

## THE TWO MARYS.

BY BYREN H. BASINIA.

**A**LL is still as a dawn in Eden. The fragrant valley in which the pretty little village of Marleigh lies, half-hidden among tall trees and fruitful cornfields, blushes coyly under the first kisses of a glowing summer sun, which loves to gild with a roseate glory the ivy-covered towers of the ruined castle, bringing out into strong relief the quaint, old-fashioned cottages that nestle round the grey church spire.

Every leaf shines and glistens like an emerald, and not a sound is heard but the faint, musical rippling of a little stream that winds its way between hedges and walls loaded with the sweet-scented woodbine and clematis, whose branches bend down to kiss the tiny brook. One rosy sunbeam, struggling through the vine-covered casement of the ancient manor-house, now used as a farm, enters the stone hall and sparkles on the silver medal worn by the tall, military figure leaning over it. His manly, but beardless, face is buried in his hands, and his slender, muscular form is motionless, but for the fitful heaving of his chest. Another figure, radiant with the soft, blooming charms of English girlhood, is bending tearfully over him; her magnificent golden hair falling in heavy masses on his shoulder, like the clustering jessamines on yonder half-lighted gable. Thus had they remained, neither knew how long, stupified with sorrow. She raised her head to speak to him, when she suddenly started, with a suppressed shriek, as the glitter of a gun-barrel on the other side of the hedge flashed through the window.

"Fly, Frank!" she gasped—"quick! they're here!"

He sprang up, held her at arm's-length for one last look, snatched a hasty, burning kiss, and, bounding to the window, leaped out—alas! too late. At the same instant a file of bayonets appeared over the hedge, and as Frank rushed across the little garden a corporal

levelled a pistol at him—"Stand, or I fire!"

Trusting to his speed of foot, the fugitive ran the faster round the corner of the house and leaped the hedge. As he rose over it, the shot struck him and he fell headlong on the other side, the blood streaming from a wound in the hip, and a shower of honeysuckle and clematis blossoms falling around him, as he fell. A few moments later he was borne off, unconscious, by two files of his comrades, while the sun rose high on a spectacle new to that peaceful valley. A blood-stained sword without, a desolated home within; a father bending, heart-broken, over the inanimate form of his daughter, and she—innocent and lovely beyond description—lying, struck to the heart, and soon to be stretched on a bed of sickness!

"A deserter!—Frank Farland a deserter!" Yes, such was now the shameful word attached to the hitherto spotless name of a brave, young soldier, once the gay, jovial companion of every merry-making; the steady, cheerful laborer at home and, after his enlistment, one of the most intrepid in the field and the most patient on the march among all that gallant band—the 32nd regiment of British Infantry.

Not all the love of his comrades, whose prime favorite he was from the first day he joined the regiment, nor even that badge of honor which hung at his breast, could shelter so promising a young soldier from the fatal consequences of one little fault! Ah! is there, really, anything "little" in this life of ours, except its duration? Trifles, apparently light as air—are they not continually fraught with fateful consequences? Among the many "mute, inglorious" heroes, against whose iron phalanx the oft-repeated, fierce charges of the splendid French cavalry, till then accustomed to victory, broke in vain, like the foaming, impotent ocean wave, all through