

# The Ladies' Garland.

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## THE REPOSITORY.

FROM BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

### THE WIDOW AND HER SON.

Not a more beautiful vale ever inspired pastoral poet in Arcadia, nor did Sicilian shepherds of old ever pipe to each other for prize of oaten reed, in a lovelier nook, than where yonder cottage stands, shaded, but scarcely sheltered, by a few birch trees. It is in truth not a cottage—but a shieling of turf, part of the knoll adhering to the side of the mountain. Not another dwelling—even small as itself—within a mile in any direction. Those goats, that seem to walk where there is no footing along the side of the cliff, go off themselves to be milked at evening, to a house beyond the hill, without any barking dog to set them home. There are many foot paths, but all of sheep, except one leading through the coppice-wood to the distant kirk. The angler seldom disturbs those shallows, and the heron has them to himself, watching with motionless neck all day long. Yet the shieling is inhabited, and has been so by the same person for a good many years. You might look at it for hours, and yet see no one so much as moving to the door. But a little smoke hovers over it—faint as mist—and nothing else tells that within is life.

It is inhabited by a widow, who once was the happiest of wives, and lived far down the glen, where it is richly cultivated, in a house astir with many children. It so happened, that in the course of nature, without any extraordinary bereavements, she outlived all the household, except one, on whom fell the saddest affliction that can befall a human being—the utter loss of reason. For some years after the death of all her other children, and her husband, his son was her support; and there was no occasion to pity them in their poverty, where all were poor. Her natural cheerfulness never forsook her; and although fallen back in the world, and obliged in her age to live without many comforts she once had known, yet all the past gradually was softened into peace, and the widow and her son were in the shieling as happy as any family in the parish. He worked at all kinds of work without, and she sat spinning from morn-

ing till night within—a constant occupation, soothing to one before whose mind past times might otherwise have come too often, and that creates contentment by its undisturbed sameness and visible progression. If not always at meals, the widow always saw her son for an hour or two every night, and throughout the whole sabbath day. They slept, too, under one roof, and she liked the stormy weather when the rains were on, for then he found some ingenious employment within the shieling, or cheered her with some book lent by a friend, or with the lively or plaintive music of his native hills. Sometimes, in her gratitude, she said that she was happier now than when she had so many other causes to be so; and when occasionally an acquaintance dropped in upon her solitude, her face welcomed every one with a smile that spoke more of resignation; nor was she averse to partake the sociality of the other huts, and sat sedate among youthful merriment when summer or winter festival came round, and poverty rejoiced in the riches of content and innocence.

But her trials, great as they had been, were not yet over; for this, her only son, was laid prostrate by a fever, and when it left his body, he survived hopelessly stricken in mind. His eyes, so clear and intelligent, were now fixed in idioty, or rolled about unobservant of all objects living or dead. To him all weather seemed the same—and if suffered, he would have lain down, like a creature void of understanding, in rain or on snow, not being able to find his way back for many paces from the hut. As all thought and feeling had left him, so had speech—all but of moaning as of pain or woe, which none but a mother could bear to hear without shuddering; but she heard it during night as well as day, and only sometimes lifted up her eyes as in prayer to God. An offer was made to send him to a place where the afflicted are taken care of, but she beseeched charity for the first time—such alms as would enable her, along with the earnings of her wheel, to keep her son in the shieling; and the means were given her from many quarters to do so decently, and with all the comforts that other eyes observed, but of which the poor object himself was insensible and unconscious. Thenceforth, it may almost be said, she never saw the sun, nor heard the torrent's roar. She went not to the kirk, but kept her sabbath where the poor paralytic lay—and there she sung the lonely psalm, and said the lonely prayer, unheard in heaven, as many despairing spirits would have thought. But it was not so: For in two years there came a meaning to his eyes, and he found a few words of imperfect speech, among which was that of 'Mother.' Oh! how

her heart burned within her, to know that her face was at last recognised! To feel that her kiss was returned, and to see the first tear that trickled from eyes that so long had ceased to weep! Day after day, the darkness that covered his brain grew less and less deep—to her that bewilderment now gave the blessedness of hope; for her son now knew that he had an immortal soul, and one evening joined faintly, and feebly, and erringly in prayer. A few weeks afterwards, he remembered only events and scenes long past and distant—and believed that his father and all his brothers and sisters were yet alive. He called upon them, by their names, to come and kiss them—on them, who had long been buried in the dust. But his soul struggled itself into reason and remembrance—and he at last said, "Mother did some accident befall me yesterday at my work down the glen? I feel weak, and about to die!" The shadows of death were indeed around him—but he lived to be told much of what had happened—and rendered up a perfectly unclouded spirit unto the mercy of his Saviour. His mother felt that all her prayers had been granted in that one boon—and when the coffin was borne away from the shieling, she remained in it with a friend, assured that in this world there could for her be no more grief. And there, in that same shieling, now that years have gone by, she still lingers, visited as often as she wishes by her poor neighbors—for, to the poor, sorrow is a sacred thing—who, by turns, send one of their daughters to stay with her, and cheer a life that cannot be long, but that, end when it may, will be laid down without one impious misgiving, and in the humility of a christian's faith.

### SABINUS AND OLINDA.—BY GOLDSMITH.

In a fair, rich, and flourishing country, whose cliffs are washed by the German ocean, lived Sabinus, a youth formed by nature to make a conquest wherever he thought proper; but the constancy of his disposition fixed him only with Olinda. He was indeed superior to her in fortune, but that defect on her side was so amply supplied by her merit, that none was thought more worthy of his regard than she. He loved her, he was beloved by her; and in a short time, by joining hands publicly, they avowed the union of their hearts. But alas! none, however fortunate, however happy, are exempt from the shafts of envy, and the malignant effects of ungovernable appetite. How unsafe, how detestable are they who have this fury for their guide! How certainly will it mislead them, and plunge them in errors they would have shuddered at, even in apprehension! Ariana, a lady of many amiable qualities, very nearly allied to Sabinus, and highly esteemed by him, imagined herself slighted, and injuriously treated, since his marriage was