

caterpillars every week. We observed the two parents to bring to the nest at least forty caterpillars in an hour, and, on a supposition that they might have been thus occupied 12 hours every day, it will yield the above number per week. But their utility is not confined to the destruction of caterpillars. They likewise feed their young ones with butterflies and other winged insects, each of which, if not thus destroyed, would be the parent of hundreds of caterpillars.

In many parts of the world sparrows are in considerable demand as articles of luxury for the table.

LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

THE WIDOW AND HER SON.

(CONCLUDED.)

The parents of the deceased had resided in the village from childhood. They inhabited one of the neatest cottages, and by various rural occupations, and the assistance of a small garden, had supported themselves creditably and comfortably, and led a happy and a blameless life.—“ Ah, Sir !” said the good woman, “ he was such a comely lad, so sweet tempered, so kind to every one around him, so dutiful to his parents ! It did one’s heart good to see him of a Sunday, dressed out in his best, so tall, so straight, so cheery, supporting his old mother to church—for she was always fonder of leaning on George’s arm than on her goodman’s, and, poor soul, she might well be proud of him, for a finer lad there was not in the country round.”

Unfortunately, he soon was tempted, during a year of scarcity and agricultural hardship, to enter into the service of one of the small crafts that plied on a neighbouring river. He had not been long in this employ, when he was entrapped by a press-gang, and carried off to sea. His parents received tidings of his seizure, but beyond that they could learn nothing. It was the loss of their main prop. The father, who was already infirm, grew heartless and melancholy, and sunk into his

grave. The widow, left lonely in her age and feebleness, could no longer support herself and came upon the parish. Still there was a kind feeling to her throughout the village, and a certain respect, as being one of the oldest inhabitants. As no one applied for the cottage in which she had spent so many happy days, she was permitted to remain in it, where she lived solitary and almost helpless. The few wants of nature were chiefly supplied from the scanty productions of her little garden, which the neighbours would now and then cultivate for her. It was but a few days before the time at which these circumstances were told me, that she was gathering some vegetables for her repast, when she heard the cottage door, which faced the garden, suddenly opened. A stranger came out, and seemed to be looking eagerly and wildly around. He was dressed in seaman’s clothes, was emaciated and ghastly pale, and bore the air of one broken by sickness and hardships. He saw her, and hastened towards her, but his steps were faint and faltering: he sank on his knees before her, and sobbed like a child. The poor woman gazed upon him with a vacant and wandering eye: “ Oh my dear, dear mother ! don’t you know your son ? your poor boy George ?” It was indeed the wreck of her once noble lad; who, shattered by wounds, by sickness and foreign imprisonment, had, at length, dragged his wasted limbs homeward, to repose among the scenes of his childhood.

I will not attempt to detail the particulars of such a meeting, where joy and sorrow were so completely blended; still he was alive! he might yet live to comfort and cherish her old age. Nature, however, was exhausted in him; and if anything had been wanting to finish the work of fate, the desolation of his native cottage would have been sufficient.

He stretched himself on the pallet on which his widowed mother spent many a sleepless night, and he never rose from it again.

The villagers, when they heard that George Somers had returned, crowded to see him, offering every comfort and assistance that