

happy with her, but for her husband, who, though he had hitherto been very fond of me, was no constantly drunk when he came home, and used to abuse and beat me whenever he saw me, so that latterly, when I heard him coming, I generally stole away to bed; but it was as bad to hear him beating Mary, which he never failed to do when I was not in the way.—Indeed, Sir, I am very unhappy—I try to please him as much as I can, but it is in vain, for he finds fault with me whatever I do; and as for poor Mary, I wonder her heart is not broken long ago, for she leads a shocking life with him, and I fear chiefly on my account.”

Here Jemmy ended his story. Bushe had been much struck with his calling Mrs. Weedon “*Mary*,” instead of *Mother*, as he had always hitherto done; but, unwilling to interrupt him, had allowed him to finish before asking him the reason.

“Why do you call Mrs. Weedon, *Mary*, now—I thought you always called her *Mother*.—Is she not then your mother?”

“She likes me to call her so, Sir; but as I told you just now, she was not married, until lately—she was my nurse.”

“Then, who was your mother?”

“Indeed, I don’t know, Sir—I don’t remember ever seeing her—she must have died before I can recollect.”

Bushe was not satisfied, but did not like to press the boy farther on so delicate a point, on which besides he was manifestly ignorant; he determined, however, to question Mary on the subject.

“Well, Jemmy, I have taken a great fancy to you—what say you to coming to live with me? You will be done with beatings then, and I’ll teach you as well as I can.”

Jemmy was silent for a few minutes, at length he said, in an embarrassed tone—“I hope you won’t consider me ungrateful, but I cannot leave *Mary*.”

“I never meant to take you without her consent; but if she is willing that you should stay with me, have you any objection? you can go and stay with her every day, as long as you wish.”

The boy’s looks brightened at the latter part of what Bushe said, “I never can thank you enough, if *Mary* makes no objection. I’ll be very glad to live with you, Sir, but she will be so lonely, I must go to her every evening.”

“So you shall, my good boy, believe me I shall only think the better of you for your affection to one who you say was so unvaryingly kind to you; but now you must compose yourself to rest again; you know I am your nurse at present.”

There was a gentle tap at the door, which Bushe opened—it was *Mary Weedon*.

“I could not rest, Sir, until I knew how Jemmy was when he awoke.”

“He is doing very well, Mrs. Weedon, and has been just telling me his history, a sad tale it is.” A hectic flush spread