

was suffered to continue his travels, and Clodio was left undisturbed in his whimsical phantasy. Naomi had opportunities of seeing my son without being observed by him, and Matilda needed but the assurance that Osmandy resembled his sister, to conceive a sufficient partiality for him. However certain we might esteem ourselves of succeeding in our project, we concerted the double adventure, which has terminated so favorably to our wishes. Osmandy's affections were engaged to his future consort as a statue; and Clodio was enamoured of Naomi as a Sylph. The year which you, my son, employed in your journey, gave me sufficient time for all my preparations. The wildest part of the forest near my mansion, was changed into the dwelling of the supposed fairy, and the pavillion, which after thy return was the usual residence of the two sisters, was so situated among the surrounding gardens, that Naomi could perform her double character without difficulty; and your supposition that a spot like this could not have remained unknown without magic, was confirmed by all the household having the strictest injunctions to profess ignorance, whenever your curiosity impelled you to make any enquiries respecting the wondrous place." "As for the wine that contained a sleeping potion, was conveyed there by me," said Naomi, who had arrived with Matilda at the castle in disguise, just after Osmandy, and heard best part of their discourse.

"And that there has been no forcery in the proceedings at the enchanted castle," continued she, with a smile, "Clodio will be convinced, when he receives this magic feat, together with the Moors, giants, dragons, and other apparatus, which accompany the heart and hand of Diana herself.

THE  
ROBBER'S DAUGHTER;  
OR, THE  
PHANTOM OF THE GROTTO.

ABOUT the distance of three miles from the Black Forest, in Germany, was once situated a strong free-booter's hold, which was occupied by a knight named *Wilibald*; he was the flower of free-booters, and the terror of all who ventured along the roads. The moment his sword was girt about his loins, and his spurs tinkled at his heels, his heart was steel'd to bloodshed and to rapine.

He accounted pillage and plunder among the privileges of his order; so he fell upon the defenceless traders and country people without mercy. At the word, "*Wilibald* is at hand," all was seized with consternation and horror; the peasants flocked into the fortified towers, and the watch-guard upon the tower sounded their bugles, to give warning of the danger.

But at home, this dread free-booter was as gentle as a lamb, the best of masters, and the fondest of husbands. His wife was a perfect pattern of virtue and good conduct. She loved her husband, and superintended her household with unremitting diligence. She had brought her husband two daughters, whom she instructed in piety and virtue.

At the foot of the castle was a plentiful spring, within a kind of natural grotto, which concealed itself among the tangled thickets. The fountain-head, according to tradition, was inhabited by a nymph of the family of the *Naiads*. If report spoke true, she had been seen, on the eve of important occurrences, in the castle. Whenever, during her husband's absence, the noble lady wanted to breathe a little fresh air beyond the gloomy walls of the mansion, or stole out to exercise her charity in secret, it was her custom to repair to this fountain.

Once, when *Wilibald* sallied forth with his little troop, to waylay the merchants, he tarried abroad beyond the time he had fixed for his return. His affectionate lady, alarmed at his unprecedented delay, apprehended nothing less than that he had been slain in the rencontre, or at least had fallen in the enemy's hand. Being no longer able to endure her apartment, she threw her cloak over her shoulders, and stole out at the private door towards the grove, that she might pursue her melancholy ideas beside her favourite fountain. Her eyes were dissolved in tears, and her moans, harmonized with the melting murmurs of the rivulet, as it lost itself among the grass.

As she approached the grotto, it seemed as if an airy phantom hovered within the entrance; but she was too deeply absorbed in sorrow to pay attention to the vision; and a transitory idea, that it was some illusion of the moon-light, passed half unperceived across her imagination. But on a nearer approach a figure in white was seen to move, and to beckon her into the grotto. The report concerning the inhabitant of the spring, that was circulated, had not failed to reach her ears, and she now recognized the phantom in white for the nymph of the fountain. She concluded that the apparition denoted some important family event: and her husband being uppermost in her thoughts, she instantly set up a lamentation, "Alas, unhappy day! Ah, *Wilibald*, thou art no more!—Thou hast made me a widow, and thy poor children are become orphans!"

While she lamented in this manner, a gentle voice was heard to proceed from the grotto: "Be not afflicted; I do not come to announce bad tidings: approach without fear; I am only a friend that wishes to talk with thee." As she stepped into the grotto, the inhabitant took her kindly by the hand, kissed her forehead, seated herself close beside her, and spake: "Welcome to my habitation,

belov'd mortal, whose heart is pure as the water of my fountain. As for me, the only favour I can confer upon thee is to disperse the fortunes of thy life. Thy husband is safe: ere the morning cock crows thou shalt fold him in thy arms. Do not be apprehensive of thy husband, for the spring of thy life shall be dried up before his. But thou wilt first bear him a daughter. The balance of her fate is equally poised between happiness and misery."

Matilda was deeply affected, when she heard that her daughter was to become an infant orphan. She was unable to suppress her tears. The Naiad, deeply touched by her sorrow, endeavoured to compose her mind: "Be not afflicted; when thou art no longer able to tend thy infant, I will discharge the mother's office, on condition, that I am chosen one of her god-mothers. Be careful at the same time to bring me back safe, the baptismal gift which I shall leave with her. This was no offer to be rejected. The Naiad took a smooth pebble out of the rivalet, and gave it to Matilda; charging her, at the proper season, to send one of her damsels to throw it into the fountain-head, as a summons to attend the ceremony. The matron promised that the injunction should be punctually observed, laid all these things up in her heart, and returned to the castle. Her patroness stepped into the water, and vanished.

Before a year had expired, the virtuous lady communicated to her lord a discovery, which raised in his mind the pleasing expectation of the arrival of an heir male, when, in a few weeks she was delivered of a daughter. The father would much rather have taken a boy into his arms; but he nevertheless rode about in high spirits to invite his friends and neighbours to the christening. On the appointed day Matilda called to her one of her trusty maids, and charged her thus: "Take this pebble; go and throw it behind you, without saying a word, into the fountain in the grotto: be careful to do exactly as I have directed you."—The maid punctually obeyed the injunction; and before she returned, an unknown lady stepped into the apartment where the company was assembled. When the child was brought out, and the priest had gone up to the font, the highest place fell to the stranger, every one respectfully making way for her. Her beauty, and the gracefulness of her demeanour, attracted every eye. At sight of the stranger Matilda betrayed some emotion—She probably felt a mixture of pleasure and surprise, at the punctuality shewn by the Naiad in the performance of her engagement. The presents now engaged all the mother's attention: a shower of gold was poured upon the nursing from the liberal hands of its god-mothers. Last of all, the unknown lady came forward with her boon. They looked for a present of inestimable value from so splendid a person, especially when they saw her produce, and unfold with great care, a silk case, which, as it turned out, contained nothing but a musk-ball, and that not the precious drug, but an imitation, turned in box-wood—This she laid very careful upon the cradle, gave the mother a kiss upon the forehead, and then quitted the apartment.

So paltry a present occasioned a whisper through the room, and a laugh of scorn succeeded;—for the festivity of a christening has in

all ages been remarkable for its effect in frightening the wit—entertained the guests at the expense of their fair stranger.

Ere the infant had outgrown the leading-strings, the nymph's prophecy respecting her mother was fulfilled: she was taken ill, and died so suddenly, that she had not even time to think of the musk-ball; much less could she dispose of it for the advantage of little Matilda, according to the directions of her patroness. Wilibald was unfortunately absent, he had gone to a tournament, and was on his way homeward as this melancholy event happened, with his heart bounding for joy, on account of a prize he had received from the hands of the Emperor himself. As soon as the dwarf on the watch-tower was aware of his lord's approach, he blew his horn, as usual, to announce his arrival to the people in the castle; but he did not blow a cheerful note, as on former occasions. The draw-bridge fell; he cast an eager look into the court-yard, where he beheld the symbol of a dead body set out before the door; and the window-shutters were closed. At the same instant he heard the lamentation of the household, for they had just placed Matilda's coffin on the bier. At the head sat the two eldest daughters, all covered with crape. They were silently shedding showers of tears over their departed mother. The little darling was seated at the foot; she was as yet incapable of feeling her loss, and so she was employed in stripping, with childish unconcern, the flowers that were strewed over the dead body. This melancholy spectacle was too much for Wilibald's firmness: he fell upon the ice-cold corpse, bedewed the wan cheeks with his tears, pressed with his quivering lips against the pale mouth, and gave himself up without reserve to the bitterness of sorrow.

It has been remarked, that the most violent feelings are the shortest in their duration. Accordingly our widower felt the load of sorrow grow lighter by degrees, and in a short time entertained thoughts of repairing his loss by a second wife. The lot of his choice fell upon a young damsel, the very antitype of the gentle Matilda. The new lady delighted in pomp and parade; her extravagance knew no bounds; she held banquets and carousals without number; her fruitfulness peopled the house with a numerous progeny. The daughters of the first marriage were disregarded, and they very soon were put away out of sight and out of mind. The two elder sisters were placed in a nunnery, and Little Matilda banished to a remote corner of the house, no more to intrude upon her step-mother's notice. As this vain woman was utterly averse to all household affairs, her want of economy rose to such a pitch, that she found herself frequently under the necessity of despoiling the repositories of her predecessor. Happening one day to be in great distress, she rummaged every drawer for valuables; in her search, she stumbled upon a private compartment in an old escrutoire, and, to her great joy, among other articles, fell upon Matilda's casket of jewels. Her greedy eye devoured the sparkling diamonds, bracelets, necklaces, lockets, and the whole treasure of trinkets besides. She examined article by article, and calculated in idea how much

this glorious windfall would produce. Among other rarities she was aware of the wooden musk-ball; she tried to unscrew it, but it was swelled by the damp. She then poised it on her hand, but finding it as light as a hollow nut, she concluded it was an empty ring case, and tossed it as worthless lumber out at the window.

Little Matilda happened to be playing on the grass-plot immediately below. Seeing a round ball roll along the turf, she grasped with a child's eagerness at the new play-thing. It afforded her amusement for several days; she was so fond of it, that she would not part with it out of her own hands. One sultry summer's noon, nurse carried her charge to the grotto for coolness; where she left her, to pick some berries. The child played with the musk-ball, rolling it before her, and running after it: once she rolled it a little too far, and it tumbled into the waters. Immediately a female, beautiful as an angel, appeared in vi.w. The Nymph accosted her in the most engaging terms: 'Be not afraid, my little dear; here is thy play-thing that fell into the water.' The sight of it enticed the child towards her: the Nymph took her up in her arms, pressed her gently to her bosom, and bedewed her face with tears. 'Poor little orphan,' said she, 'I have promised to be a mother to thee. Come often here to see me. Thou wilt always find me in this grotto upon throwing a pebble into the fountain. Keep thy musk-ball with the utmost care: be sure never play with it any more, lest thou lose it; for some time or other, it will fulfill three of thy wishes. When thou art grown a little bigger, I'll tell thee more. She, above all things, enjoined her silence. Soon afterwards the nurse returned, and the Nymph was gone.

All her thoughts were now turned towards the fountain. Whenever the weather permitted, she proposed a walk there: her superintendant could deny nothing, the grotto having always been the favourite retreat of her mother, she gratified her wishes so much the more cheerfully. Matilda always contrived some pretext for sending away nurse; no sooner was her back fairly turned, than she dropped a pebble into the spring, which instantly procured her the company of her godmother. The Naiad was not only her companion and confidante, but likewise her instructor in every female accomplishment; and she was studious to form her exactly after the pattern of her virtuous mother.

One day the Nymph clasped her charming Matilda in her arms, reclined her head upon her shoulder, and displayed so much fondness, that the young lady could not refrain from shedding tears upon her hand, as she pressed it in silence against her lips. 'Alas! my child,' said she, 'thou weepst, and knowest not wherefore; but thy tears are ominous of thy fate. A sad revolution awaits yon fortress. Ere the mower whets his scythe, or the west wind whistles over the stubble of the corn-field, all shall be desolate and forlorn. When the maidens go forth to fetch water from my spring, and return with empty pitchers, then remember that the calamity is at hand. Preserve carefully the musk-ball, which will fulfill three of thy wishes, but do not squander away this privilege heedlessly.

Fare thee well; we meet no more at this spot.' She then instructed her ward in another magic property of her ball, which might be serviceable to her in time of need. One evening, about the season of corn harvest, the maids that went out for water returned pale and affrighted, with their pitchers empty; their teeth chattered, and every limb quivered as if they were shaken by an ague. 'The lady in white,' they reported, 'is sitting beside the well, wringing her hands in great affliction.' Curiosity, carried several out to examine whether the report was true or false. They saw the same apparition; nevertheless they mustered up courage to approach the fountain, but as they came near, the phantom was gone. Many interpretations were attempted, but no one fell upon the true import of the sign: Matilda alone was privy to it; but she held her peace in compliance of the Naiad. She repaired, dejected to her chamber, where she sat, in fearful expectation of the things that were to come to pass.

Wilibald had degenerated by this time into a mere woman's tool; he could never satisfy his wife with enough of robbery and plunder. When there was a want of money or provisions, the broad-wheeled waggons and the rich bales of the Venetians, afforded a never-failing resource. Outraged at these continual depredations, the general congress determined upon Wilibald's destruction, since remonstrances and admonitions were of no avail. Before he would believe they were in earnest, the banners of the congress were displayed before his castle-gate, and nothing was left him but the resolution to sell his life as dear as possible. The guns shattered the bastions: on both sides, the cross-bowmen did their utmost: a shaft, discharged in a luckless moment, pierced Wilibald's vizor, and lodged deep in his brain. Great dismay fell upon his party at the loss of their undaunted leader: and the enemy seized the opportunity for making an assault: they clambered over the walls, carried the gates, and smote every living thing that came in their way with the edge of the sword: they did not spare even the extravagant wife, nor her helpless children. The castle was completely ransacked, then set on fire and levelled with the ground, so that not one stone was left upon another.

During the alarm, Matilda had barricaded her doors in the best manner she was able, and took post at her little window in the roof of the house; and finding that bolts and bars were not likely to afford any security, she put on her yell, and then turned her musk-ball thrice round, and repeated the words the Naiad had taught her.

She now came down stairs, and passed unperceived through the confusion of slaughter. She did not quit her paternal roof without deep sorrow of heart, which was much aggravated by her being at a loss which way to take. She hastened from the scene of carnage and desolation, till her delicate feet refused to serve her any longer. The falling of night, together with extreme weariness, constrained her to take up her lodging at the foot of an oak, in the open fields. She turned aside her head to take a last well view and to breathe her last blessing on the place where she had passed

the years of her childhood, when, behold, the sky appeared all blood red: from this sign she concluded that the residence of her father had become a prey to the flames; she turned away her face from this horrid spectacle, heartily wishing for the hour when the sparkling stars should grow dim, and the dawn peep from the east. Ere the morning had dawned, she proceeded on her wandering pilgrimage; and arrived betimes at a village, where a compassionate housewife took her in, and recruited her strength with a slice of bread and a bowl of milk. With this woman she bartered her cloaths in exchange for meaner apparel, and then joined a company of carriers. In her forlorn situation, she had no other resource than to seek a place in some family; but, as this was not the season for hiring servants, it was a long time before she could find employment.

Count Conrad, a knight of the order of knights templars, had a palace in the city, where Matilda had taken her residence. During his absence Mrs. Gertrude, the housekeeper, bore sovereign sway in the mansion. She raised such an alarm wheresoever she moved, that the maids dreaded the rattling of her keys as much as children do hobgoblins. Saucepans and heads suffered alike for her ill-humours; when no projectiles were within reach, she would wield her bunch of keys in her brawny arm, and beat the sides and shoulders of her subalterns black and blue. One day she had administered her office of correction so rigorously, that all the household decamped with one consent; it was at this conjuncture that the gentle Matilda approached to offer her services. But she had taken care to conceal her elegant shape, by fastening a large lump on her left shoulder, as if she had been crooked; her beautiful auburn hair was covered with a large coarse cap; and she had anointed her face and hands, in imitation of the gypsies, with juice of walnut husks. Mother Gertrude, who on hearing the bell ring, poked her head out of the window, was no sooner aware of the singular figure at the door, than she exclaimed, "Who art thou? Whence dost thou come? And what canst thou do?" The suppositious gypsy answered: "I am an orphan, Matilda by name; I am a stout girl; can spin, card, and knit; I can stew, bake, and brew; am honest, and here to serve you." The housekeeper, softened by all these important qualifications, opened her door to the nut-brown virgin, and gave her a shilling in earnest, as kitchen-maid. The new huieling plied her business so diligently, that Mrs. Gertrude, for want of practice, lost her dexterity at hurling saucepans at a mark. She still, however, retained her morose and querulous humour; and was sure to find fault with every thing.

About the falling of the first snow, our housekeeper had the whole mansion put in readiness for the reception of her lord, who soon afterwards made his appearance, followed by a train of servants, a troop of horses, and a loud cry of hounds. The arrival of the Templar raised little curiosity in Matilda; her work in the kitchen had grown so upon her hands, that she had not a moment to gape after him. One morning, as she was drawing water at the well, he accidentally passed by her, and his appearance kindled sensations in her bosom, to which it had hitherto been a stranger. She beheld a

young man, whose beauty exceeded the fairest of her dreams. The sparkling of his eye, the good humour that lightened up his features, his flowing hair, half concealed by the plumes that overshadowed his soldier's hat, his firm step, and the grace of his whole demeanour, acted so powerfully on her heart, that the blood moved with increased velocity along her veins. She now, for the first time, felt the degraded station to which an untoward fate had reduced her, and this sentiment was an heavier load than the large pitcher. The handsome knight hovered before her imagination day and night: she was continually longing to see him; and whenever she heard him cross the court-yard, she was sure to discover a want of water in the kitchen, and ran with the pitcher in her hand to the well; though the cavalier never once bestowed a glance upon her.

Conrad seemed to exist merely for the purpose of pleasure. He attended every banquet and rejoicing in the city; but Miss Matilda had no share in the festivity: she sat all day in the smoky kitchen, and wept till her pining eyes became sore, constantly bewailing the caprice of fortune, which heaps a profusion of the joys of life over her favourites, while from others she greedily snatches every instant of cheerfulness. Her heart was heavy she knew not why; for she had no suspicion that love had taken up his abode there.

The enamoured Matilda formed project after project, till at last she fell upon a scheme to realise the fondest of her dreams. She had still her godmother the Naiad's musk-ball safe: she had never felt any desire to open it, and make an essay of its power to gratify her wishes. She now resolved to try the experiment. The citizens had, about this time, prepared a sumptuous banquet, in compliment to the Emperor, on the birth of his son. The rejoicings were to continue three days. Each day there was a tournament, and a rich prize for the victor: each evening the most beautiful damsels danced with the knights till break of day. Count Conrad did not fail to attend these festivities.

Matilda had come to the resolution of fallying forth in quest of adventures, on this occasion. After she had arranged the kitchen, and every thing was quiet in the house, she retired to her bed-chamber, and, washing away the tawny varnish, called the lilies and roses of her complexion into new bloom. She then took the musk-ball in her hand, and wished for a new gown, as rich and elegant as fancy could form, with all its appurtenances. On screwing off the top a piece of silk issued out, expanding itself, and rustling all the while. On examination it proved a full dress, fitted up with every little article: the gown fitted as exactly as if it had been cast on her body. Her vanity was fully gratified, as she took a survey of her dress, and she was perfectly content with herself. Accordingly she did not defer a moment longer the execution of her stratagem. She thrice whirled round the magic ball, saying, "Each eye be drowned in sleep." Instantly a deep slumber fell upon the whole household, not excepting the vigilant housekeeper. Matilda glided in a moment out of the house, passed unseen along the streets,



and stepped into the ball-room with the air of one of the Graces; and the charming new figure raised great admiration among the company. Among the noble knights, who crowded to take a peep of the unknown damsel, the Count was far from hindmost. He was nothing less than a woman-hater; and, though an exact connoisseur in the sex, he thought he had never beheld a sweeter person. He approached, and engaged her to dance. She modestly presented her hand, and danced with enchanting elegance. Her nimble feet scarce touched the floor, and the ease and gracefulness of her movements set every eye in rapture. Count Conrad paid his heart for his partner. He no more quitted the fair dancer. He said as many fine things, and pushed his suit with as much zeal and earnestness as the most enamoured of our heroes of romance. Matilda was as little mistress of her own heart: she conquered, and was vanquished in her turn. Her first essay in love was crowned with success equal to her fondest wishes. It was not in her power to keep the sympathy of her feelings concealed beneath the cloak of female reserve. The enraptured Count soon perceived that he was no hopeless lover; his chief anxiety arose from his entire ignorance of his charming partner; and how to prosecute his suit, unless he could discover where she lived. But on this subject all enquiries were in vain: she eluded every question, and after all his efforts he could only obtain a promise that she would make her appearance at the next night's ball. He thought to outwit her, in case she should forfeit her word, by posting all his servants on the look-out to dog her home.

The dawn had already peeped, before she could find an opportunity of slipping away from the knight, and quitting the room. But no sooner had she passed the door, than she turned her musk-ball thrice round, and repeated her spell: by these means she got to her chamber, in spite of the Baron's night-birds, who did not catch a glimpse of her, though they were hovering in every street. No sooner had she shut the door behind her, than she locked up the silken apparel safe in her box, put on her cook's dress, and resumed her ordinary occupations.

Never had any day appeared so tedious to the knight, as that which succeeded the ball. Every hour seemed a week: his heart was in perpetual agitation between longing impatience and apprehension, lest the inscrutable beauty should fail in her engagement. At the approach of evening he equipped himself for the ball, with greater magnificence than the preceding day. He was the first at the rendezvous of pleasure, where, having stationed himself so as to command the entrance, he scrutinized every one who came in with the keenness of an eagle, expecting, with all the eagerness of impatience, the arrival of his dulcinea. The evening star was already advanced high above the horizon, before the young lady could find time to retire to her chamber, and consider what she should do, whether she should extort a second wish from her musk-ball, or reserve it for some more important occurrence of life. The faithful counsellor, Reason, advised the latter; but love enjoined the former with such impetuosity, that dame Reason was quite silenced. Matilda wished for a

dress of rose-coloured satin, so sumptuously bedecked with jewels that a princess need not be ashamed to wear it. The complaisant, musk-ball exerted its powers: the apparel exceeded the lady's expectation: she performed, in high spirits, the rites of the toilette, and, by the help of the talisman, arrived at the spot where she was so ardently expected, without having been beheld by mortal eye. She appeared far more charming than before. The Count's heart bounded for joy at the first glimpse of her person. A power, as irresistible as the central attraction of the globe, hurried him towards her through the vortex of dancers; and as he had now almost given up all hopes of seeing her again, he was unable to stammer out the effusions of his gladness. In order to gain time to recover himself, and to hide his confusion, he led her out to dance, when every couple immediately made way for the charming pair.

At the conclusion of the dance, Count Conrad conducted his weary partner into the contiguous apartment, under the pretext of offering her some refreshment. Here, in the tone of a well-bred courtier, he said a thousand flattering things, as he had done the day before; but the cold language of politeness insensibly kindled into the language of the heart, and at last terminated in a declaration of love. "Consider well what you propose," replied Matilda, "lest repentance overtake you. Those who marry in haste, have commonly leisure to repent. I am an entire stranger: you know nothing of my rank or station; whether I am your equal in birth and dignity, or whether a borrowed lustre dazzles your eyes. It is unbecoming a man of your rank to promise any thing lightly: but a nobleman's engagements should be held inviolable." Here Count Conrad seized her hand, pressed it to his heart, and in the warmth of his affection, exclaimed, "Yes, I pledge my knightly honour, and engage my soul's salvation to boot, were you the meanest man's daughter, and but a pure and undefiled virgin, I will receive you for my wedded wife." On this he pulled a diamond ring from his finger, and gave it her as the pledge of his truth; and took in return the first kiss from her chaste untasted lips, and thus proceeded: "That you may entertain no suspicion of my purpose, I invite you three days hence to my house, where I will appoint my friends, knights, and nobles, to be witness of our union." Matilda resisted this proposal with all her might: she was not satisfied at the galloping rate at which the knight's love proceeded; and she was determined to prove the constancy of his affection. He did not cease to press her to consent, but she said neither No nor Yes. The company did not break up before the dawn of day. Matilda vanished; and the knight, who had not enjoyed one wink of sleep, summoned the vigilant house-keeper betimes and gave her orders to prepare a sumptuous feast on the day appointed.

Matilda had so many fowls to pluck, draw, and skewer, that she was obliged to give up her night's rest: yet she did not grudge her labour, well knowing that the banquet was all upon her account. The hour approached; the cheerful host flew to receive every guest

as he arrived, and every time the knocker sounded, he imagined the beautiful stranger was at the door. Though the guests were assembled, the fester lingered long before he served up the dishes. Conrad still waited for the charming bride; but at last, when she did not appear, he was reluctantly obliged to give the signal for dinner. When the guests were seated, there appeared one cover too much; but no one could guess who it was that had dishonoured the knight's invitation. The founder of the feast lost his cheerfulness by perceptible gradations, and in spite of all his exertions it was not in his power to enliven his guests with the spirit of mirth. The musicians, who had been summoned for the evening ball, were discharged; and for this time the banquet ended without one tuneful sound, in the house that had always before been the mansion of joy.

The disconcerted guests stole away at an unusually early hour: the knight longed for the solitude of his bed-chamber; he was impatient for an opportunity to ruminate at liberty on the fickleness of love. While his reflections were engaged by this melancholy subject, he tossed and tumbled to and fro on his bed with the most intense exertion of thought, he could not determine what conclusion to draw from the absence of his mistress. The blood boiled in his veins; and ere he had closed an eye, the sun peeped in through his curtains. The servants found their master in a violent paroxysm of fever, wrestling with wild fancies. This discovery threw the whole family into the most violent consternation.

For seven long days did secret chagrin gnaw Count Conrad's heart: the roses of his cheeks were all withered, and the fire of his eyes was extinguished. Matilda had perfect intelligence of every thing that was going forward within doors; and it cost her a hard conflict between head and heart, reason and inclination, before she could firmly resolve not to hearken to the call of her beloved. But on the one hand she was desirous to prove the constancy of her suitor, and she hesitated on the other to extort its last wish from the musk-ball: for she considered that a new dress was necessary to the bride; and her godmother had charged her not to lavish away her wishes thoughtlessly. Nevertheless, she felt very heavy at heart, retired to a corner, and wept bitterly. The Count's illness, of which she easily divined the secret cause, gave her still greater concern; and when she heard of his extreme danger she was utterly inconsolable.

The seventh day, according to the prognostication of the physicians, was to determine for life or death. In the morning Matilda waited, as usual, upon the housekeeper, to receive her instructions respecting the bill of fare. But Mrs. Gertrude was in too deep tribulation to be capable of arranging the simplest matter, much less could she regulate the important affair of dinner. Big tears rolled down her leathern cheeks: "Ah! Matilda," she sobbed, "we shall all be forced to budge: our good master will not live out the day." These were sorry tidings; the young lady was ready to sink for sorrow; she soon, however, recovered her spirits, and said, "Do not despair of our lord's life, he will not die, but recover: this night I have dreamed a good dream." "Let me hear thy dream, that I may

interpret it," said she. "I thought," replied Matilda, "that I was at home with my mother: the good woman took me aside, and taught me how to prepare a broth from nine sorts of herbs, which cures all sickness if you do but take three table-spoonfuls. Prepare this broth for thy master, and he will not die, but get better from the hour he shall eat of it." "Thy dream," she said, "is too extraordinary to have come by chance. Go this instant, and make ready thy broth, and I will try if I cannot prevail on our lord to taste of it." Matilda prepared an excellent restorative soup, with all sorts of garden herbs and costly spices, and when she had dished it, she dropped the diamond ring, given her by the knight as a pledge of constancy, into the bason, and then bade the servant carry it up.

The patient so much dreaded the housekeeper's boisterous eloquence, that he constrained himself to swallow a couple of spoonfuls. In stirring his morsel to the bottom he felt a hard body, which could have no business there. He fished it out with the spoon, and beheld, to his astonishment, his own diamond ring. His eye immediately beamed life and youthful fire, to the great satisfaction of Mother Gertrude, and the servants in waiting, he emptied the whole bason, with visible signs of a good appetite. They all ascribed this happy change to the soup, for the knight had taken care to keep his ring concealed from the by-standers. He now turned to Mrs. Gertrude, and enquired, "Who prepared this good soup for me, that restores my strength, and calls me back to life?" "Do not give yourself any concern, good sir knight, about the person who prepared the soup: God be praised that it has had the good effect for which we all of us prayed!" This evasion was not likely to satisfy the Count, he gravely insisted on an answer to his question, when the housekeeper gave him this information: "There is a young gypsy, a servant, in the kitchen, she understands the virtue of every herb and plant, it was she who prepared the soup that has done you so much good." "Bring her to me this moment," resumed the knight, "that I may thank and recompense her for the life she has saved." "Pardon me, I beseech you, sir," returned Gertrude, "but the very sight of her would make you ill again. She is as ugly to look upon as a toad; she has a great hunch upon her back, her cloaths are all black and greasy, her hands and face are bedaubed with soot and ashes." "Do as I order you," concluded the Count, "and let me hear no longer demurs." Mrs. Gertrude obeyed in silence; she summoned Matilda quickly from the kitchen, and ushered her into the sick chamber. The knight gave orders that every one should retire, and shut the door close. He then addressed the gypsy, "You must acknowledge freely, my girl, how you came by the ring I found in the bason in which my breakfast was served up." "Noble knight," replied the damsel, "I received the ring out of your own hands; you presented it to me the second evening we danced together at the public rejoicings, it was when you vowed eternal love and constancy to me.—Look now, and say whether my figure or station deserves that on my account you should sink into an early grave. In con-

passion for the condition to which you were reduced, I could no longer suffer you to remain in such a mistake." Count Conrad's weak stomach was not prepared for so strong an antidote to love; he surveyed her in astonishment, and paused. He naturally conceived a suspicion, that his amour had been betrayed, and his friends were practising a pious fraud to extricate him. Still, however, the genuine ring was proof positive that the beautiful stranger was some way or other concerned in the plot. He therefore determined to cross-examine and convict her out of her own mouth: "If you are indeed," said he, "the lovely maiden to whom I devoted my heart, be assured that I am ready to fulfil my engagement; but take care how you attempt to impose upon me. Reassume but the form under which you appeared at the ball-room, and the words which I uttered when I delivered this ring to you shall be sacred and inviolable. But if you cannot perform these requisitions, I shall cause you to be corrected for a vile impostor, unless you satisfy me how you gained possession of this ring."—"Alas!" said Matilda, sighing, "if it be only the glare of beauty that has dazzled your eyes, woe be to me when time or chance shall rob me of these transient charms; when age shall have spoiled this slender shape, and bowed me down to the ground; when the roses and lilies shall fade, and this sleek skin become shrivelled! When the borrowed form under which I now appear, shall, as some time it will, belong to me, what will become of your vows and promises?" Sir Conrad was staggered at this speech, which seemed much too considerate for a kitchen wench. "Know," he replied, "that beauty captivates the heart of man, but virtue alone can retain in the soft bondage of love." "Be it so," returned the damsel; "I go to fulfil your requisitions: the decision of my fate shall be left to your own heart."

The Count fluctuated between hope and the dread of a new deception, called the housekeeper, and gave her strict orders, "Attend this girl to her chamber, and wait at the door while she puts on her clean cloaths.—Be sure you do not stir till she comes out." Mother Gertrude took her prisoner under charge, without being able to guess the intention of her lord's injunctions. Matilda asked for a bit of soap and an handful of bran, took up a wash-hand basin, entered her attic, and shut the door, while the new appointed duenna watched on the outside with all the punctuality that had been recommended to her. The Count, big with expectation, quitted his bed, put on his most elegant suit, and betook himself to his drawing-room, there to abide the final issue of his love adventure. At length the folding doors flew open of a sudden, and Matilda, arrayed like a bride, and beautiful as a goddess, stepped into the drawing-room. Conrad exclaimed, in the transport of a lover intoxicated with joy. "Goddess or mortal! whichever you may be, behold me prostrate at your feet, ready to renew the vows I have already made, and to confirm them by the most solemn oaths, provided you do not disdain to receive this hand and heart." The lady raised the suppliant knight: "Gently, sir knight, I pray, do not be too rash with your vows; you behold me here in my real shape, but in all other respects I am

an utter stranger to you. You have still the ring on your finger." Conrad instantly drew it off, and it sparkled on his partner's hand, and she resigned herself to the knight. "Henceforward," said she, "you are the beloved of my heart. I have no longer any secret for you. I am the daughter of Wilibald, that stout and dauntless knight, whose misfortunes, doubtless, are well known to you. I escaped with difficulty from the downfall of my father's house; and under your roof, though in mean estate, have I found safety and protection." She proceeded to relate the whole of her story, without even suppressing the mystery of the musk-ball. Conrad, utterly forgetting that he had just been sick to death, invited for the following day, all the guests who had been driven away by his dejection, before whom he solemnly espoused his bride. The knight now relinquished the order, and celebrated his nuptials with great magnificence.

The new married couple spent their time in mutual happiness and innocent enjoyments. Count Conrad's mother was still living. She passed her widowhood in retirement, at the family seat. Her dutiful daughter-in-law had for some time longed, out of pure filial affection, to beg her blessing, and thank her for the noble son whom she had borne. But the Count always found some pretext for declining the visit: he now proposed, instead, a summer excursion to an estate that had lately fallen to him, and bordered upon the grounds belonging to Wilibald's demolished fortress. Matilda consented with great eagerness. She rejoiced at the idea of revisiting the spot where she had spent her early youth. She explored the ruins of her father's residence; dropped a piteous tear over the ashes of her parents; walked to the Naiad's fountain, and hoped her presence would induce the nymph to manifest herself. Many a pebble dropped into the spring-head, without the desired effect. Even the musk-ball floated on the surface like an empty bubble, and Matilda herself was fain to be at the trouble of fishing it out again. No fairy rose to view, although another christening was at hand; for the lady was on the point of bestowing on her Count one of the blessings of wedlock. She brought forth a boy beautiful as Cupid; and the joy of the parents was so extravagant, that the mother would never part with him out of her arms. She herself watched every breath of the little innocent, although the Count had hired a discreet nurse to attend the infant. But the third night, while all within the castle was buried in profound sleep, after a day of rejoicing, and a light slumber had fallen upon the watchful mother, on awaking she found the child vanished out of her arms. She called out in a voice of surprise and terror, "Nurse! where have you laid my babe?" "Noble lady," replied nurse, "the dear infant lies in your arms." The bed and bed-chamber were strictly searched, but nothing could be found, except a few spots of blood upon the floor. The nurse, on perceiving this, uttered a loud scream, "God, and all his holy saints, have mercy upon us!—the Griffin has been here, and carried off the child." The lady pined for the loss of her child till she became pale and emaciated, and the father was inconsolable. Though

the belief in the Griffin did not weigh a single grain of mustard in his mind, yet, as he could not explain the accident in any plausible manner, he allowed the nurse's prattle free range, and applied himself to comfort his afflicted wife; and she, out of deference to him, who hated all sadness, forced a cheerful countenance.

Time, the assuager of grief, closed by degrees the wound of the mother's heart, and love made up her loss by a second son. The anxious mother would not part with the boy; and she resisted the influence of sleep as long as ever her strength would permit. When at last she was no longer able to refuse the call of nature, she took the golden chain from her neck, slung it round the infant's body, and fastened the other end on her own arm; she then crossed herself and the child, that the Griffin might have no power to hurt it, and soon after was overtaken by an irresistible slumber. She awoke at the first ray of morning, but—horrible to tell! the sweet babe had vanished out of her arms. Matilda examined the golden chain that was wrapped round her arm; she found that one of the links had been cut through by a pair of sharp scissors, and swooned away at the discovery. The nurse raised an alarm in the house, and Conrad, upon hearing what had befallen his lady, drew his sword in a transport of rage and indignation, firmly resolved to inflict condign punishment on the nurse.

"Wretched woman?" he exclaimed, "did I not give thee strict charge to watch all night, and never once to turn aside thine eye from the infant, that when the monster came to rob the sleeping mother, thou mightest raise the house by thy outcries, and scare the Griffin away? But thou shalt now sleep an everlasting sleep." The woman fell down on her knees before him: "Yes, my noble lord, I entreat you, as you hope for mercy hereafter, to slay me this instant, that I may carry to the grave the horrid deed mine eyes have seen this night.

"What deed," he asked, have thine eyes beheld this night, too horrid for thy tongue to tell? Better confess, as becomes a faithful servant, than have thy secret extorted by the rack." "Alas!" replied the woman, "better the fatal secret were buried with me in the cold ground." The Count, whose curiosity was only raised the more by suspense, took the woman into a private apartment, and by threats and promises forced from her a discovery, which he would fain have been saved the pain of making. "Your lady, since I must needs disclose it, is a vile sorceress. At the dead of night, when every thing was hushed in repose, she feigned herself asleep, and I, without well knowing why, did the same. Not long afterwards she called me by my name, but I took no notice, and set to breathe hard and snore. Supposing me to be fast asleep, she took the infant, and pressing it to her bosom, kissed it fondly, and lisped these words, which I distinctly overheard, 'Child of bone, be transformed into a charm to secure me thy father's love. Now, thou little innocent, go to thy brother, and then I will prepare, from nine sorts of herbs, and thy bones, a potent draught, which will perpetuate my beauty and thy father's fondness.'—Having said this, she drew a dia-

mond needle out of her hair, forced it through the infant's heart, held the poor innocent out to bleed, and when it had ceased struggling laid it upon the bed before her, took out a musk-ball, and muttered a few words to herself. As she unscrewed the cover, a magic flame blazed forth, as if from a tun of pitch, and consumed the body in a few moments. She carefully gathered the ashes and bones into a box, which she pushed under the bed. She then, as if suddenly awaking, cried out in an anxious voice, 'Nurse! what have you done with my babe?' and I replied, shuddering for fear of her sorcery, 'Noble lady, the infant lies in your arms.' Thereupon she began to shew signs of bitter sorrow, and I ran out of the room, under pretence of calling assistance. These are the particulars of the shocking deed, which you have forced me to disclose."

Count Conrad stood as still as though he had been petrified; and it was a long time before he could utter a word. When he had a little collected himself, he said, "What occasion is there for the fiery trial? the stamp of truth is impressed on your words: I feel and fully believe that all is as you say. Keep the horrid secret close pent up in your heart. Intrust it to no mortal, not even to the priest when you confess. I will go in to the hyena with a feigned countenance; and while I embrace her, and speak comfort to her, be sure to draw the box with the dead bones, and deliver it secretly to me."

He stepped into his wife's chamber with the air of a man firm though deeply touched. His lady received him with the eye where no guilt was depicted, though her soul was wounded to death. She did not speak, but her countenance resembled an angel's countenance. Compassion softened the spirit of vengeance: he clasped the unhappy mother to his bosom, and she moistened his garment with the tears of her affliction. Meantime the nurse had taken care punctually to perform what she was ordered respecting the delivery of the horrid reservoir of bones. It cost his heart a hard struggle, before he could determine the fate of the supposed sorceress. He at length resolved to get rid of her privately, and without drawing the notice of mankind towards his domestic grievances. He mounted his steed, and rode away, after he had given these orders: "When the Countess leaves her chamber at the expiration of nine days, for the purpose of bathing, bolt the door on the outside, and let the fires be raised as high as possible, that she may sink under the vehemence of the heat, and come no more out alive." The servant, who, in common with the whole household, adored his kind and tender lady, heard these orders with the utmost sorrow and concern. But, nevertheless, he was afraid to open his lips in opposition to the knight, on account of the positive manner in which he spake. On the ninth day Matilda gave orders for heating the bath. Her husband, she thought, would not abide long, and she wished, before his return, to eradicate every vestige of her late misfortunes. On entering the bathing-room she observed the air to quiver for mere heat, and she made an effort to retreat, but a vigorous arm forced her irresistibly forwards, and she instantly heard some without bolt and bar the door—She cried out



for help in vain—nobody heard: the fuel was now piled up high, and the fire raised till the furnace glowed like an iron furnace.

The Countess resigned herself to her fate; only the odious suspicion, which she apprehended had fallen upon her, afflicted her soul much more than her disgraceful death. She then threw herself down upon a couch to begin her last agonies. Nature, however, on the approach of the evil hour, will make an involuntary struggle against her dissolution. In the anguish occasioned by the suffocating heat, as the unhappy sufferer toiled and tumbled on the couch, the musk-ball, which she had constantly carried about her, fell upon the ground. She snatched it eagerly up, and cried aloud, "O Naiad, if it be in thy power, deliver me from a dishonourable death, and vindicate my innocence!" She screwed off the top, and the same instant a thick mist arose out of the musk-ball, and diffusing itself through the whole apartment, refreshed the Countess, so that she no longer felt any oppression. The cloud collected itself into a visible form; and Matilda, whose apprehensions for her life had now vanished, beheld, to her unspeakable joy, the Nymph of the Fountain clasping the new-born infant to her bosom, and holding the elder boy with her right hand.

"Hail, my beloved Matilda!" exclaimed the Naiad: happy was it for thee that thou didst not so heedlessly lavish the third wish of thy musk-ball as the two former. Behold here the two living witnesses of thy innocence: they will enable thee to triumph over the black calumny under which thou hast nearly sunk. Henceforward the musk-ball will fulfil no more of thy wishes; but nothing further remains for thee to desire; I will unfold the riddle of thy fate.—Know, that the mother of thy husband is the author of all thy calamity. The marriage of her son proved a dagger to the heart of that proud woman, who imagined he had stained the honour of his house by taking a kitchen-wench to his bed. She breathed nothing but curses and execrations against him, and would no longer acknowledge him for the offspring of her womb. All her thoughts were bent on contrivances and plots to destroy thee, although the vigilance of thy husband had hitherto frustrated her malicious designs. She, however, at last succeeded to elude his vigilance by means of a fawning hypocritical nurse. She induced this woman, by the most liberal promises, to take thy first-born child out of thy arms, while asleep, and cast it, like a whelp, into the water. Fortunately she chose my spring-head for her wicked purpose; and I received the boy in my arms, and have ever since nursed him as his mother. In the same manner did she undesigningly commit to my charge the second son of my dear Matilda. It was this vile deceitful nurse who became thy accuser. She persuaded the Count that thou art a sorceress. She delivered into his hands a box full of the bones of doves and fowls, which he took for the remains of his children, and in consequence of this mistake gave orders to stifle thee in the bath. Spurred on by penitence, and an eager desire to countermand this cruel sentence, though he still holds thee guilty, he is now on his return, and in one short hour thou wilt recline, with thy honour vin-

icated, on his bosom." The Nymph, having uttered these words, stooped to kiss the Countess's forehead. She then, without waiting for any reply, involved herself in her veil of mist, and was no more seen.

Meanwhile the servants were exerting their utmost efforts to revive the extinguished fire. They thought they could hear the sound of human voices within, whence they concluded that the Countess was still alive. But all their stirring and blowing was ineffectual. The wood would no more take fire than if they had put on a charge of snow-balls. Not long afterwards Conrad rode up full speed, and eagerly enquired how it fared with his lady. The servants informed him, that they had heated the room right hot, but that the fire went suddenly out, and they supposed the Countess was yet alive. This intelligence rejoiced his heart. He dismounted, knocked at the door, and called out through the key-hole, "Art thou alive, Matilda?" The Countess replied, "Yes, my dear lord, I am alive, and my children are also alive." Overjoyed at this answer, the impatient Count bade his servants break open the door; he rushed into the bathing-room, fell down at the feet of his injured lady, bedewed her hands with tears of repentance, led her, and the charming pledge of her innocence and love, out of the dreary place of execution to her own apartment, and heard from her own mouth the true account of these transactions. Enraged at the foul calumny, and shameful sacrifice of his infants, he issued orders to apprehend and shut up the treacherous nurse in the bath. The fire now burned kindly, the flames played aloft in the air, and soon reduced the diabolical woman to ashes.

## THE MAGIC LEGACY.

A CERTAIN king had one son, named Alindor, whom he had made an accomplished prince. A few minutes before his death, which took place after a long illness, he addressed him in the following words:—

"Son, the spirits of my ancestors beckon me to them; I am aged, and it is time I should make room for thee. The crown, which I bequeath, has been a burden to my head. Thou, my son, wilt wear it with joy and honour. Know, that I have long possessed a treasure which enchantment has prevented me from enjoying: but