

and encouraging through the times of their difficulty and depression, and saying "Thank God for all this!" the pressure was as affectionately and gratefully returned. Then my brother and his wife rose up, and passed into the blaze of light which surrounded the gay and youthful company within.

### THE BARMAID.

SHE was a pretty, gentle girl—a farmer's orphan daughter, and the landlord's niece—whom I strongly suspected of being engaged to be married very shortly, to the writer of the letter that I saw her reading at least twenty times, when I passed the bar, and which I more than believe I saw her kiss one night. She told me a tale of that country which went so pleasantly to the music of her voice, that I ought rather to say it turned itself into verse, than was turned into verse by me.

A little past the village  
The inn stood, low and white,  
Green shady trees behind it,  
And an orchard on the right,  
Where over the green paling  
The red-cheeked apples hung,  
As if to watch how wearily  
The sign-board creaked and swung.

The heavy-laden branches  
Over the road hung low,  
Reflecting fruit or blossom  
In the wayside well below ;  
Where children, drawing water,  
Looked up and paused to see,  
Amid the apple branches,  
A purple Judas Tree.

The road stretch'd winding onward  
For many a weary mile—  
So dusty footsore wanderers  
Would pause and rest awhile ;  
And panting horses halted,  
And travellers loved to tell  
The quiet of the wayside inn,  
The orchard, and the well.

Here Maurice dwelt ; and often  
The sunburnt boy would stand  
Gazing upon the distance,  
And shading with his hand  
His eyes, while watching vainly  
For travellers, who might need  
His aid to loose the bridle,  
And tend the weary steed.

And once (the boy remember'd  
That morning many a day—  
The dew lay on the hawthorn,  
The bird sang on the spray)  
A train of horsemen, nobler  
Than he had seen before,  
Up from the distance gallopp'd,  
And paused before the door.

Upon a milk-white pony,  
Fit for a faery queen,  
Was the loveliest little damsel  
His eyes had ever seen ;

A servant-man was holding  
The leading rein, to guide  
The pony and its mistress  
Who cantered by his side.

Her sunny ringlets round her  
A golden cloud had made,  
While her large hat was keeping  
Her calm blue eyes in shade ;  
One hand held firm the silken reins  
To keep her steed in check,  
The other pulled his tangled mane,  
Or stroked his glossy neck.

And as the boy brought water,  
And loosed the rein, he heard  
The sweetest voice, that thank'd him  
In one low gentle word ;  
She turned her blue eyes from him,  
Look'd up, and smiled to see  
The hanging purple blossoms  
Upon the Judas Tree.

And show'd it with a gesture,  
Half pleading, half command,  
Till he broke the fairest blossom,  
And laid it in her hand ;  
And she tied it to her saddle  
With a ribbon from her hair,  
While her happy laugh rang gaily,  
Like silver on the air.

But the champing steeds were rested—  
The horsemen now spur'd on,  
And down the dusty highway  
They vanish'd and were gone.  
Years pass'd, and many a traveller  
Paused at the old inn-door,  
But the little milk-white pony  
And the child return'd no more.

Years pass'd, the apple branches  
A deeper shadow shed ;  
And many a time the Judas Tree,  
Blossom and leaf lay dead ;  
When on the loitering western breeze  
Came the bells' merry sound,  
And flowery arches rose, and flags  
And banners waved around.

And Maurice stood expectant,  
The bridal train would stay  
Some moments at the inn-door,  
The eager watchers say ;  
They come—the cloud of dust draws near—  
'Mid all the state and pride,  
He only sees the golden hair  
And blue eyes of the bride.

The same, yet, ah ! still fairer,  
He knew the face once more  
That bent above the pony's neck  
Years past at the inn-door :  
Her shy and smiling eyes look'd round,  
Unconscious of the place—  
Unconscious of the eager gaze  
He fix'd upon her face.

He pluck'd a blossom from the tree—  
The Judas Tree—and cast  
Its purple fragrance towards the bride,  
A message from the Past.

The signal came, the horses plunged—  
Once more she smiled around :  
The purple blossom in the dust  
Lay trampled on the ground.

Again the slow years fled,  
Their passage only known  
By the height the Passion-flower  
Around the porch had grown ;  
And many a passing traveller  
Paused at the old inn-door,  
But the bride, so fair and blooming  
Return'd there never more.

One winter morning, Maurice,  
Watching the branches bare,  
Rustling and waving dimly  
In the grey and misty air,  
Saw blazon'd on a carriage  
Once more the well-known shield,  
The azure fleurs-de-lis and stars  
Upon a silver field.

He looked—was that pale woman,  
So grave, so worn, so sad,  
The child, once young and smiling,  
The bride, once fair and glad ?  
What grief had dimm'd that glory ;  
And brought that dark eclipse  
Upon her blue eyes' radiance,  
And paled those trembling lips ?

What memory of past sorrow,  
What stab of present pain,  
Brought that deep look of anguish,  
That watch'd the dismal rain,  
That watch'd (with the absent spirit)  
That looks, yet does not see)  
The dead and leafless branches  
Upon the Judas Tree.

The slow dark months crept onward  
Upon their icy way,  
'Till April broke in showers,  
And Spring smiled forth in May,  
Upon the apple-blossoms  
The sun shone bright again,  
When slowly up the highway  
Came a long funeral train.

The bells toll'd slowly, sadly,  
For a noble spirit fled ;  
Slowly, in pomp and honour,  
They bore the quiet dead.  
Upon a black-plumed charger  
One rode, who held a shield,  
Where azure fleurs-de-lis and stars  
Shone on a silver field.

'Mid all that homage given  
To a fluttering heart at rest,  
Perhaps an honest sorrow  
Dwelt only in one breast.  
One by the inn-door standing  
Watch'd with fast-dropping tears  
The long procession passing,  
And thought of bygone years.

The boyish, silent homage  
To child and bride unknown,  
The pitying tender sorrow  
Kept in his heart alone,  
Now laid upon the coffin  
With a purple flower, might be

Told to the cold dead sleeper ;  
The rest could only see  
A fragrant purple blossom  
Pluck'd from a Judas Tree.

### THE POOR PENSIONER.

I MET her in the corridor, walking to and fro, and muttering to herself with a down-looking aspect, and a severe economy of dress, the season considered. I wondered how she came there, and was, to say the least of it, decidedly startled when she stopped directly opposite me, and, lifting a pair of blank, brown eyes to my face, said, in a stern voice :

"He was not guilty, my lord judge. God will right him yet. It will all come out some day. I can wait : yes, I can wait. I am more patient than death : I am more patient than injustice."

I made a hasty and undignified retreat down stairs when she left the passage free, and, meeting the waiter, inquired who the woman was. The man touched his forehead significantly, and said that she was harmless (I was very glad to hear it) ; and that she lived on the broken victuals ; and that his mistress always gave her a dinner on Christmas-day. While we were speaking together, she descended to where we stood, and repeated the exact formula of which she had made use before. She was a tall woman, strong-limbed, and thin to meagreness. She might be fifty, or perhaps fifty-five ; her skin was withered, and tanned by exposure to all sorts of weather, and her uncovered hair was burnt to a rusty iron-grey. The waiter suggested to her to go to the kitchen fire ; at which she broke into a scornful laugh, and reiterated, "I am more patient than death. I am more patient than injustice," and then walked out at the open door into the snow.

"I don't think she feels it, sir," said the waiter, opening my door for me to enter.

I do not think she did. I watched her from my window. She took up a handful of the newly-fallen snow and thrust it into her bosom, then hugged it close, as if it were a living thing, that could be warmed by that eager clasp ; I saw also, as she turned her dark face up towards the sky, that the angry scowl left it. I should imagine that all sensation in her was dead, except in one corner of her heart, to which had gathered the memory of some miserable wrong, whose acuteness would bide with her to the day of her death.

Her name, as I learnt on further inquiry, was Hester. She had been born and bred in the Yorkshire dales ; her parents were of the yeoman class, and poor through improvidence rather than misfortune. As a girl, Hester was remarkable for her pride and her beauty, of which no more relics remained than are left of the summer rose-garden in drear and misty November. She received the scant education common to her condition half-a-