

THE RUSTIC COQUETTE; OR, THE PEACE FESTIVAL.

BY MISS JANE STRICKLAND.

THE festivities that took place in 1814, in honor of THE PEACE, are still fresh in the memories of the British people. They formed a memorable epoch in the minds of young and old, while even childhood dates its earliest recollections from that period of general joy. Sweet peace, even in the most secluded vales, thy influence was benignly felt. The fond mother clasped her soldier son to her bosom, and wept for very gladness, while her returned sailor boy, half jealous of the caresses she lavished on his happier brother, cried in a tone of reproach: "Have you then forgotten me, mother?" words scarcely uttered before he too was caught to her maternal breast, and bedewed with joyful tears. Some there were indeed to whom the peace brought no gladness, and who sat within doors weeping for the husband, lover or son, and refusing, like Rachel, to be comforted, and sadly thought of him who filled a soldier's grave on the distant hills of the Peninsula or fields of France; but not to these afflicted mourners does my tale belong, but to the thoughtless village beauty, the gay smiling Fanny Bloomfield, and her two admirers, Ned Griffiths and Tom Bowling. Two lovers! yes, the little coquette had two. True hearted Tom had courted her from very boyhood, before he ever went to sea; but Corporal Griffiths was a conquest of more recent date, and the festival for the celebration of the peace, first made her acquainted with his merits.

The morning of that eventful day was one of summer's loveliest; each rose was gemmed with dew, and the honeysuckle, that clasped her tendrils round the old elm, exhaled her fragrance to every passing breeze, as Fanny Bloomfield, fresh and fair as the flowers she was gathering, tripped along the smooth-rolled gravel walk, singing as sweetly as the newly awakened lark, with a heart as light and buoyant as his wing, at times turning an arch look on Tom, who stood outside the pales, awaiting for her basket of flowers, as she provokingly carolled,

"I will not have a sailor,
Because he smells of tar."

And then laughed at the frown that bent the brow of the handsome open-hearted son of Neptune, who loved her better than anything under the sun.

Another sweeter voice kindly sung, as if in compassion to the discomfited sailor, a verse from the song that bore his name, dwelling with emphasis on the words,

"Tom never from his word departed,
His heart was kind and true."

And the voice was that of Sophy Hartly, the cousin and partner of Fanny, a damsel whose good sense far exceeded her beauty, since a neat shape and fine pair of dark eyes, comprised her whole stock of charms.

"Oh! very well, Sophy," cried her companion, in a tone of feigned displeasure, "as you think so highly of Tom, pray fill the basket for him, for the cows have been up some time waiting to be milked," and the provoking creature tripped off, well knowing that from Sophy at least she had nothing to fear. Tom called out—that he should come at noon to conduct her to the green, charging her at the same time not to be longer in dressing than the Bellerophon in rigging for sea,—a caution to which she paid so little regard, that when he came at the appointed time, he found her still engaged in the duties of the toilette, and determined to read her a lecture on the subject, yet lover-like, forgot his impatience when he beheld her lovely smiling face, and hoped, as he extended an arm to her and her cousin, that Fanny loved him who loved her so truly, so entirely. The village green of —, is a sweet rural spot; open on one side to the Yarmouth road, and surrounded on every other with lofty enclosures; towards the middle of the little meadow, a pond, clear as crystal, softly reflects in its placid bosom the picturesque cottages on its banks, and the deep blue arch of heaven, with all its passing clouds and variable beauty, while from between the old elms opposite, the white spire of the parish church peeps out, rising from the dark woods behind it, and lending a new charm to the rural landscape. The turf, swelling into little hillocks, and verdant as an emerald, is studded with every wild flower that loves the lee, while the high hedgerows are wreathed with woodbine, cglantine, clematis, ivy and dogwood. Here too the bryony flings its graceful pendant festoons—of dark green shining heart-shaped leaves, and bril-