, but all was again quiet; when, as she softly drew back the bolts of the house-door, she evidently distinguished voices whispering, without; terror now took possession of her, and she

stood motionless till the sudden lifting of the latch, and the appearance of a face, cautiously peeping through the half-closed door, made her fly towards the stairs, but two men rushing in, her faint scream was stopped by the application of one of their hands upon her mouth. The energy which had brought her so far was now gone, and she sunk a senseless burden in the arms of the ruffian who held her. "She's not dead surely," said he, as he looked at her pallid cheek.

"No," replied his comrade, "never fear she'll soon recover. But what the deuce could have brought her here at this time of night."

"Who knows," said the man who spoke first, "indeed, who'd think of accounting for a woman's actions.—Let's begone—she may be missed, and the hue and cry after her may begin before we are beyond pursuit. Let's bring her out—this is doing our business easily indeed."

"Let's put out the light, that will bother them a little; and then as you say, the sooner we are off the better."

They lifted Mary from the ground, and carrying her between them, they placed her in a chaise and drove off, in which situation we shall leave her.

In order to account for Mrs. Meadows's conduct in attempting to quit the house, it will be necessary here to add a word or two of illustration. We have briefly then to observe that when George Underwood told his wife he was going in search of William—he was overheard by the ignorant country girl who waited upon Mrs. Meadows, and who immediately hastened to the invalid with the joyful news, "that her master was going to bring back farmer Meadows."

"Bring him back," said Mary, "why, where is he?"

"Laws, did'nt you know as he had left his home, and was gone nobody knows where?"

"No," replied Mary with assumed composure, "I did'nt indeed, Jessy, and mind you tell me when your master comes back."

The girl promised she would, and it was her intelligence which had caused the irritation Mr. Grigs had observed; and her attempt to quit the house arose from the same source. Finding that her husband would not return, she formed the strange resolution of going herself to fetch him back. Judging very accurately that her friends would oppose this scheme, and prevent it, she dissembled her feelings, and waited as we have seen till the family were all fast locked in the arms of sleep.

About four in the morning the girl who slept in her room rose; but what was her surprise and dismay at finding the bed empty. She started up and half-dressed ran to her mistress's room: the alarm was soon given, and in less than a quarter of an hour every individual of the family was assembled. The kitchen-door was found upon the latch—every thing appeared as it was left on the over night; no one thing was removed out of its place; but by the table they found one of Mary's shoes, and outside of the door by the railing, they picked up her bonnet which had fallen off as the men carried her to the chaise.

By six o'clock the news spread through the village—but George had mounted his horse a few minutes after this discovery, and set off on the London road, while Mr. Grigs took the opposite direction. When they were gone, the maid said, "La! I dare say she's gone after her husband."

“And why do you suppose this,” asked her mistress; Jessy then told what had passed between her and Mrs. Meadows, and Betsy wrung her hands in despair, as she bade her servant begone “and not let her face be seen, till Mary returned.”

The poor girl sobbed and cried bitterly; and Mrs. Underwood hastened to the George Inn, and employed a man to go across the Luton downs to find out William Meadows—“But stop, my good fellow,” said she, “if Mrs. Meadows went by herself, she cannot have reached half that way. Go in every lane near the village, that will be the better plan;” the man did so, but without success.

At noon George came home from an equally unsuccessful attempt—and Mr. Grigs, who was more fortunate, is the only one to whom we shall pay attention.

Mr. Grigs imagined that Mary from the agitation he had found her in, might have left the house alone, but he knew that however she might be supported by the energy of fever for a time, she must eventually, and that shortly, sink under the fatigue of her undertaking. He therefore pondered a little while, and, as he glanced over the late events, concluded that she had been carried off by force. From a shepherd’s boy he learnt that a post-chaise had passed before it was light, towards Ampthill.

“I was going to look after my lambs,” said the lad, “and I could hardly get out of the way soon enough, for they drove main fast; but as I comed back, the chaise was standing still near the same spot, and I saw a man running with water in his hat—so I crept softly on, and I heard him say—‘She’s mortal bad:’—and as I was afeard a-being seen, I went away,—but I saw them drive off.”

“There’s a shilling for you, my lad,” said the delighted Mr. Grigs; and, spurring on his long-tailed mare, he got scent of the fugitives from another man, who told him, “the chaise turned off the high road; and that a drover man had said, ‘there was quite *a-to-do* in Sheffield; for a gentleman was there, whose wife had just been brought to him in a dying state after she had run away from her husband.’”

Mr. Grigs immediately entered a chaise and four, and bade the post-boys drive for their lives to Sheffield; Mr. Grigs was well known at Ampthill, and he was readily obeyed.

Off the post-boys set, and Mr. Grigs, who had seldom driven his whiskey at more than a brisk trot, was now whirled over the ground with such velocity, that he seated himself in the middle of the chaise, expecting every instant to have his neck broke. His fears at last got the better of every other feeling, and he tapped at the chaise window; the post-boys turned round, and, touching their hats, began flogging their horses unmercifully, supposing Mr. Grigs thought they did not drive fast enough. The terrified apothecary now threw himself back in the chaise, and, closing his eyes in despair, gave himself up for lost. The entrance into the town aroused him,—and in surprise he found himself safe and sound opposite the inn, where another chaise and four stood waiting.

All idea of self was now forgotten,—and taking the host on one side, he told him his errand:—he said, “Why you must know, Mrs. Meadows!”

“To be-sure I do,” replied the landlord,—“one of the prettiest women in all Bedfordshire;—but they keep this lady so close, and won’t let nobody see her, that, hang me, if I did n’t think there was some foul play going on. But what shall I do, Sir?”

“Send that chaise out of the way, and tell *the* gentleman, that another gentleman wishes to speak with him here!—but at your peril, landlord, let the lady be carried out

before I have seen her. Have you no Justice near at hand?—bless me, I am all in a flutter— all in a flutter—for fear they should outwit us.”

“Oh, never fear,” said the landlord, “my wife shall stand at one door, and I at the other; and the devil is in it if they carry her off, then. Here, waiter! shew this gentleman up stairs, where the other gentleman is.”

Mr. Grigs followed the waiter up stairs rather slowly. Certain thoughts now arose in his breast, for Mr. Grigs was no hero as to war-like encounters; and perhaps the Colonel, who was a soldier, might be armed. “Dear me, in a low tone, ejaculated the apothecary—“I wish I had my pistols.”

But he had no time for further reflection or observation, for the door opened, and disclosed Colonel Ednor with his back to the door, urging poor Mary, by whom he was seated, to take some jelly. Mr. Grigs pulled back the waiter, and motioned to him to stop.

Mary turned with disgust away, when the Colonel, rising, said—“I must insist upon your eating it.”

“Jelly!” said Mr. Grigs, advancing—“Jelly is very bad for Mrs. Meadows:” but he said no more, for the Colonel jumped up, exclaiming—“Mr. Grigs!—confusion!” and poor Mary sprang from her seat likewise, and fastened her arms round Mr. Grigs’s neck.

“Mrs. Meadows!—Mary!—my dear Mary!” said Mr. Grigs:—“Here, waiter! call your mistress:—don’t be afraid, Mary; if he were the devil himself, (as he very much resembles him, I have no doubt), he should not touch you.”

Mr. Grigs was a hero now indeed, for he set the Colonel at defiance; and Mary having loosed her hold, he supported her to a chair, and placing himself before her, he brandished his gold-headed cane, turning round every now and then to Mrs. Meadows, encouraging her not to fear.

When the landlady entered the room, the Colonel, who had been swearing at, and threatening Mr. Grigs, threw down a guinea, and was about to depart, when the landlady “begged he would take it up again, as her husband would settle with him down stairs.”

Colonel Ednor in a passion ran down stairs, at the foot of which he was met by the landlord, who presented him with the bill, congratulating him at the same time upon the recovery of his wife.

The Colonel left the inn through the connivance of the landlord, who condescended to allow him a chaise and pair of horses, and he made his escape in good time; for there was a ducking-stool by the side of a horse-pond here, as well as at Silvershoe, and the country people were assembling round the inn, to impede his exit with impunity. He, however, sprang into his chaise so quickly, that they were disappointed, and they wreaked their vengeance on one of the instruments employed in carrying off Mary. The other escaped at the risk of breaking his neck, by leaping over five-barred gates, scrambling through hedges, and tumbling neck and heels into deep muddy ditches.

The joy of Mr. Grigs was now clamorous, and he shook the landlord and landlady by the hand heartily; gave the waiter something to drink; rewarded the post-boys handsomely, and desired they would give their horses a extra feed, as he should want to return in about an hour to Amptill.

Poor Mary was in a piteous state,—and when Mr. Grigs went near her, all his spirits fled. Her first question was about William.

“And now, my dear Mrs. Meadows,” said he, “lie down for one half hour, and I promise you that William shall be in his own house to-night;—will that satisfy you? But unless you compose yourself, we shan’t arrive at Amptill before evening, and then I cannot perform my promise you know.”

Mary allowed herself to be persuaded, and, overcome by her late exertion, she fell asleep, and Mr. Grigs then recollected, that he had not broken his fast that day. “Dear me, landlord,” said he, “have you any thing nice in the house? A bit of ham, or round of beef, or something of that kind?”

The landlord had any thing and every thing, and Mr. Grigs made a hearty meal. In the joy and delight of having rescued Mary from the power of Colonel Ednor, he forgot her alarming disposition; but when the landlady called him into Mary’s room, to look at her, all his anxiety was awakened.

“I wish she was at Underwood farm,” said he with a deep sigh, “Oh, dear! what misery there is in the world. She is very bad:—bless me! how fast her pulse beats. I am frightened to death: how will she bear the journey? Can you spare one of your maids to go with us?”

At this moment Mary opened her eyes. She looked amazed for a few seconds, but she soon recognised that friend, who had never failed her in the hour of necessity. “Ah, Mr. Grigs,” she said, “now let us go home—go to my sister’s, I mean,” she added with a sigh.

“Yes, my dear Mary,” said the doctor—“Yes, you shall go directly, and the landlady will help you. Ah! how we shall surprise them.”

“Poor thing,” he said, as he went down stairs, and drove back the tears which started to his eyes—“poor thing! she is very bad,” he continued, addressing himself to the landlady—“and it grieves me to the heart to see her. I have known her ever since she was born,—and you see, she is so natural to me—that—I think a glass of wine would do me good, landlord; I am rather low just now.” And putting his arms on the table, and resting his head upon them, he indulged nature in her tribute of a tear.

Mary having taken some refreshment at his desire, now, with trembling steps, descended the stairs, was lifted into the chaise, and placed in one corner. She was followed by Mr. Grigs and the maid-servant of the inn, and at a steady pace they departed for home. The apothecary had despatched a messenger to Silvershoe with the joyful intelligence of Mary’s rescue—and Betsy was at Amptill ready to receive them.

Mary’s spirits began to fail entirely as they approached Underwood farm, but Mr. Grigs rallied her gently, and told her she must be very good, for he was now going to fulfil his promise.

“Ah, Mrs. Underwood, you need not look so curious—that’s a secret between Mrs. Meadows and me. Well, good-bye to you both. Ah! there’s that young rogue, Will—hem! I see Mr. Underwood down there, I think;—yes, indeed, ’tis he. Well, good-bye to you.”

When Mr. Grigs joined Underwood, the latter ordered his horse to be put to the taxed-cart, and off they set.

“I did not,” said George, “go to the hovel this morning, for I really feared William would be guilty of some crime or other; but now he shall know all, and we will bring him back by force, if he will not come without compulsion.” Mr. Grigs agreed to this, but he observed, “that William was a *powerful man*.”

“We’ll manage him,” replied George, “never fear.”

William did not fly from George as before, but his pallid cheek was flushed when he saw Mr. Grigs.

“We are come,” said Underwood, “to argue with you concerning your present folly, and to say, that unless you return to night to Woodbine farm, the consequences will be fatal.”

He then detailed to him the events of the preceding night and day;—William’s agitation as George proceeded was beyond all description, and his vows of vengeance against Colonel Ednor terrified Mr. Grigs.

“You must not think of vengeance now, Mr. Meadows,” said the amazed apothecary—“you must only think of consoling Mrs. Meadows. I have pledged myself you shall return to-night; and I hope, when I declare to you that nothing but your return *can* give me a hope of her restoration from sickness, you will submit to accompany us to Silvershoe. Write her a letter by way of introducing yourself by degrees, and if she is able to support the meeting, you shall see her to-morrow. Come now, my dear Mr. Meadows, let me beg you will listen to reason.”

William overpowered by the benevolent solicitude of Mr. Grigs held out his hand to him, and, rushing out of the hovel, placed himself in the cart, followed by the doctor and George.

George went with him to his house, and the apothecary drove quickly on, and, jumping out of the vehicle with more than his usual agility, he entered the parlour with a smiling face. “I need not ask you any questions,” said Mary, bursting into tears—“your face tells me that you bring good news.”

“I do indeed;” he replied,—“there I have left George and William at Woodbine farm as comfortable as you please. And now you will, I am sure, to please me, go to bed and sleep till morning.”

Mary readily obeyed, and though her pillow was moistened with her tears, yet she sunk into a more peaceful sleep than she had for some time enjoyed. While the benevolent Mr. Grigs, wearied by the exertions of the day, delighted with their results, walked briskly home, and retired to his couch, with a heart glowing with the exalted feelings of love and good-will towards his fellow-creatures

CHAPTER IX.

Ah, gifts neglected, talents misapplied,
Favours contemn'd, and comforts unenjoy'd!
At this sad shrine, the serious man may find,
A subject suited to his thoughtful mind;
And the rash youth, who runs his wild career,
May tremble at the lesson taught him here;
While baffled nature stands desponding by,
And hails the shade of *Ednor* with a sigh.

ANONYMOUS.

HAVING now brought back Mr. Meadows to his own house, we shall account for Ednor's disappearance from Dame Greenly's cottage, and his subsequent abduction of Mary.

Sally had been despatched by him to Luton, a town ten miles on the other side of Silvershoe, on the London road. Thither she went by the Ampthill coach, and having repaired to the King's-head inn, she there inquired for Colonel Ednor's servant, who had been desired by his master, previous to his departure from London, to await further orders at that place.

John listened with astonishment at Sally's story,—and then hired a chaise,—and at eight o'clock in the evening they got into it, and directed the driver to go to Ware-hedges. Colonel Ednor was then lifted into the chaise, and conveyed to Sheffield; here he remained plotting mischief; and having, by the aid of John, found two instruments ready to execute his iniquitous scheme, he called himself by a feigned name, and gave out an extraordinary reason for his bruises—saying, that he was in pursuit of his wife. Then hiring a chaise and four, and largely bribing the post-boys, he partly effected, as we have already observed, his nefarious design.

From Sheffield he hastened to London, where his own physician soon restored him to health. He then declared his intention of commencing a prosecution against Meadows for the assault.

With great difficulty his brother and solicitor dissuaded him from the folly of this exposure of a transaction which would be better consigned to oblivion. He yielded at length to their representation, and relinquished the point.

Colonel Ednor having materially injured his fortune by his extravagant mode of living, and his health being much impaired by the chastisement of William Meadows, and the fall from his curricie, he resolved on amending the former by a wealthy marriage, and procuring a nurse, in the person of his wife.

He therefore made proposals of marriage to several young ladies of fashion, family, and fortune, but his offers were politely rejected; finding that his real character was well known in the fashionable world, he turned his thoughts to the city. But however willing the wealthy citizens might be to consign their daughters to a *suitor* from the west-end of the town, they were also too prudent not to make inquiries about the man's character, who offered himself as son-in-law. As these inquiries did not redound to the honour of the Colonel, he was dismissed with a pertinent and positive refusal.

The Colonel's pride was now piqued, and he resolved on being married at any rate: and he was also resolved that his wife should be young and beautiful.

He had frequently seen a young lady at church, (for he went to church occasionally, and his reasons for doing so, the reader may guess,) in company with a middle-aged gentlewoman and a young man, whom he naturally supposed to be mother and brother to the fair damsel who had attracted his attention. But how to introduce himself was the question. Accident, however, befriended him, for the two ladies were walking together, when an over-driven ox with a whole population flying before him was discovered by the elder lady: terrified they joined the fugitives, when the foot of the latter slipping, Colonel Ednor ran to their assistance, forced open the door of a shop, and dragged rather than led her into it. He was most sedulous in his attentions to her, and when she was recovered and they were assured the enraged animal was secured, he begged she would accept his arm, and allow him the honour of conducting her to her own home. There was no possibility of refusing this polite offer, and he accompanied the two ladies to a small house in the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury Square. He took his leave at the door, entreating he might be permitted to call on the following day to know how the lady was; giving his card at the same time.

About four o'clock on the next day, he knocked at Mr. Saunders's door, and merely inquired how the lady was; but Mr. Saunders was at home, and he begged the Colonel would do them the honour to walk in.

No one could be more insinuating than Colonel Ednor, and he conducted himself with so much propriety during his short visit, that the mother, daughter, and son, were alike captivated.

Mrs. Saunders sighed as she looked at her daughter, who was dependant as well as herself upon her son. She was a clergyman's widow, whose husband had caught a typhus-fever in visiting one of his parishioners, and left them poor, but not friendless.

Colonel Ednor's visit was repeated, and in the course of a short time he became a frequent visitor; and as he talked familiarly of his brother, who lived in South Audley-street, and many other persons whose names were familiar to Mr. Saunders, from seeing them in the newspapers' list of fashionables, he thought there could be neither harm nor impropriety in admitting him to an intimacy with his sister.

Miss Saunders listened to the delicate flattery of the Colonel with indifference; her opinion of him did not improve upon acquaintance, but her obligations to her mother and brother, induced her to sacrifice her own judgement to theirs, and to suppose that she was mistaken, and they were right.

When, therefore, Mrs. Saunders, with all the pride of a mother, congratulated her daughter on the conquest she had made, Lucy Saunders replied only by a sigh, which was followed by a smile.

"To be sure," said Mrs. Saunders, "he is not very young; but he is not old; and it would make me *so* happy to see you settled, my dear, before I die."

Miss Saunders pressed her mother's hand to her lips, and shortly afterwards left the room.

On the morning after this conversation, a letter was delivered to Mrs. Saunders from India; it was from her brother, whom she had long supposed to be dead. He was a singular character, and had left England in possession of only one hundred pounds besides the money required to defray his passage; he had not written to any of his family

since his departure from his native country. Having, however, realized a very large fortune, he wrote to an old friend, for tidings of his family, and from him, he learnt that his sister was a widow, and poor; he immediately forwarded to her a sum more than adequate to all her wants; viz., five thousand pounds, saying, that as he had no family, her children should be his heirs. For a long time she could not believe her senses, and Colonel Ednor being the first person she saw after reading the letter, which was still in her hand when he entered the room, she immediately communicated its contents. Policy induced the wily Ednor to shorten his visit, and he even absented himself for two or three days.

This conduct was declared to be the height of delicacy, and drew forth the most sanguine praises from both mother and son.

Poor Lucy was silent on the subject, and devoutly wished that his delicacy would induce him not to repeat his visits.

Her brother, however, thought differently, and having met the delicate Colonel, insisted upon his accompanying him home. With seeming reluctance he complied, but before the day was passed, he made to Mrs. Saunders proposals of marriage for her daughter.

Mrs. Saunders replied, "That she should be happy to call him son-in-law, but that at the same time her daughter was at her own disposal, and, consequently was free mistress of her choice."

This was just the answer he expected, and he begged he might have an opportunity of making known to the fair object of his adoration the first and only wish of his heart, declaring at the same time that he could no longer live in this torturing state of suspense.

A message was sent to Miss Lucy, requiring her attendance, but the young lady sent an excuse, saying, she was indisposed.

Mrs. Saunders, alarmed, left the room, and went to her daughter's apartment. When she entered the room, Lucy sat pale and motionless, while the maid was chafing her hands and rubbing her temples with vinegar.

At her feet lay a letter, to which she pointed; and motioning to the servant to withdraw, she entreated her mother to read that friendly epistle: it ran as follows:

"Let not Miss Lucy Saunders listen to the deceitful Colonel Ednor! Let her write to Mr. Grigs, of Silvershoe, Bedfordshire, and ask him the story of Mary Gabriel's woes. Let her mention Susan Cowslip; and even Mary Woodbine. These he has injured, oh! how cruelly! The first died mad;—The second, is a wanderer, without a friend;—and the third, though now married, had nearly rued the day when she listened to the flattery of one of the basest men in existence."

Mrs. Saunders could scarcely ask how her daughter came by that letter; she forgot the Colonel was waiting for them; and he, after remaining an hour in attendance, rang the parlour bell, and said he would call in the evening.

When young Saunders came home to dinner, the letter was presented to him; and on reading its contents, he was rendered speechless for a time.

After a long consultation as to their proceedings, Mr. Saunders, who was not one of those impetuous beings, who rushes headlong to destruction, wrote to Mr. Grigs; and when the Colonel came in the evening, he was told "Miss Saunders was too ill to see him, and that her mother and brother were engaged."

Ednor thought this very strange, but he dissembled his disappointment, and expressed much sorrow for Miss Saunders's indisposition; adding that he would call on the morrow. Particular business, however, prevented his fulfilling his promise, but he sent his servant with a message of inquiry.

When Mr. Grigs received the letter of Mr. Saunders, he was in deep affliction about Mary Woodbine; but he immediately wrote to the young gentleman; giving him a full and copious account of the Colonel's infamous proceedings with regard to Mary Gabriel, Susan Cowslip, and Mary Woodbine.

Mrs. Saunders was struck with horror at the villany of this bad man. She wept and scolded by turns; and at last, declared that she herself would see him, when he next called, and tell him a little of her mind. She kept her word, and scarcely rose from her chair when he entered the parlour; neither did she return any answer to his anxious inquiries after his beloved Lucy.

"Your Lucy, indeed!" at length she exclaimed; "your Lucy! thank heaven, she has escaped the misery to which she was consigned by her imprudent mother."

Colonel Ednor replied, "I am at a loss to account for this conduct, madam; and a reception so different from any I have hitherto received; and—"

"Pray, Sir," resumed Mrs. Saunders, drawing herself up, and arranging her ruffles, "pray, Sir, "did you ever know one Judy Gabriel?" the Colonel started, and turned pale; "and Susan Cowslip?" she added; and as he retreated into the passage she followed him to the door, saying, "and Mary Woodbine; and half a hundred more, I dare say!"

The Colonel did not hear the latter part of this speech, for he made such a hasty retreat, that he was out of hearing before the old lady had reached the street-door, which she shut to violently, as she exclaimed "The villain! let him never darken my doors again."

The informant in this affair, was Susan herself, who during her engagement at one of the London theatres, had seen Colonel Ednor walking out with the young lady and her brother: naturally concluding from her thorough knowledge of his character, that little good could result from any connexion with him, she made inquiries in the neighbourhood respecting the young lady's family. Finding they were persons of the greatest respectability, she instantly wrote the letter in question. Thus, she deprived the Colonel of his prey; and rescued an innocent and amiable victim from his power.

Ednor no sooner reached his home, than he sent a challenge to Mr. Saunders, which that gentleman very prudently carried to one of the magistrates of a police office, and an officer was sent to arrest the Colonel. This measure he considered a greater indignity than any thing he had ever encountered; but he was compelled to obey the summons, as the English law makes no distinction of persons. On his appearance at the public-office, the worthy magistrate asked him if he had written that letter, presenting to the Colonel, at the same time, the letter containing the challenge, to Mr. Saunders. The magistrate wondered Colonel Ednor had not engaged a second, and as the challenge in question looked so much like "slugs in a sawpit," said he must bind him over to keep the peace, towards Mr. Saunders, or in default thereof, commit him to Tothill-fields bridewell.

The Colonel attempted an excuse, and was framing a justification, when the justice cut his discourse short, by demanding immediately his recognizance not to tempt Mr. Saunders to break the peace. With this peremptory command Ednor obeyed; and

thereby escaped an exposure which would have added nothing to his reputation as a gentleman and a soldier.

The Colonel, on his return home, resolved on wreaking his vengeance on some one for his late disappointment; for he had not only lost a young and beautiful bride, but the expectation of retrieving his ruined fortunes. He had, however, learnt wisdom from experience, and he began to think that the less he made himself notorious, the better; for the world, which is very generally correct in its judgment, loudly condemned his general conduct; and the doors of those houses which were wont to be opened to him with a hearty welcome, were now closed against him.

Shut out from society, he became desperate, and, as the only means of again appearing among his former friends, supposing that it was his poverty, and not his villany, which made him shunned, he embarked in a speculation that might retrieve his fortunes, and furnish him speedily with the means of appearing in the fashionable world in a style that should render his company an object to be courted rather than avoided.

With the view of accomplishing this desirable object, Ednor and two other persons, who had been so often black-balled at the gaming-table, that they could not appear there again, opened a "Counting-house" in the city, and professed to do business as merchants of credit and knowledge of the markets. They contrived to deposit in a banking-house about one thousand pounds; from this sum they paid for five pounds worth of inferior goods from one tradesman in ready money; for ten pounds worth from another; fifteen from another; and so on till they had expended about two hundred pounds. The goods thus purchased they sent to a sham auction-room, where they were sold for what they would bring.

On the credit of their prompt payment, the parties in the "Counting-house" obtained credit to a pretty large amount, and were enabled actually to freight a vessel which they loaded with merchandise for South America. The tradesmen for the articles which they bought, drew on the partners at six, nine, and twelve months for their money; the first drawn bills were honoured by means of discounts, that had been obtained on bills drawn by Ednor, and accepted by one of his partners. The next bills due were renewed, as the vessel was expected daily to return, and thus they contrived to wear out fortune by assiduity and genius. However, the ship at length arrived, but there were no proceeds, the supercargo, who was also one of the partners, having sold off all the goods, had pocketed the cash, and sailed for the United States.

Shortly after this unexpected calamity, Ednor drew bills upon Irish stamps, which his own clerk accepted in London, but dated them Dublin; and these the parties in the "counting-house" contrived to pay away for goods to some unsuspecting and honest tradesmen.

The Irish bills being due, though payable in London, were dishonoured; and in Dublin, no such person as the drawer could be found. A prosecution was instituted on these bills, but, by a fault in law, the parties concerned in their fabrication escaped the gallows, while the honest men who held them were merely reduced to bankruptcy.

Other bills, however, appeared in the money-market, that proved to be real forgeries; and Ednor, upon this discovery, immediately prepared to go to France. At Dover he was arrested, and brought to London, where, in one of the cells of Newgate, he had leisure to reflect on his past life. What a retrospect!—and the future, what did it present?—certain destruction, and an ignominious death. The picture his imagination

drew of his fate was more than he could endure; and seeking for some means of self-destruction, as the only way to escape public execution, he resolved on abstaining from all nourishment. Neither threats nor entreaties could prevail on him to eat, and his constitution, which had been materially shaken by his fall from his curricule, and the subsequent chastisement of William Meadows, ill supported the privations he endured; and before he had been in Newgate a fortnight, he died, unpitied and unregretted, even by his brother,—thus terminating by a fearful death his ill-spent life.

Thus perished Colonel Ednor, a man who set out in life with the most flattering prospects;—whose fortune was large; whose person was handsome; whose manners were insinuating, and whose abilities, had they been cultivated, might have rendered him as distinguished a character for virtue, as he became notorious for vice. Indulgence was his ruin: and from the weak and relaxed discipline in which he had been brought up by his mother, before he arrived at manhood, he spurned all constraint, and gratified every wish at the expense of rectitude and morality. Heedless of the sufferings he heaped upon his fellow-creatures, he, to the last moment of his existence, thought only of himself; nor for an instant suffered a single thought as to the agony of his family to divert him from his cruel purpose.

The early part of his life, he had passed in the most cool and deliberate system of profligate self-indulgence; living fully up to the measure of the fool's standard of existence, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." As his years glided on, the discipline of a youth spent in dissipation, became fixed in a regular habit of refined immorality, which had solely for its object the gratification of his violent passions. These, no beam of reason ever shone on; no spark of truth ever penetrated the heart of their victim; the deceit he practised on others, in the end, led captive his own soul; and from the loss of the society of exalted friends, he sunk into the society of the outcast and swindler, and closed a career of iniquity, by anticipating his doom, but hurrying before his judge:—

Cut off even in the blossoms of *his* sin;
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd,
No reckoning made, but sent to *his* account
With all *his* imperfections on *his* head.
O, horrible!—

The particulars of Colonel Ednor's death were seen in the newspaper, by Susan Cowslip; and, in spite of all her wrongs, a tear bedewed the paper, which gave the melancholy detail of his untimely end.

She had written to Mr. Grigs, telling him, that she was the person who had sent the anonymous letter to Miss Saunders. Mr. Grigs kindly answered this epistle immediately, commending her conduct and prudence on the occasion. But from this time no further communication took place between them; indeed, for the next few months he could think of little but Mrs. Meadows, to whom we must now, in conclusion, return.

CHAPTER X.

I have too much believ'd mine own suspicion:
'Beseech you, tenderly apply to her
Some remedies for life—— WINTER'S TALE.

——I am glad thy father's dead;
Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief
Shore his old thread in twain:—— OTHELLO.

WHEN William entered his own house, he was met at the door by his mother and sister. At sight of them, he started back; they were the last persons on earth he could have wished to meet at this moment. George Underwood too, who looked upon the elder Mrs. Meadows as the cause of much of the mischief which had happened, stayed but a short time at Woodbine farm, for he felt it quite impossible to shew any cordiality towards this busy meddling woman. He was no sooner gone than the latter began thus.

“So, William, you are come home at last; well, it is no time to be sure to talk just now; but you might have come *home* I think to us, instead of gadding to Luton downs, and all for the sake of one whose conduct——”

“Mother,” interrupted Meadows, with considerable agitation, and suppressed warmth, “Mother, do not compel me to say, you are not a welcome visiter, by speaking against one—whom I have grossly injured—whom you have slandered—and who will not—I fear—trouble any of us long.”

“What do you mean, William?” replied Mrs. Meadows with some asperity, by saying I have slandered her; I am sure every body must own that Mary Woodbine was always a pert forward girl—I will speak my mind, and I think you ought to be ashamed of yourself, William, to speak so to your mother.”

William was about to reply, but his sister interfered, “Hush, mother,” said she, “Do you not see that William is heart-broken, and besides dear mother,” she added in a whisper, “Poor Mary is very ill, and if she should die——”

“Die,” said Mrs. Meadows, “die, no, no, she will not die—I'll warrant her.” William who was walking up and down the room, now stopped before his mother, his countenance terrified her, and she suddenly rose, exclaiming, “William, my dear William, I hope—I am sure—I dare say Mary will recover.”

“You have not seen her,” replied William pointedly. “Mr. Grigs, that best, that never-failing friend of all who are distressed—he has seen her, watched over her, and saved her;” here he paused,—“saved her I mean, from the hands of a villain—but I fear he cannot save her from an untimely grave.”

Overcome by contending feelings, William now sunk into a chair; cold drops stood on his forehead, while his cheeks assumed a livid hue.

Mrs. Primrose was terrified, as heavy and repeated groans burst from his agonized bosom; she chafed his hands, and as she stooped fondly over him, her tears bedewed them; they fell like drops of balm upon his swelling heart. “I feel them here,” he cried, pressing his bosom, “here dear sister—but they will not revive my drooping heart—no—no, nought but my Mary's friendly pressure can dispel the sad forebodings which

overwhelm me.—Oh,—if she should die——” he shuddered, and Mrs. Meadows, who was really appalled into silence, at the picture of despair which her son presented, remained motionless. While they were thus sadly grouped, Mr. Grigs entered.

Truly had William said, Mr. Grigs was ever the friend of the distressed. “Though it is now nearly ten o’clock,” an hour at which he always retired to rest, “I could not go home William, without just looking in upon you. Come, come, my good friend, you must cheer up, I have left our dear Mary more composed, and she will sleep well to-night I know; and then I peeped at little William, he looks like a sleeping cherub.—Ah, well I shall soon, I hope, see them here;” then turning rather sharply upon the old lady, “you have not seen your grandchild lately, I believe, nor your *daughter-in-law*, hem! Sad times these, when such near relatives are strangers, hem!”

Mrs. Meadows drew herself up and coloured, but the peaceable Mrs. Primrose prevented the retort courteous which was rising to her mother’s lips, by saying, “So it is Mr. Grigs, but I hope now, that we shall all be good friends, and happy and comfortable again together. Mother and I will call to-morrow on Mary.”

“Not for ten thousand worlds,” quickly replied William, “not till she can receive you here in this spot, in her own home, from which *we* have cruelly driven her, shall she see any one but myself, and those never-failing friends who have given her comfort and shelter when I forsook her.”

Mr. Grigs seconded William’s observations, by observing “That in her present weak state, Mary could not bear the interview;” then drawing Mrs. Primrose on one side, he added with a deep sigh, “Mary is ill, Mrs. Primrose, very ill,—worse than you think she is, and I have my doubts sometimes, whether she will ever recover herself—you cannot think how she is altered, hem! she is so thin, and so pale, and so weak—” here he stopped, the contemplation of Mary’s danger was too much for him, and pressing his forehead with his hand for an instant, he suddenly seized his gold-headed cane and little cocked hat, and grasping William’s hand, he nodded good night, and with a quicker step than he was wont to exhibit, he walked home, as we have already described, musing on the late melancholy events.

Old Mrs. Meadows finding that her son was not certainly in the most agreeable humour, as she termed it, put on her cloak and bonnet, as did also her daughter, and then sat for some time silently expecting the arrival of young Primrose. William was absorbed in his own meditations, which the entrance of his brother-in-law interrupted. After some few words had passed between them, they parted for the night: William emphatically forbidding his mother and sister to call upon Mary till she could receive them in her own house.

This second warning gave offence to his mother, and she said, “You need not be afraid William, I never intrude myself where I am not welcome; this you must know by experience: I never troubled your house much.”

William made no reply to this speech, but wishing her a kind good night, he closed the door after them, and throwing himself into a chair, he sat for some time, unheeding of the passing hours; at length, however, he retired to bed, but not to rest, for his reflections upon his pillow, were agonizing to a great degree. When he glanced upon his own conduct towards Mary, from the days of her childhood, till she presented herself to his imagination in the meridian of her charms, he found much to reprehend. As a child, he had played with her, and watched all her movements with delight; and as she grew

older, his feelings became little short of adoration. Yet at the time he most indulged her, flattered her, and courted her, he felt she was capricious, wayward, and uncertain; but instead of manfully shewing her his sentiments, he smiled when she frowned, and was obsequious when she was lofty and imperious. He had not courage to encounter her generous spirit openly, but would return to his own farm, with spirits irritated, and after a few taunting observations from his mother, upon the dominion which Mary held over him, he would break out into unmanly invectives upon her conduct; but the slave of her beauty, and the witchery of her smiles, he would, the next time he saw her, renew his vows with redoubled ardour, and declare her the arbitress of his fate.

As busy memory proceeded to place before him the subsequent events of their lives, his self-reproaches became more bitter;—his meanness in listening to Sally Greenly;—his subsequent watchings at Beaumont's tree, and his detail of all these events to his own mother, instead of openly repairing to the farm, and warning Farmer Woodbine of the danger of his beloved child. These, and the sundry circumstances which had embittered his life, stung him to the quick, and starting from his bed, he paced the room with hurried steps, exclaiming, "I, only, am to blame in all this; I have heaped sorrow on all around me; and most of all, upon her whom I was bound by honour and affection to protect;—and yet I live!—Wretch, that I am!—and the villain lives too, whose appearance in Silvershoe was the prime cause of all Mary's wo, sound in health.—Grief affects not me, nor reproaches him; while bowed to the earth, our victim sinks, weighed down by suffering."

In musings, such as these, did William pass the night; and when the first dawn of day appeared in the east, he hastily dressed himself, and sat down to write the letter to Mary. This was a hard task, for he had much to say, yet was fearful of saying more than he ought; he tore several letters to pieces, then wrote several others; then thought he would see her without further ceremony; but Mr. Grigs had said it was necessary Mary should be convinced from himself, before he saw her, that all was forgotten. Again therefore he seated himself, and having at last completed his epistle, he took a crust of bread, which the servant urged upon him, and left his home. It was too soon to go to Mr. Grigs, and he dared not approach Underwood farm, so he strolled towards Clophill, entering the little wood which skirted the road side.

It was a lovely spring morning, and he wandered on, refreshed by the pure breeze, as it came wafted across the hills of that part of Bedfordshire, perfumed by the innumerable wild plants which enamel the turf. Upon reaching the end of the wood, he emerged upon the hills, and descending to the rippling stream which ran at his feet, he stood leaning over the little bridge leading to the village of Clophill.

Perhaps there is no visible object so soothing in its effects as the gliding of waters. William as he stood with his eyes fixed on the limpid element felt gradually more composed; and although neither a poet nor a man of letters, his mind gradually and unconsciously dwelt upon those matchless passages, which are within every one's comprehension, in which the Psalmist so often refers to waters, either agitated by storms, gliding peacefully amid green banks and flowery vales, as descriptive of man's pilgrimage on earth: the stream of life swallowed up in eternity presented itself to his imagination; and even the bitter recollection that Mary's stream of life was nearly run, was softened by the recollection that a few short years would elapse when his frail bark should enter the deep waters, and they should be again reunited.

A pleasing melancholy had replaced the irritation of his feelings, and he slowly retraced his steps towards Silvershoe.

But as he was entering the wood, he was hailed by some one behind him, and upon turning round, he discovered Lord Wilsden. His Lordship was on horseback; he had arrived at the park the day before, and from his steward he had learnt the principal events which had formed a subject of interesting conversation in the village. Lord Wilsden was a man of most benevolent disposition, and he felt most deeply, that he was the unintentional cause of so much misery, by introducing a man, of whose character he knew but little at the festivities at the George inn. He was aware that many of the Silvershoe lasses were exceedingly pretty, but good himself, he was unsuspecting of others; and he was too young to have had much insight into the real character of those who assumed a virtuous exterior.

No sooner therefore did he see William, than he dismounted, desiring his servant to lead the horses on to the avenue leading to the park, there to wait for him.

When William had turned round to meet his Lordship, the latter extended his hand to his tenant, and by his countenance expressed how deeply he was interested and affected by the sorrows of others. William's pale face, though it was not as it had been of late, distorted by passion and frantic grief, told by its solemnity a tale of wo, deep and heartfelt; and Lord Wilsden, with a delicacy and feeling worthy his rank, and honourable to him as a man, was for a few minutes silent. Where he could offer no real consolation he was unwilling to wound, and it was William who first began the conversation, by expressing a hope that his Lordship was well, and that he was come to spend some time among his attached tenantry.

"Yes, Mr. Meadows," replied his Lordship, "I shall spend some time at Silvershoe; and I hope that before I quit it again, I shall have the pleasure of entertaining all my tenantry at the hall, upon an occasion they will, I am sure, rejoice at; I am going to be married, Mr. Meadows; and at Flitton, I intend to be united to the lovely lady Susan Melman, and I trust that Mrs. Meadows will, by that time, be so far recovered as to make one of our guests."

William heaved a deep sigh, as he congratulated his Lordship upon his approaching marriage, but expressed a doubt that Mary would take a long time to restore her to so much health as to enter into any festivity.

"I hope, Mr. Meadows, that your fears exaggerate the danger of your wife," replied Lord Wilsden; "and I can assure you, that the loss of Farmer Woodbine, and the indisposition of Mrs. Meadows, have thrown a damp upon my happiness which I cannot well define."

William again expressed his thanks, but he was writhing under the lash, for he felt that his Lordship was acquainted with all the circumstances of his own impetuosity, and Mary's imprudence. This conviction again discomposed his soothed feelings; and with that sort of despair which leads us into real difficulties, by tempting us on to avoid imaginary ones, he began a sort of defence of himself and his family. It was in vain that Lord Wilsden endeavoured to interrupt him; with a volubility and irritation which was distressing to his noble auditor, he entered into the details of all that had passed; with wonderful self-possession, he proceeded in his tale, till he came to the scene of Ware Hedges; the name of Colonel Ednor, however, appeared to shake his whole frame; regardless of the rank of his companion, and the connexion of the latter with the villain

who had robbed his soul of peace, he went on with his tale, imprecating curses upon himself and Ednor.

Lord Wilsden was astonished at his vehemence, and gently patting his hand upon William's arm, he said, "Mr. Meadows, let me entreat you will be more calm?" The voice of his Lordship at length arrested the frenzy of Meadows, whose clenched hand instantly fell, and the colour which had crimsoned his cheek fled likewise; he became suddenly pale, while his kindling eye gradually softened, and respectfully taking off his hat, he begged Lord Wilsden's pardon; saying, "he hoped his Lordship would permit him to depart, as he was ill company for any one."

Lord Wilsden was aware that grief is an imperative sovereign, and that it was useless to contend with William's anguish; he therefore left him, and proceeded to the village, while the farmer turned to the wood, to regain, if possible, that composure which the appearance of his Lordship had disturbed.

Lord Wilsden, in the mean time, slowly passed on, and on entering the village, he knocked at Mr. Grigs's door. The apothecary was at breakfast; his usual cheerful countenance was overcast with grief, and he received his guest with a solemnity that was unusual to him. From him Lord Wilsden learnt, that Mary was ill indeed, but that he hoped she would do well.

Lord Wilsden did not stay long with Mr. Grigs, but returned thoughtfully to the Hall.

William in the mean while was pacing to and fro in the wood, anxiously and frequently looking at his watch; and when the village clock struck nine he hurried on to the apothecary's, and found Mr. Grigs busy in his little room, designated a study, in which he usually compounded his medicines.

CHAPTER XI.

Her bloom was like the springing flow'r,
That sips the silver dew;
The rose was budded in her cheek,
And opening to the view.

But grief had like the canker-worm,
Consum'd her early prime,
The rose grew pale and left her cheek;
She dy'd before her time.

BALLAD OF WILLIAM AND MARGARET.

MR. Grigs welcomed William cordially, commented upon the beauty of the morning, and the powerful effect of the morning breeze upon the constitution. "I have heard you say so very often," replied William, peevishly; "but I have a more interesting subject to talk upon than the weather; I have brought you the letter you promised to deliver to Mary, and the clock has struck nine."

"Certainly," resumed Mr. Grigs, "I will fulfil my promise; but you have not breakfasted, I fear; and now, Mr. Meadows, you must excuse me, but I cannot help saying you must not interfere with my arrangements respecting Mrs. Meadows; she must be wholly and solely under my guidance still."

"Well, well," replied William, "only take the letter, and bring us together, and I will promise any thing."

"Hem!" replied Mr. Grigs, "take the letter now; oh no, Mr. Meadows, I must visit some of my poor patients before I go to the farm. Besides, Mrs. Meadows should not be disturbed before ten o'clock at least—but keep your mind composed, and don't be hasty in what you do."

Mr. Grigs might have spared the last remark, for William's spirits were fled, and his countenance expressed the deepest dejection.

About half-past ten the apothecary went to Underwood farm: Mary was up, and appeared so much refreshed, and her mind so composed, that after some preliminary discourse he told her, that William was well and at home:—"but he is very unhappy about you, Mary, as this letter," he continued, presenting it to her at the same time, "this letter will best testify."

Mary laid it on the table for some time without opening it; at last, summoning resolution, she broke the seal, and with many interruptions of sighs and tears, read the following epistle.

Mary, my dearest Mary,

When shall I have the happiness of seeing you here; when may I tell you all I have suffered, all the anguish I have endured on your account. Forgive me dear Mary—forgive me. I own, I do not deserve your forgiveness—for my folly in being the dupe of appearances. I cannot write all I feel; my head and heart both ache too much to allow me to dwell on subjects which confound me. Yet believe me, dear Mary, I shall never be

happy till I see you, and if you refuse me this pleasure, I shall be wretched for ever. For dear little William's sake, do not deny admittance to his father. Let me see you once more, that I may assure you, I am, and always shall be, your loving and affectionate husband,

WILLIAM MEADOWS.

"Let me see him directly," said Mary, endeavouring to rise as she put down the letter. "Oh, Mr. Grigs, let me see him; indeed I can bear it: do pray let him come."

"Well," replied the apothecary, "you shall, my dear Mrs. Meadows; you shall see him at tea time."

Mary was however importunate, and Mr. Grigs went to fetch William Meadows. The latter joyfully obeyed the summons, and was posting off in a great hurry, when his friend called upon him to stop.

"Bless me, Mr. Meadows, you walk so fast, I can't keep up with you: and I have something to say to you. Now don't you begin a long story about what has happened—walk a little slower, if you please; I am really quite out of breath—don't begin a long story, as I said before, about what has happened; but just go in as if nothing had been the matter. You will see a great change in Mrs. Meadows," he added with a sigh; "but take no notice of that."

William walked so fast that Mr. Grigs was frequently obliged to pause for want of breath; and by the time they reached Underwood farm, he was quite exhausted.

William prudently waited till the apothecary had recovered himself, and then followed him into the parlour.

At sight of Mary, Meadows started back, while she unable to rise from her seat, extended her hands towards him; and in a few moments they were encircled in each others arms. After gazing at her husband for some time, Mary burst into tears, while he, rising from his seat, paced the room, exclaiming, "What a fool! what an unnatural monster have I been!"

Mr. Grigs went up to him, saying, "Mr. Meadows, remember what I told you. You must be quiet, or you must leave the room: Why you don't take any notice of little William. See how he is scrambling to get at you."

William stooped and raised his lovely boy, and then sat down by his wife. Although they had been separated now for some weeks, and although each had much to say to the other, yet few words passed between them. Mary's sparkling eye wandered from her husband to her boy, and from her boy to her husband: if William attempted to move, she started, grasped his hand, and eagerly asked "If he were going."

"No my beloved Mary," replied William, "no, no,—I was but going to the window to see if George were coming."

Mary extended her hand, and with a smile told him he must not play truant again, "if you do," she added, as the tear gathered on her trembling eyelid, "if you do William, I shall die—I shall indeed."

William again and again assured her he would never quit her more, and Mary's spirits which had been much exhilarated, and were now much exhausted, wept as she received this assurance.

Mr. Grigs at this moment entered, and declared that Mrs. Meadows must compose herself, or else William must leave her, "and after dinner," he added, "you must lay down Mary, you must indeed, and endeavour to get a nap."

Mary promised she would be obedient, and when George came home to dinner, he had the felicity of finding a most happy party assembled in the parlour.

Mary refreshed by her nap, was at tea time quite lively, and when her husband took leave for the night, she requested him to get all things in readiness for her at home: she meant in two or three days to resume her usual occupations at the farm.

William thought she never had looked so beautiful as at this moment; her flushed cheek and sparkling eye were transcendently dazzling; twice he returned to bid her good night, and with a deep sigh he left Underwood farm. "If she should die," said he with a shudder; but he quickened his pace, and in order to dispel dismal thoughts, he caressed Captain, his constant and faithful companion.

The next morning Mr. Grigs paid Mary an early visit. He found her feverish, restless, anxious to be gone,—to go back to Woodbine farm,—to be all day with William,—she was quite equal to the removal, and she wanted to depart immediately.

Mr. Grigs gently opposed her intentions. "Indeed, Mary," he said, "I must be master a little longer; and you must be a little stronger before you are again removed. Betsy is such a good nurse, that I am surprised you should think of leaving her."

"But William," answered Mary, "I want to see William all day;—If he should not come to see me often, I shall die, Mr. Grigs;—indeed I shall."

"Why now Mary, this is very extraordinary," said the apothecary, "that you should suppose such a thing for one instant; there is much greater probability that he should neglect every thing in the world rather than you." Mr. Grigs turned to the window to conceal a tear which dimmed his eye.

"There now I told you so, there is William posting along at such a rate. Bless me! I wish you could see him; don't you hear him coming up stairs? Ah! Mr. Meadows, how do you do? how do you do? the farm is not ready for Mrs. Meadows yet; is it?"

"Not quite," replied William, advancing towards the bed; but he started back, the hectic flush of the preceding evening, was fled, and was replaced by a delicate and sickly white.

He turned to Mr. Grigs, who understood his anxious inquiring look, and replied, by observing, that he should fetch that little rebel William, who was romping with Captain on the grass, while Betsy was in vain endeavouring to appease the ecstasies of both child and dog.

"Dear me," he exclaimed, as he went down stairs, "Bless me, my nerves are all in a tremour this morning! I cannot think the reason."

Mr. Grigs endeavoured, as much as possible, to deceive himself, as to the cause of his shaking nerves, but his efforts were vain; the truth would intrude itself on his mind, and the suspicious and alarming symptoms, he every day saw more and more confirmed in Mrs. Meadows of a rapid decline, preyed on his spirits. Mary rose about twelve o'clock and went down stairs, where William impatiently waited for her.

A smile and an illuminating eye expressed her delight. She never, perhaps, loved William so dearly as she did at this time: she could not endure that he should leave her for an instant; fearing, if he were a short time abroad, that he was gone never to return.

The third day after this, she was considerably worse, but still expressed the most ardent desire to go home. Again she recovered a little, and was so fretful at being refused permission to return to Woodbine farm, that she burst into tears, and said, "she knew very well she never should recover her health till she was there; and I think, Mr. Grigs, you are very unkind to me; and I am quite certain if I don't go home, I shall never get well."

"Well, my dear Mrs. Meadows," he replied, a little agitated, "well, you shall go home to-morrow; and I will drive you gently in my gig. The weather is so warm, that I do not think you can possibly take cold; and William shall lead the horse, and we shall do very well, I dare say."

Mary raised herself gently from her seat, and advanced towards the apothecary to thank him, but he had left the room as soon as he had given her leave to be removed.

"She will have it so;" he said with a sigh, "She will have it so. It is of no use; I can deceive myself no longer: she must die! All the physicians in the universe could not save her. God forgive me!" he exclaimed; "but I could find in my heart to say the worst death the Colonel could die would be too good for him. Oh dear me! I wish I was at York, or Lincoln, or any where but here: and yet," he added, after a pause, "I should be wretched to leave her. I have known her ever since she was a child—ay, and loved her too; and if William—if William—had not married her, I am sure I should have been so happy, so proud to have married her myself; I would at this moment sacrifice my life to save hers."

When Mr. Grigs arrived at home, he threw himself into his armed chair, and with the most poignant feelings, alternately upbraided Colonel Ednor and William, for blighting the sweetest flower that ever blossomed.

"Oh dear Mary!" he continued, "I never thought I did love you so dearly; but to see thee struggling so with death, I cannot bear it."

He walked up and down his study with hurried steps; but being unable to calm his feelings, he again went to the farm, fearing he should see her no more.

The anxiety his countenance expressed, imparted itself to William; but the latter was not sufficiently versed in physical knowledge to attribute the beautiful hue of Mary's cheek, the lustre of her eye, and the hurry of her spirits to fever. Therefore he called Mr. Grigs out of the room, to ask him what was the matter.

The apothecary said he was not well, and begged William would take no notice of him, but go to his wife. To George, however, he imparted the cause of his depression, and regretting her wish to go to the farm on the following day, as he was sure it would hasten her death; and yet, he added "to refuse her would kill her outright."

Mary, at parting with William for the night, repeatedly said, "*Remember to-morrow.*"

"And this, dear William, is the last night of our separation; to-morrow evening, I shall rest in my own dear home. Oh, that to-morrow was come."

William pressed her to his bosom; and after repeated adieus, they parted. As soon as William was gone, Mary complained of weariness, and retired to rest, after taking one look at her sleeping boy. Mr. Grigs had given her a composing draught, for he concluded that she would, without it, have little repose. She waked once in the night, and longed for morning; but sleep again overpowered her, and it was not till near ten that she awoke, and then she was all impatience. Scarcely would she be persuaded to take her breakfast in

bed; and having submitted to this, she insisted that little William's hat and tippet should be put on in the mean time, that he might be ready.

"For you know," Mary added, by way of excuse, conscious of her own impatience, "You know we *must* not keep Mr. Grigs *waiting*, because his time is so occupied. Oh Betsy! I feel so well to day!" and as she looked in the glass to put on her bonnet, she said, "Betsy, I wish William was come."

"But Mary," replied Mrs. Underwood, "*you* must keep yourself quiet, or you will fatigue yourself before you depart."

Mary did fatigue herself; and she was so exhausted, that she was carried into the whiskey; which she had never entered since its owner drove her, in all the pride of youth and beauty, to Clophill, when they met Lord Wilsden and Colonel Ednor. Alas! how was she changed! The old horse was scarcely allowed to walk at his usual pace, when he was left to himself. Mary smiled at her anxious friends who surrounded her; but as she nearly approached her own home, she changed colour, and by the time they reached the farm, her head sunk on Mr. Grigs's shoulder, as she sobbed out, "My father; my dear father."

William hastened to her and lifted her from the whiskey, carrying her into the house; he was about to place her in the armed-chair, formerly occupied by old Woodbine, when she clung closer to him.

"Not there dear William, not there; it might be ominous."

William looked at her with astonishment, for her countenance was expressive of anguish and the deepest grief. "Mary, dear Mary," he replied with a trembling voice, "be not so downcast, since you have again reached your own home. You said you should rest here to night, and here you are."

"Where is my boy?" she replied, "I am very weary, but where is my darling?"

Mrs. Underwood entered the kitchen at this moment with her little nephew in her arms; he was fast asleep. "Lay him in my lap," said Mary, "we will sleep together; and dear William, do not leave me; let me rest my head on your shoulder."

William put his arm round her waist, and Betsy having taken off her sister's bonnet, the head of the latter, sunk upon her husband's shoulder; her left hand was closely locked in his; her right, fell languidly over her sleeping infant: Betsy was kneeling at her feet, to prevent little William, who was feebly held by his mother, from falling. Twice did Mary open her eyes, and gently raise her head to gaze upon her boy; at length, sleep overpowered her, her heavy eyelids closed, and she sunk into a gentle slumber.

Just as Mr. Grigs alighted from his whiskey, he was summoned to attend on a poor woman, inhabiting a cottage at the end of the orchard. But after staying a short time with her, and finding there was no necessity for his immediate attendance, he hastily retraced his steps to the farm: he entered the kitchen softly, (for he had been apprized by the maid servant that Mary was asleep,) and approached the interesting group.

For an instant he stood motionless; when he exclaimed, "Merciful God!"

This ejaculation induced Betsy to put up her finger, as she said in a suppressed voice—"Hush! hush! she sleeps."

"She does indeed," replied Mr. Grigs with a heavy groan, "but she will never wake again. Alas! alas! she said she should rest here to night."

Thus perished the young, the beautiful, the lovely Mary Woodbine; the victim of Colonel Ednor's villanous intentions, and the perhaps well-founded, though pertinacious, suspicion of her husband, William Meadows. The original cause of all Mary's sorrows, may however be traced to the same source as those of Mary Gabriel and Susan Cowslip—viz: "Filial disobedience." Mary Gabriel left a kind and affectionate mother in declining life, to pine alone, and deplore with anguish the departure of her best loved child.

Susan fell a victim partly to the malicious tales of slander raised by Sally Greenly; but chiefly to that act of disobedience which induced her to leave the parental roof, and place herself under the protection of a man, with whose infamous conduct to poor Judy's daughter she was well acquainted.

But what shall we say for Mary Woodbine? That she should have deceived her father, and such a father too! so kind, so fond, so idolizing! Who could have thought it? Yet vanity, that bane of female virtue, led her to the brink of destruction, from which she was only rescued by her guardian angel in the person of old Judy Gabriel.

C'est le premier pas qui coute, says a French proverb; but it is not only so; the *first step* in life generally *decides* our future fate.

THE END.

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