



“Old Mary With the Necklace.”

(A True Story)

FATHER JOHN, the Benedictine,
 From Saint Gregory's at Downside,
 —Downside, on the Hills of Mendip—
 Went one day, to Shepton Mallet :
 As he drove, the village jehu
 Spoke about the crops, the weather,
 Spoke about the coming harvest,
 Spoke, no doubt, of friends and neighbors :
 Sudden asked, “Do you know Holcombe ?”
 Answered Father John, not knowing
 Why the question, “I have been there,
 “Once, on business for the Prior.”
 “Saw you ‘Mary with the necklace’ ?”
 “Mary who ?” “Why, sure, I know not,
 “But from morning, Sir, till evening,
 “Sitting at her cottage doorstep
 “You may see her, twisting, turning,
 “Something in her fingers, whispering
 “Ever to herself: the neighbors
 “Call her ‘Mary with the necklace.’”
 Pondered much the Benedictine,
 Spoke, that night, to Father Prior,
 Went, next day, on foot, to Holcombe,
 Asked for ‘Mary with the necklace.’
 Sitting by her cottage doorstep
 With a ‘necklace’ in her fingers,
 Sat an ancient woman, ‘twisting’
 Ever ‘twisting’ it, and whispering
 Something to herself, and smiling.
 Smiling still, as well contented,
 Bade she Father John his welcome :
 “Have you come at last, then, Father ?”
 “Come at last ? Did you expect me ?”
 “Thirty years,” she answered, “daily
 “Have I told my Beads, beginning
 “‘I believe’ and ending rightly
 “As my mother taught me, telling
 “Bead by bead, and ever asking,
 “Begging, of the Blessed Mother,
 “Asking, for the sake of Jesus,