

MARK HURDLESTONE;

OR,

THE TWO BROTHERS.

CHAPTER I.

Say, who art thou—thou lean and haggard wretch !
Thou living satire on the name of man !
Thou that hast made a god of sordid gold,
And to thine idol offered up thy soul ?
Oh, how I pity thee thy wasted years :
Age without comfort—youth that had no prime.
To thy dull gaze the earth was never green ;
The face of nature wore no cheering smile,
For ever groping, groping in the dark ;
Making the soulless object of thy search
The grave of all enjoyment.—S. M.

TOWARDS the close of the last century, there lived in the extensive parish of Ashton, in the county of —, a hard-hearted, eccentric old man, called Mark Hurdlestone, the lord of the manor, the wealthy owner of Oak Hall and its wide demesne, the richest commoner in England, the celebrated miser.

Mark Hurdlestone was the wonder of the place ; people were never tired of talking about him—of describing his strange appearance, his odd ways and penurious habits. He formed a lasting theme of conversation to the gossips