

my cheek, and then he touched up the old mare, and off we started.

"Yes," he said with a little sigh; "Dad's getting a bit dim-sighted now, Bessie. The years fly fast, very fast, my child."

It gave me a sharp pain at my heart to hear him speak so. I loved my father more than any one in the world.

It was a good market that day, and we sold nearly all the poultry we had, and every one of the pretty little bunches of primroses mother had tied up so carefully with ferns all around, and one gillyflower in the middle of each. I felt quite triumphant as I handed over the last and dropped twopence in my pocket, which was already heavy. Mother would be so pleased.

I was standing talking to a woman in the stall next to ours, when father called to me to pack up the baskets, as he was off to fetch the mare, and put her into the cart. "I shall only be a few minutes, Bess," he said, "so look as sharp as you can. It's late now, and getting as dark as dark can be. Try and be ready by the time I'm back, lass." But somehow, in spite of his injunctions, I lingered talking, and had not begun to pack up when I saw him again, coming towards me through the now almost deserted market. He was put out, and very justly, at my disobedience, and spoke somewhat sharply in consequence.

"Go and see the mare doesn't move, at once, Bessie, while I pack up myself. You ought to have done as I told you, instead of gossiping there—naughty lass!

I felt my face flush an angry scarlet, and I threw back my head proudly. "Father might have wait-

ed to reprove me till we were alone," I said to myself resentfully, and as I stood holding Dobbin's head I felt so deeply injured that the tears welled up into my eyes, and I had to brush them away, lest father should see them.

He took the reins from me when he came, without a word, but bent over me with his usual tender care before starting, to wrap my shawl tighter round my shoulders. Then we jogged along the lighted streets in silence. It was, indeed, a dark night—no sign of moon or stars to relieve the dense blackness.

Presently father spoke, and I fancied his voice was a little nervous.

"I don't remember being out on a thicker night, Bess; it makes it a bit fearsome driving, but your eyes are quick."

I just murmured something which was not meant to be intelligible, for one of my sulks had come on, and I determined to be as unsociable as I possibly could. So, after that there was silence again, except for the sound of Dobbin's quick trot on the hard road, and the night breeze sighing through the trees.

Suddenly, through the darkness, not more than a few yards off, I saw something coming. It looked like a great wagon, but had no lights, so that I could not tell for certain what it was. We had no lights either, for the matter of that, or what happened then would never have happened. It seemed to me father made a pause, and a sort of movement, as if listening, but he did not speak, and the thought just flashed through me, should I do so, and tell him there was danger? "No," said the evil spirit within me promptly, "it will be all right: he has often man-