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THE MILLER'S FAMILY OF SHADING-BROOK.

There is not a sweeter spot in England than the pastoral valley in which the mill of Shadingbrook is situated. It derives its picturesque name from the clear rapid little stream, which, fringed with drooping willows, cuts its rippling way through the emerald sod of these lovely lowland meadows, and forms the boundary of the miller's garden. As for that garden, with its velvet bleaching-green, its blooming parterres, and bowing fruit-trees, white with a snow of blossoms, or bending under their rich autumnal lading, it looked like a gay fertile island rising amidst a sea of verdure.

Many a rustic sportsman, or more sprucely attired angler from the adjacent market-town, might be seen on fine summer evenings loitering with rod and line on the banks of this pleasant stream—some in reality engaged in the fascinating but cruel amusement of beguiling the shining tenants of the brook from their native element, but far greater numbers sought these sylvan shades in the hope of obtaining an occasional glimpse of the miller's pretty daughter, Flora Mayfield, who might sometimes be seen tending her garden flowers, gathering fruit, feeding her poultry on the lawn, or assisting her elder sister Lydia in spreading the snowy linen on the bleaching-green, or withdrawing it, when dried, from the lines, or the close-clipped hawthorn hedgerow that enclosed the garden on either side.

Flora Mayfield, who was the beauty of the neighbourhood, was fully aware of the admiration she excited, and failed not to place the appearance of every angler on the banks of the adjacent stream to the attraction of her personal charms, apprehending no rival in her sister, the plain and unpretending Lydia.

Lydia was, however, endued with qualities which, in the eyes of the few who look deeper than the bright tints of lip or cheek, might have been considered of more value than the fair externals of which the lovely Flora could boast. Lydia had been educated by a wise and virtuous aunt, who occupied a respectable place in society in a populous town; and without seeking to acquire those frivolous accomplishments which she rightly judged would be out of place in a person in her station, she had laboured to strengthen and improve her mind by the attainment of useful knowledge, and a judicious course of reading. On the death of this relative, Lydia returned to the mill to take charge of her father's house, to keep his books, and to perform the difficult part of a friend and mother to her pretty volatile sister, who had been sadly spoiled by both her parents; and since the decease of her mother, she had been almost wholly emancipated from those restraints which, at her age, and with her peculiar inclinations, were so essentially necessary. Flora was vain, self-willed, petulant, and ambitious, and Lydia had of course an arduous task in repressing her natural disposition to levity and coquetry; yet her influence was so gently and judiciously interposed, that it was not wholly without effect.

"I know not how it is," would Flora observe, "that Lydia always contrives to carry her point with me. She is perpetually opposing my inclinations, and yet she makes me love her whether I will or not. I have often been very cross to Lydia, and said very offensive things to her, yet she has never in any instance answered me harshly, or complained to my father of me. Sometimes I wish I were as wise and good as my sister Lydia; but then, Lydia, with all her amiable