

THE BRITISH COLONIAL MAGAZINE.

Conducted by W. H. SMITH, Author of the "Canadian Gazetteer," &c. &c.

NUMBER II.

PRICE 3d. ; or 12s. 6d. per Annum.

HAY-CARRYING.

AT one end of the cluster of cottages, and cottage-like houses, which formed the little street of Hilton Cross,—a pretty but seclude village, in the north of Hampshire,—stood the shop of Judith Kent, widow, "Licensed," as the legend imported, "to vend tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff." Tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff formed, however, but a small part of the multifarious merchandise of Mrs. Kent, whose shop, the only repository of the hamlet, might have seemed an epitome of the wants and luxuries of humble life. In her window,—candles, bacon, sugar, mustard and soap, flourished amidst calicoes, oranges, dolls, ribbons, and gingerbread. Crockeryware was piled on one side of her door-way, Dutch cheese and Irish butter encumbered the other; brooms and brushes rested against the wall; and ropes of onions and bunches of red herrings hung from the ceiling. She sold bread, butcher's meat, and garden stuff, on commission; and engrossed, at a word, the whole trade of Hilton Cross.

Notwithstanding this monopoly, the world went ill with poor Judith. She was a mild, pleasant-looking, middle-aged woman, with a heart too soft for her calling. She could not say, no! to the poor creatures who came to her on a Saturday night to seek bread for their children, however deep they might already be in her debt, or however certain it was that their husbands were, at that moment, spending, at the Checquers or the Four Horse Shoes, the money that should have supported their wives and families; for, in this village, as in others, there were two flourishing ale-houses, although but one ill-accustomed shop,—“but one half-penny-worth of bread to this intolerable

deal of sack!” She could not say, no! as a prudent woman might have said; and, accordingly, half the poor people in the parish might be found on her books, whilst she herself was gradually getting in arrears with her baker, her grocer, and her landlord.

Her family consisted of two children,—Mary, a pretty, fair-haired, smiling lass, of twelve or thirteen, and Robert, a fine youth, nearly ten years older, who worked in the gardens of a neighbouring gentleman. Robert, conscious that his mother's was no gainful trade, often pressed her to give up business, sell off her stock, relinquish her house, and depend on his labour for her support; but of this she would not hear. Many motives mingled in her determination: a generous reluctance to burthen her dutiful son with her maintenance,—a natural fear of losing *caste* among her neighbours,—a strong love of the house which for five and twenty years had been her home,—a vague hope that times would mend and all come right again, (wiser persons than Mrs. Kent have lulled reason to sleep with such an opiate!)—and, above all, a want of courage to look her difficulties fairly in the face. Besides she liked her occupation,—its petty consequence, its bustle, and its gossipary; and she had a sense of gain in the small peddling bargains,—the pennyworths of needles, and balls of cotton, and rows of pins, and yards of tape which she was accustomed to vend for ready money,—that overbalanced, for a moment, her losses and her debts; so that in spite of her son's presages and warnings, the shop continued in full activity.

In addition to his forebodings respecting his mother, Robert had another misfortune;—the poor youth was in love.