

MARY,
THE
MAID OF THE INN;
AN AFFECTING NARRATIVE;
DETAILING HER
UNFORTUNATE AND ILL-REQUITED ATTACHEMENT;
Her singular Courage,
AND THE MIRACULOUS MANNER IN WHICH SHE BECOMES THE
INSTRUMENT IN THE
DISCOVERY OF A MURDER,
AND
Bringing one of the Perpetrators to condign Punishment.
DESCRIBING ALSO
THE WANDERINGS OF THE UNFORTUNATE
MARY,
WHO BECOMES A WRETCHED MANIAC.

FROM THE CELEBRATED POEM, BY ROBERT SOUTHEY.
WHICH IS ALSO ADDED HERETO.

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MARY,
THE MAID OF THE INN.

IT was a dark evening, at the close of the month of October, when a couple of travellers arrived at the Falcon; an inn, on one of the great roads in the north of England: one of them was an entire stranger; the other saluted the landlord with a friendly shake of the hand: and honest John Harding, mine host of the Falcon, recognized in him an old frequenter of his house, and a former resident in his neighbourhood.

“Well, Harding,” cried Mr. Walters, (his guest), as soon as the travellers were comfortably seated in a warm room, “how has the world wagged with you, since last we met? How is your good woman? How is your daughter Mary? She is married by this time, I suppose, and made a grandfather of you?”

“No, sir, Mary is not married yet.”

“But she is about, though?” rejoined Mr. Walters.

“Why, yes, sir, she and Richard Wilson have been sweethearts above a twelvemonth.”

“What, the son of Wilson, the cornchandler?”

“The same, sir.”

“I know him well: a worthy, honest man. If Richard is like his father, Mary will have a good husband, and here I drink her health, and heartily wish it may be so. Now, Harding, that you have satisfied my curiosity, go and hasten supper, that I may satisfy my hunger.”

As soon as the landlord left the room, Mr. Walters turned to his companion, who was poking the fire, exclaiming,

“You can't imagine, Beaumont, how much I feel myself at home here; there isn't a picture on the walls, or a chair in the room, that I don't hail as an old friend. Harding was, some twenty years ago, Squire Worton's coachman; he and the cook made a match of it, and set up this inn; and very well they have done in it, and a worthy couple they are.”

“Enough of the old people,” cried his young companion; “let me hear something of the daughter. She must be very shy, for I saw nothing of her as we came in; and damsels about an inn, are never slow at showing themselves,

especially if they are handsome; perhaps she is not.”

“She is, without exception, the most beautiful girl I have ever beheld,” replied Mr. Walters. “It is now two years since I have seen her; she was then sixteen, and though I have travelled many miles since, I have never seen a face or a form to match her’s.”

“Is it not possible to get me a sight of this paragon to-night? asked young Beaumont. Mr. Walters rung the bell, which was answered by the hostess: “How do you do, my good Mrs. Harding? I merely rung for some one, to tell you, how much I wished to see you and Mary, and ask you both how you did.”

She modestly received the hearty salutation of their old friend and customer, and informed him, that Mary was at a neighbour's; but that she expected her shortly home, as it was near nine; and then, after a few more observations, she curtsied and withdrew.

Mrs. Harding had scarcely got down stairs, before Mary entered the house; when informed that Mr. Walters was arrived, and wished to see her, she begged that nothing might be said about her return, for she was not sufficiently in spirits to see any one that evening. As she passed on to their private parlour, Mrs. Harding saw, by the listless dropping of her arms, the bend of her head and the slowness of her step so different from the usual lightness of her tread, that she was unwell or unhappy; and all the fears of a proud and doting mother rose in her heart. As soon as business permitted, she hastened after her, and found her in tears.

“What is a matter with you, Mary?” cried her mother, anxiously; “are you ill?”

“Oh! no,” replied Mary, endeavouring to speak cheerfully, “only a foolish fit of low spirits, for which I cannot account.”

“You have seen Richard this evening?”

“Yes,” cried Mary hastily; “but it is not him; he has not done any thing to make me unhappy.”

At this moment Mrs. Harding was called away, and Mary felt it a relief; for, however dear a mother may be valued and respected, inconsiderate youth but rarely confide to her the hopes and fears of love; it is to a companion of similar years, and similar feelings, that the young heart overflows in confidence: hence often the imprudent friendships of early life.

Mary had seen Richard that evening; he was partially intoxicated, and there was a strangeness in his manners and conversation, that alarmed and

bewildered her. He had asked her, if she would consent to fly with him to another country, and for his sake leave every thing that was dear to her in England? Why should such a thought occur to his mind? What necessity could there possibly be for such a line of conduct? She could only reconcile it on a plea of his inebriety; but to come to this conclusion gave her no comfort. Possessed of powers of reflection beyond her years, much as she loved Richard, she was not blind to his faults, nor ignorant of what was likely to be their consequent results; these reflections had often obtruded on her mind; her parents, but especially her mother, had often talked seriously with her on the subject; but all her meditations, all her arguments, ended in a conviction that he would reform when they were married; and thus passion, as it ever does, triumphed over reason.

Richard was what the world calls a superior young man; he was tall and handsome, and could boast many of those showy qualities which are calculated to catch the general eye; he possessed an infinite share of good-nature; and his temper was free and open: but he was careless and idle; it was the remark of every one that when he lost his father, the business would go to ruin. for Richard had no application; and the same easy disposition which made him welcome in good company, also led him into bad: he thus got acquainted with many unworthy associates, who flattered his vanity, drained his pockets, and poisoned his mind, and he was sinking rapidly into the most dissolute habits.

His father threatened, advised, and entreated by turns; and Richard, like all weak characters, was affected at the moment, and never failed to acknowledge his faults, and promise amendment. Sometimes, when alarmed at his father's anger, or penetrated by his goodness, he would sit down to the books full of good resolutions; but good habits are not the work of a moment, and Richard had no perseverance; the account made his head-ache; he went out, met some idle associate, and was as easily gained over to his evil habits, as if he had never promised to renounce them.

When Mary would leave him in silence and tears, refuse to see him or hear from him, in the vain hope of conquering her attachment, or working a reformation in his character, he would wander before the house, refusing food or rest till she relented. This kind of conduct, his impassioned language, and the candour with which he acknowledged his faults, speedily disarmed the resolutions of a heart of which he was already master. But no sooner was he pardoned and restored to all his former confidence in her love, but he felt himself again at liberty, and carelessly threw aside the restraints, which the wise and virtuous ever keep in view.

He had, on the evening of Mr. Walter's arrival at the inn, probed Mary's heart; he had been drinking to animate his spirits, not so as to disturb his reason; and, had he found her less shocked and alarmed at the idea of quitting her friends and her country, he would have revealed to her the state of involvement he was in, and which rendered such a step necessary. But he had not the courage and

resolution to enter into the history of his extravagance and iniquities, when he saw her so unprepared to receive intelligence so wounding to her heart: yet, unable to dismiss the subject from his own mind, he was absent, and strange in his manner, and, without any defined or decided cause, infused that sorrow into her bosom with which she returned home.

As soon as he left Mary, Richard slowly bent his way to the rendezvous of his companions, turning over in his mind, as he went along, the liabilities he had to meet, and the debts he must discharge or fly from. Unable to bear his own reflections, he had recourse again to drinking, when he was interrupted by the appearance of one of his *friends*, Andrew Foster, a dark, gloomy-looking being, about thirty years of age.

“Why, what the plague do you do here, Dick?” quoth Foster; “I have waited for you an hour, whilst you stay moping here, as though money was to be made by sighing. I have been to the Falcon to seek you: I thought, mayhap, you might be there, dangling after old Harding's daughter.”

“I have been with poor Mary this evening,” replied Richard.

“Poor Mary? why hang it man, you'll never make her rich, if you don't bestir ye. Come, come, work's to be done, cash to be had: come, my boy, its only to ask and have.”

“Ah! to plunder, to seize that to which I have no right, and that with which I shall never prosper.”

“All grandmother's gabble! Hang it, you beant a coward—be ye, Dick?”

“A coward!”

“Aye, fear a dark night, and a single traveller, hey?—Why, heart alive! if I had promised a friend to lend a helping hand, I'd break my heart, sooner than my word.”

“Nay, nay, Foster, do not urge me. I was mad—I was drunk—I said, I knew not what: you cannot mean it!”

“I always say what I mean,” replied the other doggedly and ferociously; “I want money—so do you—I know where it is to be gotten; and shall take it. The squire crosses the heath to-night with a round sum about him—he'll not think of resisting two of us.”

“Ah! but should he do so?”

“Why then——”

“What then?”

“Why—Pshaw, d—n it, man, then we must do the best we can—Here's a crape, boy, to disguise your face, and we shan't let him hear our voices—then what's to fear?”

“He is a rich, proud man,” cried Richard meditating—“were I but so sure it would end thus——”

“*Be* sure it will—come, here's your pistol.”

“A pistol! for what?”

“To frighten him, to be sure. When he sees your barking-iron, I warrant he swoons away; and then we can take his cash at our leisure, and leave him neither sick, sore, nor sorry. and then let it blow over a bit, and you can marry Mary, and be as happy——why, what ails you?”

“Foster, the pistol's loaded,” cried Richard, in a tone of horror, as he laid it down.

“Loaded? well, its best to be safe: should the worst come to the worst, we must save *ourselves*. Dead men tell no tales; and if we are put to it, boy, we shall only blow off his head, for he's no brains to lose.”

“For God's sake, Foster, hold that horrid laugh: How should we answer it on the last day?”

“The last day's a long way off; besides, a death-bed repentance clears all. But come, lad, never flinch; ten to one, it don't come to that; but I like to make all sure. You know the squire must die some day or other, if it should fall out so. Come, follow me.”

“I cannot! I *will* not.”

“*Will* not? This to me, who have lent you my last shilling? This is you, who have sworn a hundred times to serve and stand by me?”

“And I would still in every thing but this.”

“Aye, aye, the old trick, any thing but what you're asked. But harkee, Dick, I'm resolved. I've stood by *you* through hail, rain, and sunshine; and I thought you'd have done the same by me. Come, Dick, if you don't help me to make money, pay me what you owe me—that's fair.”

“You know, Foster, I have it not.”

“Then I'm off—you'll hear of me, depend upon it, and others will hear of *you*.”

“Stay, Foster,” cried the wretched and irresolute Richard, feeling how much he was in his companion's power, “you know I would willingly assist you in every thing I could. Would you promise me, this should not go beyond a robbery——”

“I promise—come, we should be on the watch by now—Here, drink; and d—n it, Dick, don't reflect. It will be over in a pop: you'll have plenty of cash, and Mary besides—There's my hearty fellow, as I always thought you—Drink again, and now for it.”

Almost mad with liquor, and the still stronger excitements and stimulants, with which Foster urged him on, Richard went forth that night, with his desperate companion, to a desperate deed.

We must now return to the inn. A violent ringing made Harding hasten to the room of his newly-arrived guests; as he opened the door, he heard Mr. Beaumont vociferating “A bet! a bet! you lose, depend upon it.” “I shall win—I shall win,” reiterated Mr. Walters; when seeing the landlord make his appearance, he exclaimed, turning to him—“Is Mary come home? I have just laid a wager, that she will go to the abbey to-night by herself, and bring me a bough of the alder tree that grows in the centre aisle.”

“It will not be the first time that Mary has shewn her courage,” said her father, somewhat proudly; “she will go, sir, I am sure. There is not a man in his Majesty's service (glancing at the naval uniform of Mr. Beaumont) that is more fearless than Mary, though but a girl.”

“You hear,” cried Mr. Walters, looking at this friend. “Hear? yes, to be sure I do,” replied Mr. Beaumont: “but who would trust to what a father says of his child! Ask the daughter herself. Why, this wind might awaken the dead: she'll go as much as my walking-stick. “She *will* go,” cried Mr. Walters passionately, “and go fearlessly too.”—“Nonsense!” replied his friend, “the first white cow she sees, if she's induced to cross the threshold, she will fancy a ghost, and faint away.”

“Bring her to us, good Harding,” cried Mr. Walters, “and let me convince this infidel.”

The landlord left the room, somewhat piqued at the manners of the young officer, and in a few minutes returned with Mary. The travellers were struck with her appearance as she entered the room. There was something almost majestic in

her figure and carriage; that which education and good company does for others, nature had done for her, and in every movement a grace and dignity uncommon and unlooked-for in her station of life, was conspicuous. Her beautiful features were animated by a blush, which deepened as the strangers (for both were almost equally so to her) continued to gaze upon her. And her soft hazel eyes, that beamed with sensibility, having met theirs in the first moment of salutation, remained downcast.

Mary cheerfully acquiesced in going to the abbey, and breaking away from the travellers, who appeared more willing to detain her, than to let her go, she hastened to equip herself for her solitary ramble. The abbey was nearly three-quarters of a mile from the inn. It had once been a magnificent pile, it was now a magnificent ruin. The moss and ivy creeping over it, seemed as if anxious to save it from the despoiling hand of time; while the high trees, that clustered round, only here and there, permitted the light of the sun or moon to visit it. Not a few were the local tales attached to that awful and dreary ruin; murdered nuns, and guilty friars had laid their bones there, but not their spirits, which, by vulgar report, were still said to haunt the abbey, and its precincts.

Mary, with a mind singularly firm, did not suffer these stories to infuse the slightest terrors into her heart; well grounded in the articles of the Christian faith, she cherished that entire and pure reliance on Providence, which sustained her through every difficulty.

The wind was rising every now and then in sudden gusts, as she bent her way to the abbey, and then moaned slowly on in the distance; this became still more melancholy as she approached the ruin, for its echoes, and the tress, prolonged the sound. The moon was struggling through masses of black clouds, and only at intervals shed a faint uncertain light. Mary knew the way too well to err, and safely and speedily reached the grand and mouldering gateway; she passed lightly through it; and stepping over the fragments that lay in her path, soon reached the centre aisle, where the alder tree grew. She was approaching it to gather a bough, when the sound of footsteps rose upon her ear; her hand dropped, and she listened attentively, under an idea that it might only be the wind; but the sound approached too rapidly and regularly, and she was convinced that there were others in the abbey besides herself. The dead that had slumbered for ages beneath its stones, she knew could not hurt her; but she felt not the same security with regard to the living. Stepping softly and hastily back, she hid herself behind a projecting piece of ruin, and breathing a trembling prayer to heaven, waited for the issue of the event.

In a few moments, she heard the slow steps of men, as if bearing some heavy burden, enter the aisle. They took a direction opposite to where she stood. One of those faint glimmers of moonlight, which had been rising and disappearing all night, enabled her to discern two male figures bending in the attitude of depositing some large and heavy substance on the ground; having

breathed a moment, they dragged it along nearer to where she had concealed herself, and she then saw it was a murdered body, partially covered with torn and soiled clothes. Thrilled with horror, she sunk upon the ground, but consciousness did not for a moment forsake her.

She saw, or rather heard, for the moon was again obscured, the murderers digging a grave for their victim. They worked evidently in trembling haste; and having thrust the body into the hole they had made, and replaced the earth, they collected the shrivelled autumnal leaves that strewed the ground, and scattered them over the new-made grave. They whispered over their task of horror; but their voices blended with the howling of the wind, and Mary could not catch a sound; one sudden gust, as they bent over the body, carried off the hat of one of them, and it rolled to the feet of Mary! a terror, lest in seeking it they should discover her, shook her frame like an ague; but they rose from their dark work of guilt and horror, and passing the spot where she lay, quitted the abbey without attempting the search. When the last sound of their footsteps died away, she arose, seized the hat, and winged by terror, flew through the ruin: the rustling of the leaves, as she went along, she fancied the murderers in pursuit of her; and the fanciful forms in which the mouldering of decay had left the walls, appeared (as the moon at times fell faintly on them), like the murderers laying in wait for her. At length she gained the open road, and had not advanced far, when the sound of footsteps again filled her with alarm. To advance, had been to meet them; she therefore stopped, trusting they would pass her; but as the persons approached, she distinguished the voice of her father. He, with his two guests, alarmed at the length of her stay, had come forth to seek her. She threw herself into his arms, and burst into an hysterical fit of tears. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered to speak, she related in a hurried manner all she had seen.

“This must be investigated,” cried Mr. Walters, breaking silence first. “Harding, take poor Mary home; Beaumont and I will proceed to the abbey, and call on Sir William Morris, the magistrate, in our way.”

Slowly, for now utterly exhausted, Mary, leaning on the arm of her father, returned to the inn; her mother flew to her; the servants pressed round her, devouring the tale of horror she had to unfold; the hat, which she still kept with the nervous grasp with which she had first caught it up, she now held forth, crying, “This is the hat of one of the murderers!” As she spoke, one of the servants took it from her, to examine it, and read the name of “Richard Wilson,” written on the inside. Mary started from her seat with a piercing shriek of anguish, and catching hold of the hat, examined it herself. “It is *his* hat, *his* name, and *his* hand-writing!” she ejaculated in a tone of deep despair; and dropping it from her hands, she covered her face with them, and sunk again into her chair. Her parents, and all around used every effort to soothe and console her, but she uttered no sound but that of a half-smothered groan. At length, starting up, while a beam of hope kindled in her eyes, she exclaimed, “Richard is in the habit of giving away his clothes, it may not be him—he may still be innocent! Oh! mother, mother, it

may not be him!” and falling on her mother's neck she wept in agony. Her tears, and a glass of water, restored her to more composure, than she had felt since the dreadful scene at the abbey, and sitting down (for she could not be persuaded to go to bed) she ran over in her own mind all the circumstances of her last meeting with her lover. She endeavoured to recal the whispering voices of the murderers, whilst they were burying the dead body, and their height and size, as she saw them by the dim light of the moon; and, much as she tried to shun the awful conviction, a secret consciousness whispered, one of them was Richard. “Oh! if he is guilty,” thought she, “he must fly?—but how does he know his danger—who is to warn him that pursuit is already on foot? Let me fly: and I, who led to the discovery, save him, if I can.” “Where are you going, Mary?” cried her mother, as she saw her dart from her chair. “Do not—do not stay me, dearest mother,” she earnestly said: “I shall be back directly.” Her mother, fearing opposition, in her present state of mind, might derange her intellects, suffered her to leave the house, while her father followed her at a distance,

She bent her rapid steps to the dwelling of Richard, just as the first grey streaks of the morning were stealing along the skies. She crossed the stile, and ran down the meadow leading to the house, when Richard overtook her; “Mary! what do you do here at this hour? What is the matter?” His voice was tremulous, and she felt his hand cold as death as he took her's. “Oh! Richard, you know too well what is the matter! fly, for heaven's sake! all is known—you are discovered—suspected—” —“What do you mean?” he asked, while his cheek every moment grew paler: “you are mad.”

“No, but I soon shall be. Richard, this is no place for you; fly, and may God forgive and guide you!—lose not a moment, the search has already began.— Oh! God! my Maker, hear my prayer, and save him!” Fervently clasping her hands, she fell upon her knees. Richard was struck to the heart; he looked at her for a moment, and then in an agony of remorse dashed himself on the earth. He could not join her prayer. She went to him, and hung over him with the deepest anguish; she felt that, though the world should spurn him, this was not the hour for her to forsake him.

“Leave me, Mary,” he cried; “leave me to my fate. In my best days, I never deserved you, and *now*—” a convulsive groan stifled what he would have added. The sound of voices and footsteps, just then arose. “They are coming!” cried Mary, with horror. Richard started on his feet. As danger approached, his fears became alarmed; as the probability of death drew near, the love of life grew strong within his heart. “Oh! fly,” cried Mary, “and God in his mercy save you!” He strained her to his breast without uttering a sound, and flying across the field, she saw him disappear over the hedge.

The noise that had alarmed them was only some workmen going to their daily labour. She saw them pass, and, a little relieved, returned home, unconscious that her father pursued her footsteps.

Every moment Mary was engaged in mental prayer, for her unfortunate lover; and hope, and trust in the mercy she supplicated, kept her in a tolerable state of composure. About nine o'clock, Mr. Walters entered the room where she was sitting; his countenance expressed the deepest commiseration; and he spoke in a low voice, as he took Mary kindly by the hand:—

“You must prepare yourself to accompany me before the magistrate, to make your deposition on the fatal business of last night: collect yourself, and remember, that you will have to appear also on the trial; therefore, think well of the awful duty you have to perform, and say nothing to commit yourself, for the sake of one of whose guilt there can be no doubt—one who has ever been unworthy of you.—The unfortunate prisoner is taken.”

“Poor Richard!” exclaimed Mary as she burst into tears. “Oh! my heart will break before the day of trial, and I shall escape the horrors of giving evidence against him.”

“Not so, Mary,” replied Mr. Walters, “you must summon your fortitude, and act as becomes a girl of your superior understanding: I do not blame your tears, they are natural; but while you pity Richard, pity others also; think of your father and mother, what they suffer for your sake; think of the grey headed father of that misguided young man; and then ask yourself if *he* alone ought to engross your sympathy.”

“Oh! Mr. Walters, I feel your reproof, I will endeavour to do my duty; I will pray for strength to meet what I have to perform. I know I ought to speak the truth, and I *will* speak it. But oh! how much rather would I have died than lived to see this day!”

Mr. Walters suffered her feelings in some measure to exhaust themselves, for he knew, in her present state, it was in vain to attempt to offer her consolation; and then, when more composed, assisted by her father, he supported her to the magistrate's, where many persons were assembled; come, like the unhappy Mary, to give their testimony; others on business; and some led by curiosity and a strongly-excited interest. A circumstance of such horror could not fail to arouse a powerful sensation in the neighbourhood, and stimulate every one to aid in its development; thus every little occurrence relative to the affair was diligently searched out and brought to light.

Richard's course had been traced from one spot to another, till the whole proceedings of the day were made out; but of his companion no one knew any thing. A singular looking man, with a large hat that shadowed his countenance, and wrapt in a large coat, which concealed his figure, had inquired for Richard at the Falcon, of Mr. Harding himself; he appeared agitated, and somewhat out of breath; but whence he came, or whither he had now gone, remained a mystery. An

aged peasant, who resided some distance from the spot where the horrid crime had been perpetrated (for the state of the ground marked the place,) said, that the word "Murder" had more than once struck his ear, growing fainter and infirm till it at last died away; but, old and infirm, he knew he could not aid the unhappy victim, and fear made him shudder in his bed till sleep again sealed his eyes, and the circumstance came over his mind in the morning like a dream, till the quickly-spreading tale convinced him of the horrid truth, and that it was not in fancy, but reality, that he had heard the dreadful outcries of human agony.

The body had been raised, and presented a dreadful spectacle—too dreadful for description; and the awful business of the day closed by Richard's committal to the county gaol, to take his trial at the assizes just then commenced.

The unfortunate young man, guilty as he appeared, excited general commiseration. It was remembered how kind and generous a heart he had once possessed, how ready he had ever shewn himself to stand by the oppressed, to assist the poor, and forgive an injury. Idleness was thought to have been his worst fault, and so it was, for it led to every other. A young man who is engaged in laudable pursuits, has neither time nor inclination for vicious indulgencies; the innocent enjoyments of life are enough for his relaxation: but the idler soon exhausts every allowable source of pleasure, and then flies to mischief and dissipation; and thus he runs on, till vice succeeds to folly, and ultimately leaves him in misery and guilt. If idleness is the parent of vice, it is no less certain that virtue is the offspring of industry; and much better is it to possess a spirit for active and honourable exertion, than to inherit a large fortune. Well-earned honour always sit well upon a man; it wants no argument to prove, that a wealthy tradesman is a happier and a more respectable being, than a ruined nobleman; the last may retain his titles after he has thrown away his fortune at the gaming-table; but what comfort or consolation does their empty sound impart to his declining years? whereas the former can look back, while surrounded with comforts, on the hardships and exertions of his youth, with honest pride and real pleasure.

The day of trial advanced rapidly, far too much so for the hearts that trembled for the issue. At length it came, and at an early hour every avenue of the court was filled. The unhappy Mary appeared in the witness box, pale and wasted, and almost before her evidence was concluded, was carried fainting out of court.

Many other witnesses were examined; Richard's bloodstained clothes, which he had concealed, were produced, and the fact of his guilt placed beyond a doubt.

He was at length called upon for his defence; his eye was fixed upon the place from whence Mary had been taken; all his faculties appeared absorbed in the thoughts and feelings the sight of her had awakened; and it was not until the judge had twice addressed him, that he became sensible of what was expected of him.

Calling home his thoughts to himself, he addressed the Court in a few words expressive of his deep contrition for all his past offences, but still declaring, that he was innocent of the murder, and even of the intention; and thus accounted for the appearances against him:—

“I acknowledge, with shame and sorrow, that I went out that night to commit the crime of robbery. That it would lead to murder, I might have foreseen. We were resisted; our victim had nearly escaped us, when my companion fired after him. Perhaps it will hardly be believed, that I flew to him to succour him, and in raising him in my arms, covered myself with his blood; my companion followed also, but with a different view; and, lest any spark of life were remaining, stabbed him to the heart. I will not attempt to describe my horror, but the peril of my own situation recalled my scattered senses, and I assisted in the interment of the body that night in the abbey. I participated not in the booty, purchased by murder; none of the deceased's property has been found upon me, and none of it was ever in my possession. I am the *only sufferer*, but not the *greatest criminal*. For the sake of those I leave behind, I would wish to impress that on every mind; and I now bow myself with an humble and contrite spirit to God, to whom alone I feel I can now look for mercy.”

He ceased; a verdict of “guilty” was returned. Sentence of death was immediately passed upon him, and that day week appointed for his execution.

His friends were permitted to see him, and the bitterness of death commenced. The time he had passed in prison had been devoted to reflection and true repentance. Just as he was about to lose them for ever, he felt the value of the excellent parent whose heart he had broken, and the worth of her whose love he had so ill deserved, so ill requited.

Through the exertions of Mr. Walters and Mr. Beaumont, a pardon was offered him, on condition of his impeaching his accomplice; but he rejected it, declaring that he should never be so fit to die as he then was, and that he would never betray a confidence. Those who argued the point with him, urged that it was a sentiment of false honour,—that no guilty compact could be binding; and that, if not for his own sake, he should consent to prolong his life for the sake of others. But he was immovable in his resolve to die. His last reply was:—

“I am so awakened to a sense of shame and dishonour, that, after what has passed, and on the terms it is offered, I cannot accept of life. I will not trust myself to return again to the world and its temptations. I feel the humble hope, that I have made my peace with my God, and I most freely forgive all my enemies. With regard to those I love, for whom my heart bleeds at every pore, my life could not atone for what they have suffered, nor could I remove from them the memory, or the shame of the past, I shall consult their peace, and their honour more, in dying a penitent, than living, perhaps, to sin again, and at the expence of

another man's existence. I now shall die in peace—if *that* was the case, I never should.” Finding him thus determined, he was resigned to his fate: and he met it, with the fortitude of a man, and the humility and resignation of a Christian.

On the morning before his execution, Mary came to see him, for the last time. To all appearances, death seemed hovering nearer to her, than to him; as she tottered into his cell, dissolution seemed almost commenced, and the sigh she drew, as she sunk on his bosom, seemed as if it were her last.

“My beloved Mary!” he cried, as he pressed her to his heart, “how much have I to answer for, in destroying so much goodness, so much sweetness! do not unman me thus. Teach me, as you have often done before, the lesson of fortitude and resignation.”

“Oh! Richard, fortitude has run out, but I am resigned to die! this is our last meeting, Richard! our last on earth—but we shall meet again in heaven, and meet soon. Tell me, in the little time that I may linger after you, have you no wish I can fulfil—can you leave me no little task, that I may do—and do—and die!”

“None, my own love,” he cried, kissing the tears from her pale cheeks; “none, but to forgive me, and that, excepting to goodness like yours, were a task indeed. Oh! Mary! can you really pardon the manner in which I have requited your love, and betrayed your hopes? can you really forgive the hours of anguish I have caused you, the pangs with which I have torn your heart, the tears of bitterness I have drawn from your eyes?”

“Forgive you! yes, from my inmost soul! O Richard! you know not half my love, half my agony, at this moment. I have also much to be forgiven; often, in the petulance of passion, in the pride of prosperity, I have spoken to you with reproachfulness, with unkindness. Oh! I shall think of every cold and cruel word I ever uttered to you—to-morrow, and the next day, and the next, and weep till nature will at last refuse me tears.”

“No, my love, you will think of the many hours of my life you blest, whilst I was yet guiltless and happy; of the many you soothed, when I was sunk in sin and wretchedness; you will be able to look back on your past life, and not reproach yourself; no forgotten or neglected duty will arise to haunt you with vain remorse.—You have injured no human being—you have not broken a parent's heart!—

“Mary, I said, I had no wish for you to fulfil—no task to leave you—I have—”

“Oh! speak; what is it?” she exclaimed, with trembling eagerness.

A moment Richard struggled with the strong feelings that convulsed his

frame; but he could not repress the tears which coursed each other in big drops down his face; at length he cried—

“That poor old man! Mary, will you not be a daughter to him? will you not sometimes go to his desolate fire side, and sit with him, and soothe his lonely hours? Oh! had you both reproached, reviled me, as I merited, I could have borne it; but when he strained me to his broken heart—and blest me! when you hang on me with this changeless tenderness, I feel, oh! I feel the torture, the wretch, the villain I have been!”

For a time, anguish denied him the power of utterance: till again struggling against it, he continued, as he passionately kissed her—

“Yes, Mary, for my sake, you will be kind to him; tell him, (for never had I power to tell him so myself)—that I always loved and honoured him; and that in the very height of all my wickedness, I was proud and conscious of his worth; and that all the bitterness of death is leaving him and you to mourn for one so undeserving of your tears.”

Mary mingled her tears with her lover's, as she promised to be a daughter to his father. The signal for her departure was at length given; and the last farewell, the last words they were ever to speak to each other in this world, were to be uttered. Neither spoke, but their silence spoke for them: locked in each other's arms, in voiceless, wordless anguish, they were at last separated by force; and Mary was carried from the prison in a state of insensibility

The unhappy prisoner was now left to prepare for death; he had already taken leave of his father, and the few hours that remained to him, he devoted in humble prayer to that God, whom he had offended, but whom, we are led to hope, never yet rejected the petition of the repentant sinner.

The next morning, an awful example to the crowd, that were assembled to witness the execution, the unfortunate young man was led forth. The traces of heart-felt sorrow were visible in his countenance; but it was blended with manly composure and calm and humble resignation. He ascended the scaffold with a slow, but firm step, and continued in prayer to the last moment.

Eyes that had not wept for years, shed tears at his fate; and when the drop fell, a groan of deep and genuine feeling, burst from the crowd. Many an idle and disobedient son, returned home that morning, with resolutions of amendment, and an awakened sense of the blessing Providence had bestowed, in giving him worthy parents, and the means of an honest livelihood. May the fate of Richard Wilson have as salutary an effect on many who did *not* witness it, and teach them in time to forsake bad company and idle habits!

Poor Mary soon gave symptoms of derangement; and it was found

impossible to restrain her from wandering about the country: often as she was sought, and led home, she always found means to escape again. As she was not violent, no measures of coercion were adopted, and her caprices were humoured as much as possible. When Richard's father died, an event that soon succeeded the loss of his son, she followed the funeral, and was observed to weep: they were the first tears she had shed since the hour she parted from her lover; and the circumstance awakened a hope that her reason was returning; but it was only the glimmering of a lucid interval. She was similarly affected at the death of her mother, who, heart-struck at the fate of her only and beloved child, sunk into a rapid decline, which closed her existence in a few months. Poor John Harding, without wife or daughter, gave up the Inn, and devoted his time, and the savings of his honest industry, to his unfortunate child.

According to his sentence, the body of Richard had been gibbeted on the spot where the dreadful crime had been committed, and that was poor Mary's favourite haunt. There she would stand and address the wild and fervent language of madness to the sad remains of Richard. In the grey light of morning, in the dark hour of the night, in the heat of the mid-day sun, the poor maniac might still be found walking round, standing, or sitting before it. Sometimes the shrill notes of her once sweet voice might be heard singing the fragments of songs, which she had learned in days of happiness.

One morning, a traveller, crossing the common, stopped to listen to her, and inquired whose gibbet it was, for by that time only a few of the bones were left rattling in the wind. She stared at him in silence. He repeated the question, and added:

“What was his crime?”

“Murder!” replied the maniac, in a voice awfully deep—the stranger shuddered,

“He murdered *me!*” she added, “and they hung him there to bleach in the high winds of Heaven. But,” she continued, addressing the traveller in that confidential manner, madness sometimes instantly assumes—

“There was another, who struck the first and deepest blow.—Richard told me so—the work of blood was *his.*”

As she was speaking, her father, who was ever watching her foot-steps, came up to them. His first glance at the dark figure standing before Mary, was one of carelessness and indifference: but when he looked again, the consciousness of having seen it before struck his mind.

“Do you remember me?”

“I almost fancied that I did,” replied the aged Harding: “but perhaps it is only fancy, for I cannot recollect where or when I’ve seen you.”

“You kept the Falcon?”

“Some miserable years ago!”

“Did you know him whose gibbet hangs there?”

“Aye, aye”

“Do you remember one asking for him at the Falcon, on the night of the murder?”

“It was *you*.”

The energy with which the old man spoke those last words made the stranger start—but he answered coldly,

“It *was*.”

“Mary had stood all this time in silent attention, with her eyes fixed on Andrew Foster, (for it was no other,) but she now darted forward, while a kind of wild joy lighted up her countenance, exclaiming,

“You will give him back to me?”

“No: but I will follow him!”

The instigator and companion of Richard's crime surrendered himself to justice, finding life a load too burdensome to be supported under a consciousness of guilt so deep and offences so manifold; in every change of place, in every change of circumstance, that silent monitor attended him; in the dead silence of night, in the confusion of the crowded streets, that “still small voice,” was ever making itself heard.

The ends of justice were thus completely answered, though some years after the crime was perpetrated, by the execution of Foster, whose body was hung upon the same gibbet. From that time poor Mary ceased to visit the common, where no longer a vestige of her lover remained, but she still continued to wander about the country, sometimes the sport of the idle and unthinking, but more often the object of kind feeling and deep compassion.

The progress of age and infirmity deprived her of her father, and she was then left solitary in the world, with no claims upon her fellow creatures, but such as Christian charity accorded her.

She was one morning found dead upon her mother's grave, where she had expired in the course of the night. It was thought she had experienced some short or partial return of reason, by the place she had chosen to breathe her last upon.

In closing this melancholy story, we cannot help pausing to observe, how seldom is the misery consequent on guilt confined to the guilty party solely! but how sure is it to involve in its results the innocent and unoffending! Thus Richard, in forsaking the path of virtue, not only closed his own life in pain and ignominy, but consigned the grey hairs of his father with sorrow to the grave; desolated the once happy home of John Harding; and destroyed, by a fate the most cruel and unmerited, the beautiful and innocent Mary!

MARY,
THE MAID OF THE INN.

A Poem, by Robert Southey.

WHO is she, the poor maniac, whose wildly-fix'd eyes
Seem a heart overcharg'd to express?
She weeps not, yet often and deeply she sighs;
She never complains—but silence implies
The composure of settled distress.

No aid, no compassion the maniac will seek,
Cold and hunger awake not her care;
Thro' the rags do the winds of the winter blow bleak;
On her poor wither'd bosom, half bare; and her cheek
Has the deadly pale hue of despair.

Yet cheerful and happy (nor distant the day)
Poor Mary the maniac has been;
The trav'ler remembers, who journey'd this way,
No damsel so lovely, no damsel so gay,
As Mary, the maid of the inn.

Her cheerful address fill'd the guests with delight,
As she welcom'd them in with a smile:
Her heart was a stranger to childish affright,

And Mary would walk by the abbey at night,
When the wind whistled down the dark aisle.

She lov'd—and young Richard had settled the day,
And she hop'd to be happy for life;
But Richard was idle and worthless; and they
Who knew him, would pity poor Mary, and say,
That she was too good for his wife.

'Twas in Autumn, and stormy and dark was the night,
And fast were the windows and door;
Two guests sat enjoying the fire that burnt bright,
And smoking in silence, with tranquil delight
They listen'd to hear the wind roar.

“'Twas pleasant,” cried one, seated by the fire side,
“To hear the wind whistle without,”
“A fine night for the abbey,” his comrade replied,
“Methinks a man's courage would now well be tried,
Who should wander the ruins about.

“I myself, like a school-boy, should tremble to hear
The hoarse ivy shake over my head;
And could fancy I saw, half-persuaded by fear,
Some ugly old abbot's white spirit appear,
For this wind might awaken the dead.”

“I'll wager a dinner,” the other one cried,
That Mary would venture there now;”
“Then wager and loose!” with a sneer he replied:
“I'll warrant she'd fancy a ghost by her side,
And faint if she saw a white cow.”

“Will Mary this charge on her courage allow?”
His companion exclaim'd with a smile;
“I shall win; for I know she will venture there now,
And earn a new bonnet, by bringing a bough
From the alder that grows in the aisle.”

With fearless good humour did Mary comply,
And her way to the abbey she bent;
The night it was gloomy, the wind it was high,
And, as hollowly howling it swept through the sky,
She shiver'd with cold as she went.

O'er the path so well known still proceeded the maid,

Where the abbey rose dim on the sight;
Thro' the gateway she enter'd, she felt not afraid,
Yet the ruins were lonely and wild, and their shade
Seem'd to deepen the gloom of the night.

All around her was silent, save when the rude blast
Howl'd dismally round the old pile;
Over weed-cover'd fragments still fearless she pass'd,
And arriv'd at the innermost ruin at last,
Where the alder-tree grew in the aisle.

Well pleas'd did she reach it, and quickly drew near,
And hastily gather'd the bough,
When the sound of a voice seem'd to rise on her ear,
She paus'd and she listen'd, all eager to hear
And her heart panted fearfully now.

The wind blew, the hoarse ivy shook over her head;
She listen'd—nought else could she hear.
The wind ceas'd, her heart sunk in her bosom with dread
For she heard, in the ruins, distinctly, the tread
Of footsteps approaching her near.

Behind a wide column, half breathless with fear,
She crept to conceal herself there.
That instant the moon o'er a dark cloud shone clear,
And she saw in the moonlight two ruffians appear,
And between them a corpse did they bear.

Then Mary could feel her heart-blood curdled cold—
Again the rough wind hurried by—
It blew off the hat of the one, and behold!
Even close to the feet of poor Mary it roll'd;
She fell—and expected to die.

“Curse the hat?” he exclaims.—“Nay, come on, and first hide
The dead body,” his comrade replies,
She beheld them in safety pass on by her side,
She seizes the hat, fear her courage supplied,
And fast through the abbey she flies.

She ran with wild speed, she rush'd in at the door,
She cast her eyes horribly round;
Her limbs could support her faint burthen no more;
But exhausted and breathless she sank on the floor,
Unable to utter a sound.

Ere her pale lips could the story impart,
For a moment the hat met her view;
Her eyes from that object convulsively start,
For, O God! what cold horror thrill'd thro' her heart
When the name of her Richard she knew!

Where the old Abbey stands, on the common hard by
His gibbet is now to be seen;
Not far from the inn it engages the eye,
The trav'ler beholds it, and thinks, with a sigh,
Of poor Mary, the maid of the inn.

FINIS.

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