

"Nonsense, Anthony! you take up this matter too seriously; women love flattery, and if we are bound in honor to marry all the women we compliment, the law must be abolished that forbids polygamy."

"I know one, who would not fail to take advantage of such an act," said Anthony, laughing; "but these things are really too serious for a joke. I hope poor Mary's light heart will never be rendered heavy by your gallantry."

Again the colour flushed the cheek of Godfrey. He looked down, slashed his boot with his riding whip, endeavoured to hum a tune, and finally, telling his cousin that he was in no need of a Mentor, whistled to a favourite spaniel, and, dashing his spurs into his horse, was soon out of sight.

Mary Mathews, the young girl who formed the subject of this conversation, was a strange, eccentric creature; more remarkable for the beauty of her person, and her masculine habits, than for any good qualities she possessed. Her father rented a small farm, the property of Colonel Hurdlestone. Her mother died whilst she was yet a child, and her only brother ran away from following the plough, and went to sea. Mathews was a rude, clownish, matter-of-fact man: he wanted some person to assist him in looking after the farm, and taking care of the stock, and he brought up Mary to fill the place of the son he had lost—early inuring her to bear the vicissitudes of the weather, and to take an active part in those manual labours which were peculiar to his vocation. Mary was a man in every thing but her face and figure, which were exceedingly soft and feminine, and if her complexion had not been a little injured by constant exposure to the atmosphere, she would have been a perfect beauty, and, in spite of these disadvantages, she was considered the *belle* of the village. Alas for Mary! Her masculine employments, and constantly associating with her father's work-people, had destroyed the woman in her heart. She thought like a man, acted like a man, spoke like a man. The loud voice, and louder laugh, grated harshly on the ear, and appeared unnatural in the highest degree, when issuing from coral lips, whose perfect symmetry might have formed a model for the Venus. Mary knew that she was handsome, and as long as her exterior elicited applause and admiration from the rude clowns who surrounded her, she cared not for those minor graces of voice and manner, which render beauty so truly captivating. In the harvest-field she was always the foremost in the band of reapers, dressed in her tight green stuff boddice, clean white apron, neatly blacked shoes; her beautiful features, shaded by her large coarse straw hat, put knowingly to one side, more fully to display the luxuriant auburn tresses, which waved round her face and neck. In the hay-field you passed her with the rake across her shoulders, and turned in

surprise to look at the fair creature who whistled to her dog, or hallooed to the men in the same breath. In the evening you met her bringing home her cows from the marshes, mounted upon her father's grey riding horse; keeping her seat with as much ease and spirit, although destitute of a side-saddle, as the most accomplished equestrian in St. James' Park. And when his services were no longer required by our young Amazon, she rubbed down her steed, and turned him adrift with her own hands into the paddock. But to see Mary Mathews to advantage, when the woman triumphed over the coarse rude habits, to which her peculiar education had given birth, was when, surrounded by her weanling calves and cosset lambs, or working in her pretty garden, which skirted the road. There, among her flowers, with her light brown locks waving round her sunny brow, and singing, as blithe as any bird, some rural ditty, or ballad of the days gone by, she looked the simple, unaffected, lovely country girl. The traveller paused at the gate to listen to her song, to watch her at her work, and to beg a flower from her hand. Even the proud, aristocratical country gentleman, as he rode past, doffed his hat, and saluted courteously the young Flora, whose smiling face floated before him during his homeward ride. Uncontrolled by the usages of the world, and totally indifferent to its good or bad opinion, Mary became a law to herself—a solitary, wayward being, who held little intercourse with her own sex, whom she looked upon as her common enemies,—nor was the lonely girl far wrong in her conjectures. With a mind capable of forming and executing the most daring projects, she found no one to share her feelings, or enter into her pursuits, until the sudden return of her long lost brother gave an impetus to all her thoughts and influenced all her actions. The bold, audacious William Mathews, of whom she felt so proud, and loved so fiercely, carried on the double profession of a poacher on shore and a smuggler at sea. Twice Mary had exposed her life to imminent danger to save him from detection, and so strongly was she attached to him, that there was no danger that she would not have undertaken for his sake. Fear was a stranger to her breast, for she had often been known to ride at the dead hour of night, through lonely cross roads, to a distant parish, to bring home her father from some low public house, in which she suspected him to be wasting his substance with a crew of worthless profligates. Twice during the short period of her life, (for at this time she had barely completed her eighteenth year,) she had suffered from temporary fits of insanity, and the neighbours, in speaking of her exploits, always prefaced them with, "Ah, poor thing! There's something wrong about that girl. There's no account to be taken for her deeds."

From a child, Mary had been an object of deep interest to the young Hurdlestons. Residing on