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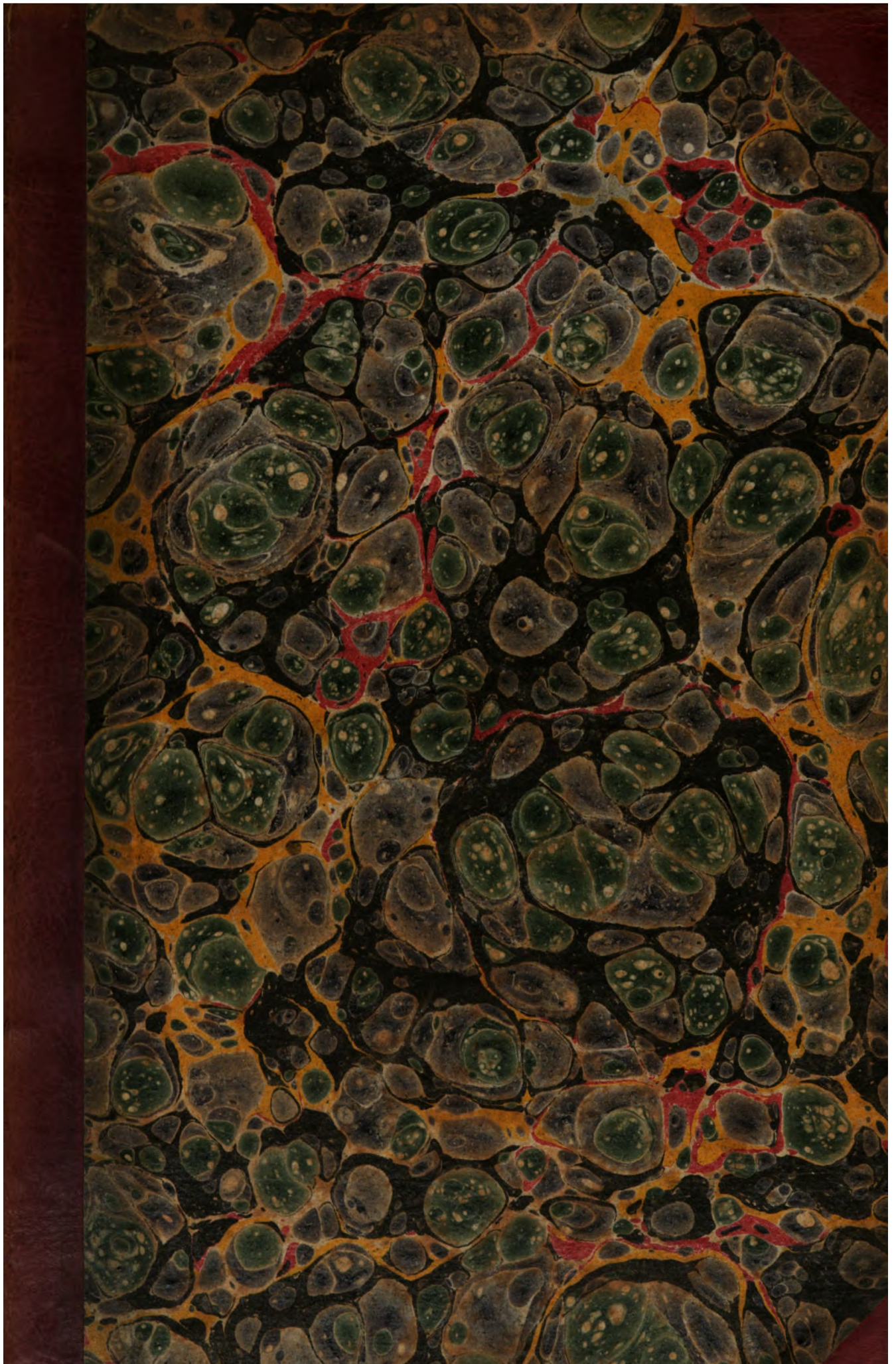
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8° B. P. 10. 92.





ELLEN GRAY;

OR,

THE DEAD MAIDEN'S CURSE.

J. MOYES, GREVILLE STREET, LONDON.

ELLEN GRAY;

OR,

THE DEAD MAIDEN'S CURSE.

A POEM,

BY THE LATE

DR. ARCHIBALD MACLEOD.

Omnibus UMBRA LOCIS adero! — VIRGIL.



EDINBURGH :

PRINTED FOR ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO. ;

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AND 8, PALL MALL, LONDON.**

1823.

TO

JOANNA BAILLIE,

This Small Poem,

FOUND AMONG THE PAPERS OF THE LATE

DR. ARCHIBALD MACLEOD,

IS RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY

Inscribed,

BY THE EDITOR.

INTRODUCTION.

As some account of the origin of this Poem may be reasonably expected by the reader, the following brief memorial is prefixed, digested from a few unconnected hints and memoranda, contained in certain papers which Dr. Macleod had left behind him, at his lodgings, in the village of Mousehole, in Mount's Bay, Cornwall, where he had attached numerous friends, in his place of temporary sojournment, by his agreeable manners and interesting eccentricities.

The first glance at the notes of which we have just spoken, was sufficient to satisfy us that the Doctor had left Edinburgh, and travelled into the west of England, in search of the **POETICAL**: an idea which had probably been suggested to

his mind by the amusing details of another traveller, the celebrated Doctor Syntax, some time since given to the public, as the results of his tour in search of the PICTURESQUE.

Be this, however, as it may, it is sufficiently clear, from the papers above mentioned, that the Doctor penetrated to the south-western extremity of our island, with the intention of searching out, and seizing upon, every floating tradition, local superstition, and affecting incident, afforded by the various counties through which he passed, that appeared to be most adapted to his peculiar pursuits.

Among the many local facts with which his diligent investigation was rewarded, the groundwork of the following Poem may be considered as not one of the least interesting, — the plain narration of which is subjoined in the Appendix, taken from the Rev. Mr. Polwhele's History of Cornwall.

Gratified as we ourselves have been with the

perusal of this production of Doctor Macleod's Muse, it is sufficiently known, that in these times attention is given, and praise awarded, *not* so much to *what is written*, as to *who it is that writes*.

Bare merit, in truth, without the fortunate adjunct of a *favourite name*, seems at present to have little chance of successful notoriety; led, or fettered, as the popular taste is, by the periodical publications of the day. A stranger has scarce a chance of *being heard*, among so many claimants, and where every bard (it might almost be said) has *his own critic*.

We tremble, indeed, for the fate of our author, so little known as Doctor Macleod is, when we perceive that the very *first line* of his poem may afford occasion for the exercise of that peculiar wit which often characterizes the tone of some of our periodical criticisms : *

“ Oh, shut the book, dear Ellen! shut the book !”

* There are some manly and liberal exceptions.

May not the critic here facetiously exclaim,

“ Oh, shut the book, dear *Reader!* shut the book!”

or inform the public, that the line is a mere plagiarism from Pope :

“ Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigued, I said?”

It is not impossible, also, that some more important circumstances may call forth the critic's vituperation, — we mean, the *character* of the composition of the Poem, unaccommodated to the style and taste so much in fashion, and its total lack of all those glittering conceptions and dazzling expressions which are now the *sine quibus non* of popular poetry. Here are no “ diamond tears ” of sensibility ; no “ gems ” of sparkling sentiment ; no metaphorical gardens of Arcadia : and the Doctor has shown himself, in this effusion, either so lamentably ignorant of the choicest figures of rhetoric, or so conceitedly disdainful of such accessories, as to neglect even that most important one, to which the modern sons of

Parnassus are so deeply indebted, the *catachresis*, by the aid of which, according to the scholastic definition of Martinus Scriblerus, “the grass is *shaved*, and the beard is *mown*!”

Of the leading motive of the Doctor's tour to the west, we have already spoken; it is necessary, however, to add, that, from particular poetical associations, he had an earnest desire to visit and contemplate that singular feature in the scenery of Cornwall, of high poetical interest,

“Michael's Mount and chair;”

and, moreover, “*debitâ spargere lacrymâ favillam*” of Dolly Pentreath, with whom (according to the Hon. Daines Barrington) the faculty of speaking the ancient Cornish language expired. Of his visit to the former poetical spot, this Poem is the result.

In visiting the spot where this gifted female lies, among “th' unhonour'd dead” of her native village, the Doctor's curiosity, taste, and

feeling, were equally gratified, by discovering and transcribing the curious inscription which appears on the "frail memorial" that protects her bones from insult, and which is couched in the venerable language of the aboriginal Britons. The lines are as follow, and will be allowed to be in strict accordance with some of the *simply pathetic* effusions of the present day: —

" Coth Doll Pentreath cans ha deau
Morow ha bledyn ed Paul pleau,
Na ed an egloz gan pobel bras,
Bet ed egloz-hay coth Dolly es."

A quatrain of great beauty in the original (as the *multilinguists* assert), and thus rendered, we have no doubt with fidelity, by the historian of Danmonium: —

" Old Doll Pentreath, one hundred aged and two,
Deceas'd and buried in Paul's parish too;
Not in the church, with people great and high,
But in the churchyard does old Dolly lie."

The Doctor, unwilling probably that such a tender composition should be confined to the almost unintelligible original and its English translation, made the following version of it into Latin, for the general benefit of the learned ; and we really think, that he has not only admirably hit off the style of the sepulchral inscriptions preserved in Weaver, but also done ample justice to the simplicity and pathos of Dolly's monumental lines : —

“ *Nata annos plusquam centum annosissima Dolly
Hic jacet, heu ! Pentreath, exteriore solo :
Non jacet illa, intra muros Pauli benedicti,
Cum summis, extra pauperibusque jacet.*”

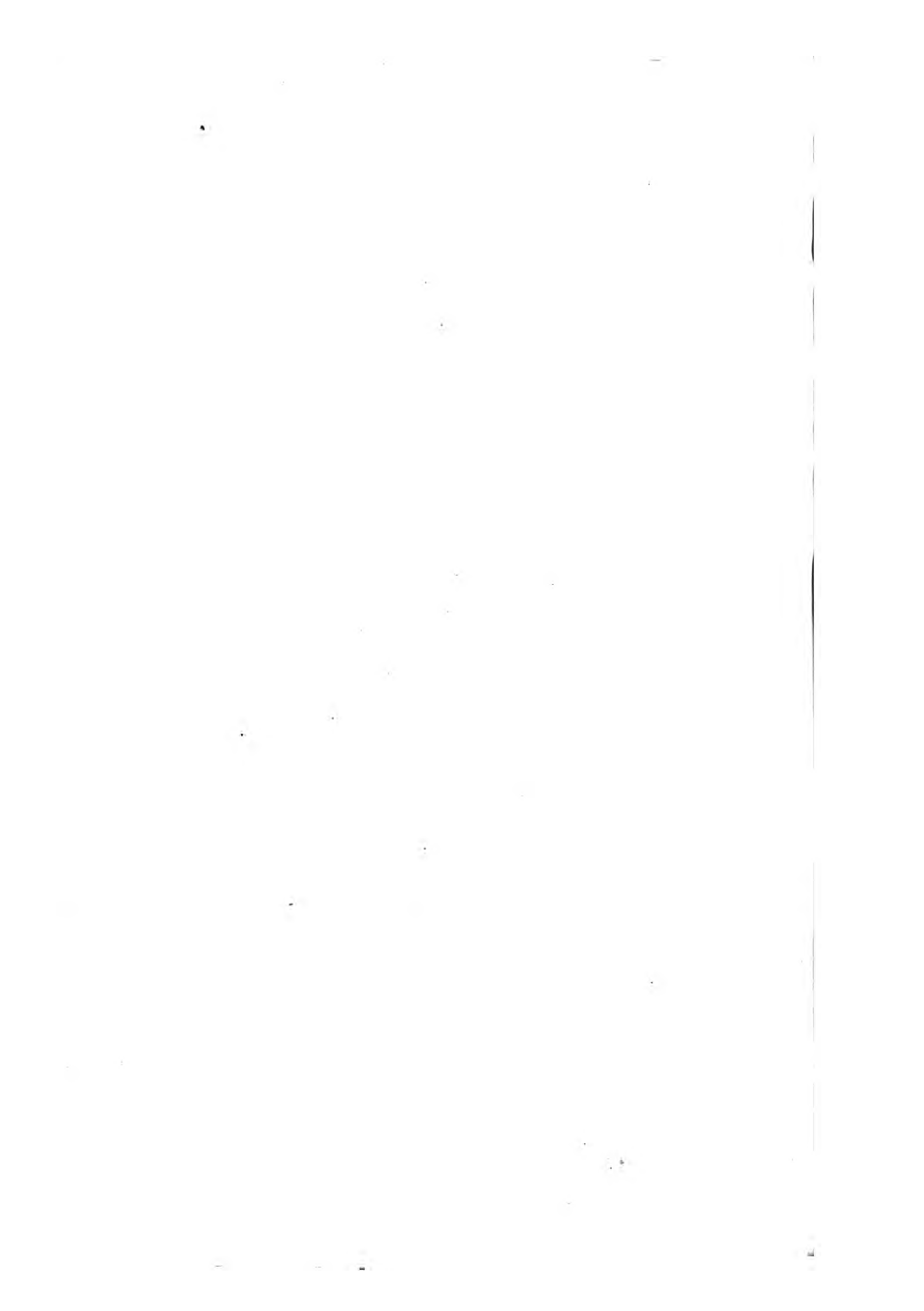
To be serious, however, the version appears to be merely a good-natured stroke of raillery on some pathetic productions of a few poetical contemporaries, — and, indeed, the chief object of the Doctor, in poetical style, appears to have been, to show that taste lay between the Scylla and

Charybdis of *bombast* on the one hand, and affected *simplicity* and *puerility* on the other.

But, enough of our remarks: let the Doctor now speak for himself.

MARAZION, IN MOUNT'S BAY, CORNWALL,
March 5th, 1823.

THE "HOARY SWAIN" OF A WESTERN VILLAGE IS SUPPOSED TO
POINT TO A NAMELESS GRAVE, AND RELATE TO THE PASSENGER
THE TALE WHICH IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS POEM.



ELLEN GRAY;

OR,

THE MAIDEN'S CURSE!

“OH! SHUT THE BOOK, dear Ellen, shut the book!”

HUBERT exclaim'd, with wild and frantic look. —

She whom he lov'd was in her shroud, — nor pain
Nor grief shall visit her sad heart again.
There is no sculptur'd tomb-stone at her head;
No rude memorial marks her lowly bed:
The village children, every holiday,
Round the green turf, in summer sunshine play;
And none, but those now bending to the tomb,
Remember ELLEN, lovely in her bloom!

Yet oft the hoary swain, when autumn sighs
Thro' the long grass, sees a dim form arise,
(Its wan lips moving, in its hand a BOOK,)
And hie in glimmering moonlight to the brook.
So, like a bruised flower, when in the pride
Of youth and beauty, injur'd Ellen died.
Hubert some years surviv'd, but years no trace
Of his sick heart's deep anguish could erase.
Still the dread spectre seem'd to rise, and, worse,
Still in his ears rung the appalling CURSE,
(While loud he cries, despair upon his look,)
"OH! SHUT THE BOOK, DEAR ELLEN, SHUT THE BOOK!"

The sun is in the west; and the last ray
Yet lingers on our churchyard dial grey.
Come, sit on these stone steps, while I relate
Hubert's dread doom, and hapless Ellen's fate.

Yon tempest-shatter'd elm, that heavily
Sways to the wind, seems for the dead to sigh.

How many generations, since the day
Of its green pride, have pass'd, like leaves, away ;
How many children of the hamlet play'd
Round its hoar trunk, who at its feet were laid,
Wither'd and grey old men ! In life's first bloom,
How many has it seen borne to the tomb !
But never one so sunk in hopeless woe
As she, who in that nameless grave lies low.

HER, I remember, by her mother's chair,
Lisping, with folded hands, her first imperfect pray'r :
For Ellen grew, as beautiful in youth,
As lesson'd in the early lore of truth.
What diff'rent passions in her bosom strove,
When first she heard the tale of village love !
The youth whose voice then won her partial ear,
A yeoman's son, had pass'd his twentieth year ;
She scarce eighteen : her mother, with the care
Of boding age, oft whisper'd, " Oh ! beware !"
For HUBERT was a thoughtless youth, and wild,
And like a colt, unbroken from a child :

But he had vow'd, and plighted her his troth,
"Never to part;" and HEAVEN HAD HEARD THE OATH.

Poor Ellen, while her father was alive,
Saw all things round the humble dwelling thrive :
Her widow'd mother now was growing old,
And, one by one, their worldly goods were sold :
Ellen remain'd, her mother's hope and pride —
How oft, when she was sleeping by her side,
She wak'd at night, and kiss'd her brow, with tears,
And prayed for blessings on her future years, —
When she, her mother, ev'ry trial o'er,
Should rest on earth's cold lap, to weep no more.

But Ellen to love's dream her heart resign'd,
And gave to fancy all her ardent mind.
Shall I describe her? — Did'st thou never mark
A soft blue light, beneath eye-lashes dark?
Hair auburn, part by riband-braid confin'd,
Part o'er her brow, blown lightly by the wind?

The village beauty, when on Sunday drest,
Her looks a sweet, but lowly grace express'd,
As modest as the violet at her breast.



She sat all day by her grey mother's side,
And now and then would turn a tear to hide.
Such Ellen was, in her youth's opening day, —
Now in the grave, and to the worm a prey.

Where winds the brook, by yonder bord'ring wood,
Her mother's solitary cottage stood.
A few pale poplars, and an aged pine,
Its rugged bark festoon'd with eglantine,
Grew near the whiten'd front, that, o'er the down,
Look'd to the grey smoke of a neighb'ring town.
Beneath an ivied bank, abrupt and high,
A small clear well reflected bank and sky,
In whose translucent mirror, smooth and still,
From time to time, a small bird dipp'd its bill.

Before the window, with late April show'rs
Refresh'd, a border bloom'd of Ellen's flow'rs.
There the first snow-drop ; and, of livelier hue,
The polyanthus and narcissus grew.
'Twas Ellen's care a jessamine to train,
With small white blossoms round the window-pane :
A rustic wicket open'd to the meads,
Where a scant path-way to the hamlet leads :
A mill-wheel in the glen toil'd round and round,
Dashing the o'er-shot stream, with deep continuous
 sound.

Beyond, when the brief show'r had sail'd away,
The tap'ring spire shone out in sun-light grey ;
And climb o'er yonder northern point, to sight
Stretching far on, the main-sea rolled in light.

Enter the dwelling, it is small but neat,—
ONE BOOK lies open on the window-seat,—
The spectacles are on a leaf of JOB :
Here mark, a map of the terrestrial globe ;

And opposite, with its prolific stem,
 The Christian's tree*, and new Jerusalem ;
 Below, a printed paper to record
 A veritable " LETTER FROM OUR LORD † :"
 Some books are on the window-ledge beneath, —
 The Book of Prayer, and Drelincourt on Death.
 With sounds of birds and bees the garden rung,
 And Ellen's linnet at the casement sung.

It is not long — not long to Whitsuntide,
 And haply Ellen then shall be a bride.
 On Sunday morn, when a slant light was flung
 On the pale tow'r, where bells awak'ning rung,
 Hubert and Ellen I have seen repair,
 Arm link'd in arm, to the same house of pray'r
 " These bells will sound more merrily " (he cried,
 And gently press'd her hand) " at Whitsuntide."

* Large, coloured prints, in most cottages.

† The letter said to be written by our Saviour, to king Agbarus.
 This also is seen in many cottages.

She check'd th' intruding thought, and hung her head ;
Ellen, alas ! ere Whitsuntide — WAS DEAD !

'Twas said, but we could scarce the tale believe,
That Ellen's form was seen upon that eve *,
When, in the churchyard trooping, all appear,
All who should die within the coming year ;
Piteous and strangely pallid was her look,
Her right hand held the shadow of a BOOK,
On which her long hair dripp'd, — the cold moon cast
A glimmering light, as in her shroud she pass'd !
One thing is certain, that she went alone
To learn her fate, at Madern's mystic stone † ;

* In Cornwall, and in other counties remote from the metropolis, it is a popular belief, that they who are to die in the course of the year, appear, on the eve of Midsummer, before the church porch. See an exquisite dramatic sketch on this subject, called " the Eve of St. Mark."

† Madern-stone, a Druidical monument in the village of Madern, to which the country people often resort, to learn their future destinies.

What there she heard ne'er came to human ears ;
But, from that hour she oft was seen in tears.

'Twas spring tide now : the butterfly more bright,
Wheel'd o'er the cowslips, in the rainbow light ;
The lamb, the colt, the blackbird in the brake,
Seem'd all a vernal feeling to partake ;
The " swallow twitter'd " in the earliest ray,
That show'd the flow'r on Gwinnear's turret grey ;
More grateful comes the fragrance after rain,
To him who steals along the sweet-briar lane,
And all things seem, to the full heart, to bring
The blissful breathings of the world's first spring.

More cheerful came the sunshine of MAY-MORN,
The bee from earliest light had wound his horn,
Busiest from flower to flower, as he would say,
" Up! Ellen! for it is the morn of May!"
The lads and lasses of the hamlet bore
Branches of blossom'd thorn or sycamore * ;

* This is invariably the custom in Cornwall. See POLWHELE.

And at her mother's porch a garland hung,
While thus their rustic roundelay they sung: —

MAY SONG.

1.

“ And we were up as soon as day*,
“ To fetch the summer home,
“ The summer and the May,
“ For summer now is come.”

2.

In Madern vale the bell-flow'rs bloom †,
And wave to Zephyr's stirring breath:
The cuckoo sings in Morval coombe,
O'er Penron spreads the purple heath ‡.

* These are the first four lines of the real song of the season, which is called “ the Furry-song of Helstone.”

† *Campanula cymbalaria*, foliis hederaciis.

‡ *Erica multiflora*, common in this part of Cornwall.

3.

Come, dance around Glen-Alston tree,
We'll weave a crown of flowrets gay,
And ELLEN of the BROOK shall be
Our LADY OF THE MAY.

ELLEN expected HUBERT; the first flow'r
She gather'd, now was fading; hour by hour
She watch'd the sunshine on the thatch; again
Her mother turn'd the hour-glass; now, the pane
The west'ring sun has left. The long May-day,
So Ellen wore in hopes and fears away.
Slow twilight steals — by the small garden-gate
She stands, — “ Oh! Hubert never came so late!”
Her mother's voice is heard; “ Good child, come in;
“ Dream not of bliss on earth — it is a sin:
“ Come, take the BIBLE down, my child, and read;
“ In disappointed hopes, in grief, in need, —
“ By friends forsaken, and by fears oppress'd,
“ *There*, only, can the weary heart find rest!”

Her thin hands mark'd by many a wand'ring vein,
The mother turn'd her ebbing glass again ;
The rush-light now is lit—the Bible read,—
But, ere poor ELLEN can retire to bed,
She listens,—Hark ! no voice, no step she hears,—
Oh ! seek thy bed to hide those bursting tears !

When the slow morning came, the tale was told,
(Need it have been ?) that Hubert's love was cold.

But hope yet whispers, “ Dry the accusing tear,—
When SUNDAY comes, again he will be here !”
And Sunday came, and struggling from a cloud,
The sun shone bright, — the bells were chiming loud, —
And lads and lasses in their best attire,
Were tripping past, and light was on the spire ; —
But HUBERT came not ; — with an aching heart
Poor ELLEN saw the Sunday train depart :
Her mother follow'd, with starch'd pinners clean,
And pray'r-book, tottering o'er the dewy green ;

Ellen, to hear no more of peace on earth,
Retir'd in silence to the lonely hearth.

Next day the tidings to the cottage came,
That Hubert's heart confess'd another flame :
That, cold and wayward falsehood made him prove
At once a TRAITOR to his FAITH and LOVE ;
That, with our Bailiff's daughter he was seen,
At the new Tabernacle on the green ;
Had join'd the Calvinistic flock, and there
Renounc'd his PRAY'R-BOOK, yea, our SAVIOUR'S PRAY'R* ;

* The poet is unhappily borne out in this incident, by the *actual fact* of the rejection of the LORD'S PRAYER and TEN COMMANDMENTS, in the service of certain places of dissenting worship. It is in the recollection of our readers, that during the course of last year, a witness appeared to give evidence in one of our courts of justice, who had *constantly attended a place of worship* with her mother, but *never heard of the Lord's Prayer, or the Ten Commandments*: the judge, very properly, refused to admit her evidence, until she had been six months under the instruction of a clergyman of the Church of England. Such a fact speaks volumes, and may be considered as a practical comment upon an expression of Bunyan, in his "Pilgrim's Progress," who calls going to church, *going to the town of morality*.

The Doctor, in the lines to which this note refers, cannot be sup-

And, if he left young Ellen's heart to bleed,
 Poor Ellen's heart to break — IT WAS DECREED!

Alas! her heart was left indeed to break;
 Wan sorrow prey'd upon her vermeil cheek. —
 Now, with a ghastly moodiness she smil'd, }
 Now, still and placid look'd as when a child, }
 Or rais'd her eyes disconsolate and wild. }

Then, as she stray'd the brook's green marge along,
 She oft would sing this sad and broken song: —

1.

Lay me where the willows wave,
 In the cold moon-light;
 Shine upon my quiet grave,
 Softly, queen of night!

posed to allude to the philosophical, or at least sober, Calvinism of the Scotch and Genevan churches; but to the *vulgar* and *terrible* Calvinism mouthed out by the ignoramuses, enthusiasts, or something worse, of some of our own conventicles.

2.

I to thee would fly for rest,
But a stone — a stone —
Lies like lead upon my breast,
All hope on earth is flown.

3.

Lay me where the willows wave,
In the cold moon-light ;
Shine upon my quiet grave,
Softly, queen of night * !

Her mother said, “ My child, go unconfin’d,
“ For thou art meek and harmless, and thy mind
“ The water’s sound may soothe ; or, as it blows,
“ The very tempest bring thy mind repose.”

* The cadence of this song is taken from a ballad “ most musical,
most melancholy,” in the British tragedy, “ Lay a garland on my
grave.”

Ellen oft wander'd to the northern shore *,
And heard, with boding voice, the gaunt TREGAGEL † roar,
Among the rocks, and when the tempest blew,
And like the shivered foam her long hair flew,
And all the billowy space was tossing wide,
“ Rock ! rock ! thou melancholy main,” she cried,
“ I love thy noise, oh, ever sounding sea,
“ And learn stern patience, while I look on thee !”

Then on the clouds she gazed with vacant stare,
Or dancing with wild fennel in her hair ‡,
Sang merrily : “ Oh ! we must dry the tear,
“ For Mab, the queen of fairies, will be here, —

* The bay of St. Ives.

† Tregagel is a giant, whose voice (according to the superstition of the country) is heard among the rocks constantly preceding and during a storm.

‡ *Feniculum vulgare*, or wild fennel, common on the northern coast of Cornwall.

She shall know all — know all,”— and then again
Her ditty died into its opening strain : —

“ Lay me where the willows wave,
In the cold moon-light ;
Shine upon my quiet grave,
Softly, queen of night !”

The children in their sports would pause and say *,
With pitying look, “ There goes poor Ellen Gray.”

Now, loitering home, while tears ran down apace,
She look'd in silence in her mother's face ;
Then, starting up, with wild emotion cried,
“ To-morrow ! oh, to-morrow 's Whitsuntide, }
“ And all shall dance when Ellen is a bride !” }

* Who does not remember Crabbe's exquisite lines in his *Village*,
and the affecting image of the children standing over the old man's
grave?—

“ Silent and sad, and gazing hand in hand !”

Now, some dire thought seem'd in her heart to rise,
Stern with terrific joy she roll'd her eyes :
Her mother heeded not, — nor when she took
(With more impatient haste) her Sunday book, —
She heeded not — for age had dimmed her sight.

Now twilight slowly steals — 'tis eve — 'tis night, —
“ ELLEN ! my ELLEN ! ” her lone mother cried,
“ ELLEN ! my ELLEN ! ” — but NO VOICE REPLIED.

CANTO II.

AT early dawn, gay HUBERT pass'd along, —
The birds were singing loud their hedge-row song ; —
The meadow's pathway, on which fairies threw
Their lightest net-work of the film and dew,
Careless he brush'd : the sun rose as he pass'd,
A line of glory on the scene was cast, —
Where the brook, trembling in the orient light,
Stole by ; and now, the small spire rose in sight,
As the mist creeping from the nether plain
Flew off, departing to the northern main.
Now, peeping from the river's farther side,
Ellen's maternal cottage he descried,
And saw a faded garland at the door,
And with'ring branches of the sycamore :

But heard no humming wheel, and saw no smoke
 Slow rising o'er the shades of pine and oak.
 Ah! was it fancy? as he pass'd along,
 He thought he heard a spirit's feeble song*!
 Struck by the thrilling sound, he turned his look,—
 Upon the ground there lay an open BOOK,—
 The page was folded down:— Spirit of grace!
 Ah! there are soils, like tear-blots, on the place:
 It was a PRAY'R-BOOK!— and these words he read:
 “ Let him be desolate, and beg his bread †!

* It is a common idea in Cornwall, that when any person is drowned, the voice of his spirit may be heard by those who first pass by.

† The passage folded down was the 109th Psalm, commonly called “the imprecating Psalm.” It is now generally understood, that the imprecations were denounced by David's enemies against himself. I extract the most affecting passages:—

“ May his days be few.”

“ Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.”

“ Let there be none to extend mercy.”

“ Let their name be blotted out, because he slayed even the broken in heart.”

" Let there be none — not one on earth to bless, —
 " Be his days few, — his children fatherless, —
 " His wife a widow ! — let there be no friend
 " In his last moments mercy to extend ! "

It was a PRAY'R-BOOK he before had seen :
 Where ? when ? Once more, wild terror on his mien,
 He read the page : — " An outcast let him lie,
 " And unlamented and deserted die !
 " When he has children, may they pine away
 " Before his sight, — to hopeless grief a prey !
 " His wife ——— "

He trembled — who could read unmov'd ?
 Ah ! 'tis the written name of her he lov'd : —
 " THE BOOK OF ELLEN GRAY ; — WHEN THIS YOU SEE,
 " AND I AM DEAD AND GONE — REMEMBER ME ! "

His limbs — they shake — the dew is on his brow : —
 " THE CURSE IS HERS ! — oh God ! I FEEL IT NOW !
 " I see already — ev'n at my right hand —
 " POOR ELLEN, thy ACCUSING SPIRIT stand !

“ I feel thy deep, last curse!” Then with a cry,
He sunk upon the earth in agony.

Feebly he rose, — when, on the matted hair
Of a drown'd maid, and on her bosom bare,
The sun shone out ; and, 'mid the sedges green,
Poor Ellen's cold and floating corse was seen.
“ Merciful God !” with faltering voice he cries,
“ Hide me ! oh, hide me from the sight ! Those eyes —
“ They glare on me ! oh, hide me with the dead !
“ THE CURSE — THE DEEP CURSE rests upon my head !”

ELLEN, FAREWELL ! 'twas frenzy fir'd thy breast, —
That prompted horrors not to be express'd :
Whilst ever at thy side the foul fiend stood,
And, laughing, pointed to the oblivious flood.

HUBERT, heart-stricken — to despair a prey,
Soon left the village, journeying far away ;

But first, if signs his future fate might tell,
He sought the spirit of St. Cuthbert's well*:
He dropp'd a pebble — mark! no bubble bright
Follow'd; and slow he turn'd away his sight.
He look'd again: "Oh, God! those eye-balls glare,
"How terribly! ah, smooth that matted hair, —
"Ellen! dead Ellen! thy cold corse I see
"Rise from the fountain! look not thus at me!
"I cannot bear the sight — that form — that look!
"OH! SHUT THE BOOK, DEAR ELLEN, SHUT THE BOOK!"

Meantime, poor Ellen in the grave was laid; —
Her lone and grey-hair'd mother wept and pray'd:
Soon to the dust she follow'd; and unknown,
There, they both rest without a name or stone.

* The people of the country consult the spirit of the well for their future destiny, by dropping a pebble into it, striking the ground, and other methods of divination, derived, no doubt, from Pagan antiquity.—

Pity them, pensive stranger, nor pass by,
Till thou hast said one pray'r, for charity!

But what of Hubert? "Hide me in the mine!"
He cried, "the beams of day insulting shine!
"Earth's very shadows are too gay, too bright, —
"Hide me, for ever, in forgetful night!"
In vain; — that shade, the cause of all his woes,
More sternly terrible in darkness rose!
Nearer he saw, with its white waving hand,
That phantom in appalling stillness stand;
The letters in the book shone through the night,
More blasting! "Hide, oh hide me from the sight!
"Vast ocean, to thy solitudes I bring
"A heart, that not the fragrance of the spring, —
"The green-leaves' music, — or the wood-lark's strain, —
"Shall ever wake to hope or joy again!
"OCEAN, be mine, — wild as thy wastes, to roam
"From clime to clime! — OCEAN, BE THOU MY HOME!"

Some said he died, — but he was seen no more ; —
He went to sea ; yet there, amid the roar
Of the wild waters, starting from his sleep,
He gaz'd upon the lone tempestuous deep ;
When, slowly rising from the vessel's lee,
A shape appeared, which none besides could see ;
And then he shriek'd, like one whom Heav'n forsook, —
“ OH ! SHUT THE BOOK, DEAR ELLEN, SHUT THE BOOK ! ”

In foreign lands, in darkness and in light,
The same dread spectre stood before his sight ;
If slumber came, his aching lids to close,
Funereal forms in sad procession rose.
Sometimes he dreamed that ev'ry grief was pass'd, —
Ellen had long been lost — was found at last, —
And now she smil'd as when in early life, —
The morn was come when she should be his wife ;
The maids were dress'd in white, and all were gay,
And the bells rang for Ellen's wedding-day !

Then, wherefore sad? a chill comes o'er his soul, —
Hark! the glad bells have sunk into a toll, —
A slow, deep toll; and lo! a sable train
Of mourners, moving to the village fane.
A coffin now is laid in holy ground,
That, heavily, returns its hollow sound,
When the first earth upon its lid is thrown:
The hollow sound is chang'd into a groan:
And, rising with wan cheek, and dripping hair,
And moving lips, and eyes of ghastly stare,
A figure issues! Ah! it comes more near!
'Tis Ellen! and that book with many a tear
Is wet, which, with her fingers long and cold,
He sees her to the glimmering moon unfold.
Her icy hand is laid upon his heart;
Gasping, he wakes, — and, with a convulsive start,
He gazes round. Moonlight is on the tide —
The passing keel is scarcely heard to glide, —
Ah! there the spectre goes: with frenzied look
He shrieks, "OH! SHUT, DEAR ELLEN, SHUT THE BOOK!"

Now to the ocean's verge the phantom flies, —
And hark ! far off, the lessening laughter dies.

Years roll'd away, — till now, at evening's close,
Faint, and more faint, th' ACCUSING SPIRIT rose.

Restor'd from toil, and perils of the main,
Now HUBERT treads his native land again.

Near the " hoar " mount, by Marazion's shore,
Where, from the west, Atlantic surges roar,
Where once, above the solitary main,
The MIGHTY VISION sat, and look'd to Spain *,
He liv'd, a lonely stranger, sad, but mild ;
All mark'd the sadness, chiefly when he smil'd ;

* The apparition of St. Michael, who, from the top of the mount so called, as Milton says, in his Lycidas,

" Looks to Namanco's and Bayonna's hold."

See a masterly note of T. Warton's on the passage, in illustration of its imagery.

Some competence he gain'd, by years of toil :
So, in a cottage, on his native soil,
He dwelt, remote from crowds, nor told his tale
To human ear : he saw the white clouds sail
O'er the bright bay, when suns of summer shone,
And oft he wander'd, mutt'ring and alone.
He never went to church, where he might hear
The judgment-psalm, so harrowing to his ear :
The Bible on the window-seat was laid,
He wept upon it, and in secret pray'd ;
But never join'd the social sabbath bands,
That to St. Paul's* pass'd o'er the whit'ning sands.

No other friend had he, save one blue jay †,
Which, from the Mississippi, far away,
O'er the Atlantic, to his native land
He brought ; — it fed from its protector's hand,

* The village of St. Paul.

† The blue jay of the Mississippi. See Chateaubriand's Indian song, in *Atala*.

And sometimes sang at morn, so loud and clear,
That ev'ry passenger would pause to hear.
In the great world there was not one beside
For whom he car'd, since his grey father died.

Still manly strength was his, for thirteen years
Weigh'd light upon his frame, though pass'd in tears ;
Not thirty-five his age, and in his face
There was of care, more than of time, the trace.

Ellen was half-forgotten ; by degrees,
The sights and sounds of life began to please.

The widow'd Ruth in early life had known
Domestic griefs and losses of her own.
She — patient, mild, compassionate, and kind —
Waken'd to human sympathies his mind.
The first that won his notice, was her child,
Who fed his bird, and took his hand, and smil'd.
Ruth and her little boy, to most unknown,
Liv'd in a cottage that adjoin'd his own ;

Oft, when the winds arose, by one small light
They read the Bible, on a Sabbath night.
The cottage look'd upon the circling bay ;
Penzance, a streak of light, to southward lay ;
Eastward the Lizard's hazy point was seen,
Now vanish'd in " a momentary spleen * ;"
Nearer, the lone, romantic rock † uprears
Its tower'd brow, which like a crown appears,
And seems the shadow of its state to throw
Along the restless waves that break below.
Who has not sigh'd for the lone fisher's life,
So fraught with terror to an anxious wife ?
Night after night, expos'd upon the main ;
Returning tir'd with toil, or drench'd in rain ;
His gains uncertain as his life, — he knows
No stated hours of labour and repose.
On land, when busy scenes of life retire,
And his wife looks upon the evening fire,

* " How is it vanish'd in a hasty spleen !"

CROWE'S Lewesden Hill, one of the finest poems of the age.

† St. Michael's Mount, with the Castle, &c.

He, afar off, 'mid the tempestuous night,
Haply, is thinking of that social light.

Ruth's husband left the bay, — the wind and rain
Came down, — the tempest swept the southern main ; —
Whether his skiff on some black shore was cast,
Or, whelm'd, he slept beneath the ocean vast,
Was never known ; — but, from his native shore,
Thy husband, Ruth, sail'd, — and return'd no more.
Seven years had pass'd, — and after evening pray'r,
To Hubert's cottage Ruth would oft repair,
And with her little son full late would stay,
Listening to tales of regions far away.
The wond'ring boy lov'd of wild scenes to hear ;
Of battles of the roving buccaneer ;
Of wild-fires lighted in the forest glen,
And songs and dances of the savage men ;
Then the pale mother would sit by and weep,
While Hubert told the dangers of the deep.
He spoke of many a peril he had pass'd, —
Of howling night-fiends riding on the blast, —

Of those, who, lonely and of hope bereft,
' Upon some melancholy rock are left,
Who mark, despairing, at the close of day,
Perhaps, some far-off vessel sail away.
He spoke with pity of the land of slaves —
Then, of the phantom-ship that rides the roaring waves*.
It comes! it comes! A melancholy light
Gleams from the prow upon the storm of night.
'Tis here! 'tis there! In vain the billows roll;
It steers right on, — but not a living soul
Is there, to guide its voyage thro' the dark,
Or spread the sails of that terrific bark.
He spoke of vast sea-serpents, how they float
For many a rood, or near some hurrying boat
Lift up their tall neck, with a hissing sound †,
And turn their blood-shot eye-balls questing round.

* Called the flying Dutchman; the phantom ship of the Cape.

† The Doctor evidently seems here to have endeavoured to make the sound an echo to the sense.

“ So Ajax strives,” &c.— ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

He spoke of sea-maids, on the desert rocks,
 Who in the sun comb their green, dripping locks,
 While, heard at distance, in the parting ray,
 Beyond the farthest promontory grey,
 Aërial music swells and dies away !

One night, they longer stay'd the tale to hear,
 And Ruth that night " beguil'd him of a tear,
 " When he did speak of the distressful stroke
 " Which his youth suffer'd." Then, she pitying spoke,
 Yet placed RELIGIOUS HOPE within his view !
 And from that night a tenderer feeling grew.
 And why not, ere the long night of the dead,
 Life's slow descending steep together tread ?
 Partake its transient light, or gathering gloom,
 And journey gently onward to the tomb ?

The day was fix'd ; no longer he shall roam,
 But BOTH shall have ONE HEART, one house, ONE HOME :

The world shut out, BOTH shall together pray,
BOTH wait the evening of life's changeful day :
SHE shall his anguish soothe, when he grows wild, —
And HE shall be a FATHER TO HER CHILD.

Fair rose the dawn — the summer air how bland !
The blue wave scarcely seem'd to touch the land, —
So soft it lay, far off, in morning light,
Whilst here and there a scatter'd sail shone white.

Come, hasten — yonder is the church ; away
All cares, for who can mournful be to-day ?
The bells are ringing, and the rites are o'er, —
The nuptial train return along the shore,
Cheer'd by new hopes of life : as thus they pass'd,
In sudden blackness rush'd the impetuous blast * ;
Deep thunder roll'd, with long portentous sound,
At distance : nearer now, it shakes the ground,

* Sudden storms are very common in this bay.

Whilst Hubert sinks with speechless dread oppress'd,
As the fork'd flash seems darted at his breast.
His beating heart was heard, — bleach'd was his cheek, —
A WELL-KNOWN VOICE seem'd in the storm to speak ;
Aghast he cried, wild phrenzy in his look,
“ OH ! SHUT THE BOOK, DEAR ELLEN, SHUT THE BOOK ! ”

My tale is well-nigh o'er ; for, from that day,
(The arrow in his soul,) he pin'd away,
And silent sunk beneath the ceaseless smart
Of a PIERCED CONSCIENCE, and a BROKEN HEART.

Go, STRANGER, and instruct the YOUNG and FAIR ;
Bid them of rash and hasty trust beware,
Lest they should find the dream for ever fly —
The dream of hope — and broken-hearted die !

And THOU, if ever thou hast prov'd unkind,
Or caus'd one sorrow to a virtuous mind ;

If thou hast lov'd "some gentle maid and true,"
Whose first affections never swerv'd from you ;
If thou hast seen with tears her eyelid swell,
When thou hast said — but for a time — FAREWELL !
LEAVE HER NOT — (oh ! for pity and for ruth) —
LEAVE HER NOT "tearful in her days of youth * ;"
For life may long, and not unhappy prove,
But ITS BEST BLESSING IS — THE HEART'S FIRST LOVE ! †

* "Tearful in the days of her youth." OSSIAN.

† The Doctor seems to have been so perverse in taste, as to think that the humblest poem ought to have something of a *moral lesson*.

A P P E N D I X.

A LOOSE paper contained the following extract from Polwhele's History of Cornwall. The judicious reader will immediately acknowledge the good sense of the Doctor, in departing so far from the real fact, as to avoid describing Ellen dying under the influence of the dire and deliberate vindictiveness, which the unfortunate young woman in the story actually did. Instead of such a revolting representation, he wisely describes Ellen's selection of the imprecating psalm, and her act of suicide, as the effects of mental derangement, and the phrenzy of the MOMENT, when the sight of the PRAYER-BOOK awakened the most painful recollections, and excited the desperate, but *instant* idea.

A comparison, also, of the plain narrative with the poetical story, will enable the reader to perceive the variations, incidents, and ornaments, adopted by the Doctor, for the sake of poetical beauty and pathetic effect.

“ October, 1780. Thomas Thomas, aged 37. This man died of mental anguish, or what is called a broken heart. He lived in the village of Drannock, in the

parish of Gwinnear, till an unhappy event occurred, which proved fatal to his peace of mind, for more than eight years, and finally occasioned his death. He courted Elizabeth Thomas, of the same village, who was his first-cousin; and it was understood that they were under a matrimonial engagement. But in May, 1772, some little disagreement having happened between them, he, out of resentment, or from some other motive, paid great attention to another girl; and on Sunday, the 31st of that month, in the afternoon, accompanied her to the Methodist meeting at Wall. During their absence, the discarded female, who was very beautiful in her person, but of an extremely irritable temper, took a rope and a common prayer-book, in which she had folded down the 109th Psalm, and, going into an adjacent field, hanged herself. Thomas, on his return from the preaching, inquired for Betsy; and being told she had not been seen for two or three hours, he exclaimed, "Good God! she has destroyed herself!" which apprehension seems to show, either that she had threatened to commit suicide in consequence of his desertion, or that he dreaded it from a knowledge of the violence of her disposition. But when he saw that his fears were realized, and had read the psalm, so full of execrations, which she had pointed out to him, he cried out, "I am ruined for ever and ever!" The very sight of this village and neighbourhood was now become insupportable, and he went to live at Marazion, hoping that a change of scene and social intercourse might expel those excruciating reflections which harrowed up his very soul, or at least render them less

acute; but in this he appeared to be mistaken, for he found himself closely pursued by the evil demon —

‘ Despair, whose torments no man, sure,
But lovers and the damn’d endure.’

“ To hear the 109th Psalm would petrify him with horror, and therefore he would not attend divine service on the 22d day of the month; he dreaded to go near a reading school, lest he should hear the ill-fated lesson. Whatever misfortunes befel him (and these were not a few, for he was several times hurt, and even maimed in the mines where he laboured), he still attributed them all to the malevolent agency of the deceased, and thought he could find allusions to the whole in the calamitous legacy which she had bequeathed him. When he slumbered, for he knew nothing of sound sleep, the injured girl appeared to his imagination, with such a countenance as she had after the rash action, and the prayer-book in her hand, open at the hateful psalm; and he was frequently heard to cry out, “ Oh, my dear Betsy, shut the book, shut the book!” &c. With a mind so disturbed and deranged, though he could not reasonably expect much consolation from matrimony, yet imagining that the cares of a family might draw off his thoughts from the miserable subject by which he was harassed both by day and night, he successively paid his addresses to many girls of Marazion; but they indignantly flew from him, and with a sneer asked him, whether he was desirous of bringing all the curses in the 109th Psalm on their heads? At length, however, he succeeded with one

who had less superstition and more fortitude than the rest, and he led her to St. Hilary church, to be married, January 21st, 1778; but on the road thither they were overtaken by a sudden and violent hurricane, such as those which not unfrequently happen in the vicinity of Mount's Bay; and he, suspecting that poor Betsy rode in the whirlwind and directed the storm, was convulsed with terror, and was literally 'coupled with fear.' Such is the power of conscious guilt to impute accidental occurrences to the hand of vindictive justice,—and so true is the observation of the poet,

'Judicium metuit sibi mens mali conscia justum.'

“He lived long enough to have a son and a daughter; but the corrosive worm within his breast preyed upon his vitals, and at length consumed all the powers of his body, as it had long before destroyed the tranquillity of his mind, and was released from all his pangs, both mental and corporeal, on Friday, October 20th, 1780, and buried at St. Hilary, the Sunday following, during evening service.” — POLWHELE.



