

individuals of which it would have been reckoned foul disgrace to have held communion of any kind. This was not her opinion ; but it was the opinion of the world, and she was so far compelled to bow to it as to keep close locked up in her heart the secret of her love.

Mary's mother, who was a widow, rented a small farm in Stirlingshire, and was in comparatively easy circumstances. She held the land on reasonable terms ; and the judicious management of her only son, a fine young man of about five-and-twenty, enabled her to make the most of it, and to live, if not in affluence, at least in plenty.

On the occasion with which our story opens, Mary was mounted on the pony which it was intended should be sold ; and, accompanied by her brother, who walked by her side, they set out for Bucklyvie at a suitable hour in the morning. The young maiden, who had never been at a fair before, was in high spirits at the prospect of being gratified by the sight of such a scene ; every now and then playfully urging on her pony, in order to put her brother to his speed, and to laugh at his efforts to keep pace with her. This emulation soon brought them to their destination. On arriving at the scene of the fair, the unsophisticated girl was delighted with the joyous bustle and confusion which it exhibited : the shows, the music, the tents—every thing pleased her, because every thing was new to her ; but above all was she pleased and flattered by the attention shewn her by the numerous acquaintances whom she met : these she encountered at every turn ; and being a universal favourite, every one insisted on presenting her with a *favour*, until she was literally loaded with gifts of various kinds. Having remained in the crowd all the forenoon, and having seen all that was worth seeing, Mary was conducted by her brother to the house of a friend, where he left her until he should dispose of the pony, and return with the proceeds.

It was some time before he came back—and when he did, it was to say that he had sold the animal, but would not receive the price till towards the afternoon ; and that his sister must, of necessity, wait till then. Mary was alarmed by the delay ; for it would thus be dark before she could reach home, and her own fears, and her mother's last injunctions, warned her to be home with daylight. She

mentioned her uneasiness on this subject to her brother.

"But there's no help for it, Mary," was his reply, "and, besides, you have nothing to fear. Duncan McDonald will see you safe home."

On this proposal, Mary made no remark. To the escort of McDonald she made no objection to her brother, whom she knew to entertain a very different opinion of him from what she did : he was one of her numerous lovers, and, being in good circumstances, his addresses were favoured by her brother.—But Mary herself—over and above the reasons already assigned for her rejecting the suits of her numerous wooers, and of McDonald amongst the rest—had an invincible aversion to him, on account of his coarse manner, and fierce, irascible temper ; but her gentleness rendering her unwilling to have any difference with her brother on this subject, she made no objection to his proposal of McDonald accompanying her.

In the course of the evening, Mary's brother again called, and handed over to her the price of the pony, which he had received telling her, at the same time, that McDonald would call for her at eight o'clock. It was now about seven.

The hour appointed came, but McDonald came not with it. Another half hour passed away, and still he did not appear. Mary became restlessly and miserably impatient—her host, who was an intimate friend of hers, and her family, perceiving her unweariness, proposed to her to accept the convoy of E. nephew, (a young man of excellent character who lived in the immediate neighbourhood and to wait no longer on McDonald. With this proposal Mary thankfully closed, as she was anxious to get home ; knowing that her mother would be in wretchedness till she returned. She was, besides, by no means displeased to escape the company of McDonald ; her host's nephew was accordingly sent for and when he came, he, with great good will undertook to see her safely home. In a few minutes after, the two set out, and had proceeded for the distance of about a mile or so when they heard some one shouting behind them ; and, turning round, they saw a man running towards them at his utmost speed—it was McDonald : he was the worse of liquor—considerably so—and in a state of furious excitement. On coming close up to Mary and