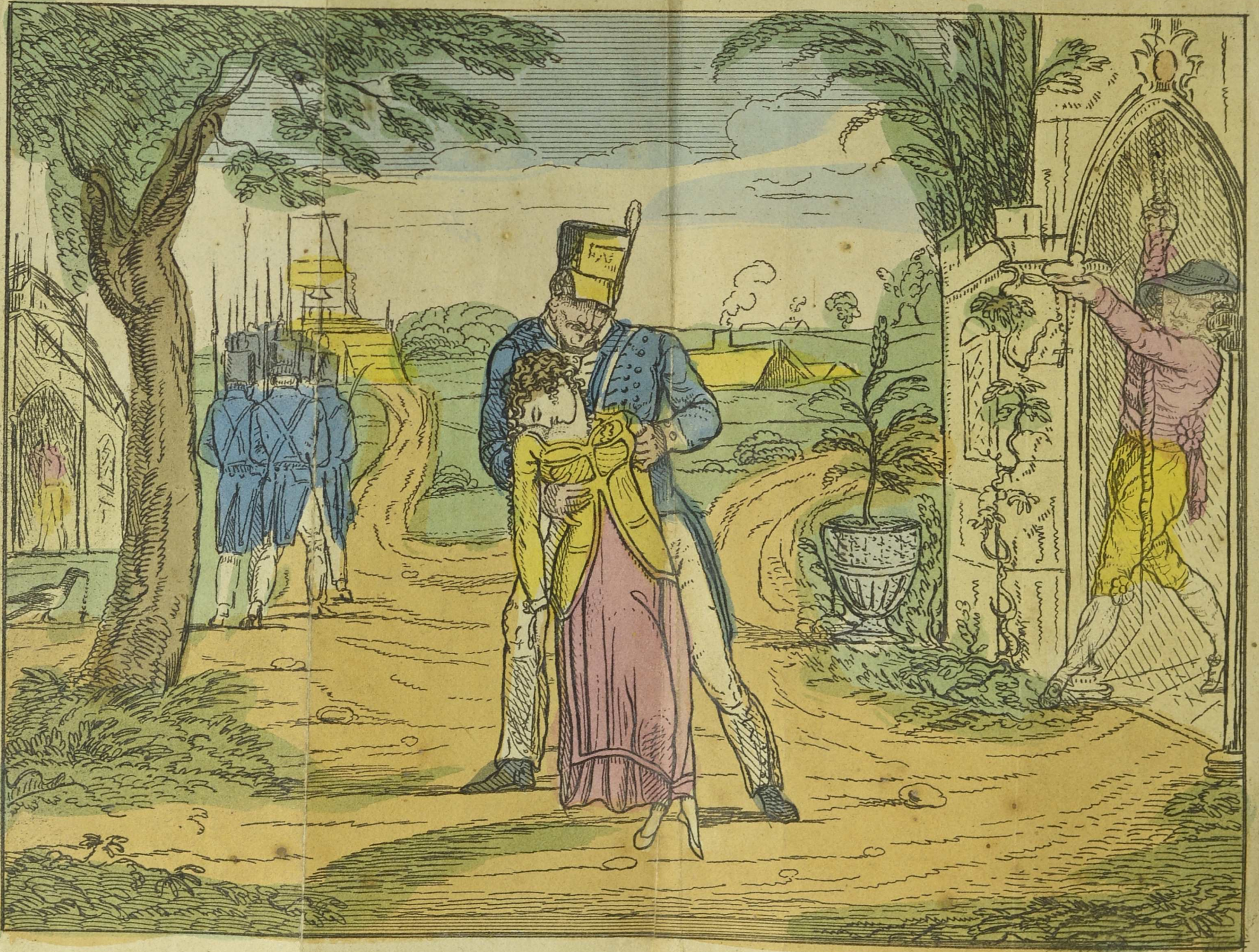






THE WITNESS

THE WITNESS



Annetta fainting in the arms of the guard, while being conveyed to Execution.

THE  
**Maid and the Magpie;**

A PATHETIC TALE,

FOUNDED UPON A WELL-KNOWN FACT;

BEING THE

*Affecting History*

OF AN

**INNOCENT FEMALE,**

WHO WAS

*Sentenced to Death*

ON

Strong circumstantial Evidence of stealing various

ARTICLES OF PLATE,

And afterwards proved to be Innocent;

ON WHICH IS

*Founded the much approved Entertainment, now performing at the  
Theatres Royal with unbounded applause.*



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THE

## Maid and the Magpie.



MONSIEUR GRANDVILLE, a native of France, was, by a series of unfortunate circumstances, reduced from a state of comparative affluence, to such severe poverty, that he was necessitated to enlist as a common soldier to procure his daily subsistence.—His daughter, the young and lovely Annette, he left meanwhile in the charge of a friend, who had promised his protection, till she should be enabled to obtain some means of providing for herself.

Though Annette had received an education that rendered her an unfit companion to the humbler classes of society; yet she possessed none of those accomplishments that were necessary to her obtaining a situation superior to that of servitude.—Her natural good sense taught her to consider the means of honest support (though in a menial capacity) far less degrading to her feelings and former situation in life, than the real humiliation of intruding on the kindness of friends, who wanted more the ability than the inclination to preserve her from such an alternative. With these ideas of propriety of conduct, and humble resignation to the evils of her lot, she became a servant in the house of Monsieur Gerard, an opulent farmer, resident in the delightful village of Palaiseau.

The unassuming and pleasing manners of Annette, her willingness to oblige, united to the patience with which she bore her misfortunes, soon won on the esteem and affection of her master and mistress; and perhaps these qualities lost nothing of their attractions in the eyes of young Blageau (the godson of the former) from being the modest dowry of so young and lovely a female as Annette.

It seemed as though the pretty stranger had the power of charming every creature in the family of farmer Gerard; for even the magpie (who had long been the pet at the farm) soon singled out Annette as a peculiar favourite; repeatedly calling on her name, and hovering about her.

As the farmer and his wife had the most implicit confidence in the integrity of Annette, she was entrusted with the care of the plate, and many other valuables for the use of the house; but it unfortunately happened, soon after her receiving this commission, that a handsome silver fork became missing—it had been used with the remainder of the dozen on the celebration of the farmer's birth-day.

Madame Gerard, was one of those notable housewives, who never miss any thing without suspecting it to be stolen; and though her husband had endeavoured to silence her on the subject of the fork, it was ever in her memory. Annette, as she had charge of the silver, felt great uneasiness from the loss of the fork, and could not but perceive, that Madame Gerard's suspicion glanced at her:—the farmer, pitying her evident distress, endeavoured to calm her mind, by assuring her she was mistaken, and that it was not a subject worth perplexing herself about.—Thus several weeks passed, as Mrs. Gerard, who was really a good sort of a woman, behaved to her with kindness, whilst the attentions of Blageau became every day less equivocal. Annette, sensible of the merits of Blageau, and grateful for the attachment he evinced towards her, soon acknowledged to herself a reciprocal feeling; but the consciousness of her humble fortune induced her to conceal as much as possible, that attachment that seemed to strengthen in proportion to her endeavours to suppress it.

One day, Blageau hearing himself called, and supposing it to be by Annette, went to her; but, finding that it was the magpie who had pronounced his name, it gave him a favourable opportunity of speaking of his passion, by telling the bird he had anticipated his wishes, in calling him to where Annette was; he then, in the honest warmth of sincere love, avowed his attachment and his hopes, and Annette had almost been induced to forget her resolution of concealing her own, when Madame Gerard broke on their tête-à-tête. The good lady, being



put out of humour by some accidental circumstance sent Annette to her work, and severely scolded Blageau for so frequently loitering about that part of the house where Annette was to be found; adding, that the girl would be spoilt by the attention she received; for, not only Blageau, but she believed the old justice Monsieur du Rocher, who resided in the village, was fool enough to be in love with her too; upon which, Blageau immediately declared, that the justice should never, if he had any influence with Annette, presume to address her.

Madame Gerard, in order to end the subject of their discourse, called to Annette, who returned, bringing with her a basket of plate.—Madame Gerard, reminding her of the lost fork, desired her to be careful of what had remained; the farmer reprimanded his wife for alluding to that circumstance, and she left the room, offended at the manner in which he had spoken to her.

Annette, addressing Monsieur Gerard, again spoke of her regret at the disappearance of the fork; and the good man, with a view to give an effectual turn to her ideas, after entreating her to think no more of it, told her, that she must pardon the plainness with which he was about to speak of a subject that was very agreeable to him; he then proceeded to say, he was aware of the attachment subsisting between his godson and herself, and that he earnestly desired that their marriage should shortly take place; unwilling to embarrass her, by waiting for a declaration from her lips of what her eyes and glowing cheeks sufficiently avowed, he made some excuse for immediately leaving her.

So great was the surprise and joy of Annette, that she sat for several minutes, absorbed in anticipation of future happiness.—She was awakened from her dream by a pedlar, who, standing at the open door, requested her to be a customer.—Annette had sent all the money she had earned to her father, and was therefore unable to comply with the Jew's request, and Monsieur and Madame Gerard, both having gone out. Immediately on leaving her, the pedlar went away, and Annette, not daring to remain longer idle, began to look over the plate;—before, however, she had finished sorting them, a cautious footstep behind her made her turn.—A man, wrapped in a large great coat, with a hat flapped over his eyes, met her view. The stranger glanced cautiously around, then raising his

hat so as to show his features, Annette beheld her father in the impulse of surprise and affection, she threw a spoon and fork (that she had held in her hand,) upon the table, and tenderly embracing her parent, begged to know why he appeared so suddenly before her, and too in that disguise.

Grandville, after preparing the mind of his daughter for a painful discovery, informed her, that being refused by his captain the indulgence of coming to see her, he had charged him with cruelty; the officer raised his cane with a view to chastise him, but Grandville, exasperated at his conduct, drew his sabre, upon which he was immediately seized, having forfeited his life by the military law; but effecting his escape, he had purchased the disguise in which he then appeared; and had hastened to again behold his dear Annette.

Grandville finished his relation, by urging his daughter to solemnly promise concealment of what he had revealed to her, with which Annette readily complied.—‘But, my beloved father,’ exclaimed the weeping girl, ‘permit me to share your fortunes, these hands can labour for our mutual support, and this heart shall know no other solicitude than that of providing for your comfort, and soothing your sorrows.’

To this filial proposal, Grandville at first could only answer by his tears; but at length he became sufficiently composed to decisively refuse her request. Ere Annette had time to reply, she beheld Monsieur du Rocher, (of whom mention has before been made,) approaching the house;—as time did not allow her to put her father into any place of concealment, she desired him to cover his uniform with his great coat, and to remain silent on the seat she had placed for him.

‘A good morning to you, my pretty little rogue!’ exclaimed the justice, as he approached Annette, ‘but, ah! who is this good man I see here?’ ‘A traveller,’ replied Annette, ‘who, fatigued by his journey, has solicited refreshment, and half an hour’s repose.’—Grandville, alive to the intimation of his daughter’s wish, soon pretended to fall asleep. The justice of course, concluding that he was really so, proceeded in the object of his wishes, in attempting to ingratiate himself into the favour of Annette; but his servant shortened the first period of his eloquence, by bringing a letter which had that minute been sent by an officer of the Marechausee.

The justice had thought so much of Annette, that it had never occurred to him to bring his spectacles; and therefore, unable to discern any thing more of the letter, than to discover that it was a description of a deserter, he begged Annette would peruse it for him. With a trembling hand and beating heart, she took the paper, and hastily glancing her eye over it, perceived in a moment, that it accurately described the person of her father. The justice renewed his request for her to read it, and Annette, indicating by a sign to her father that he should still feign sleep, entered on her difficult task.—Reversing, as she proceeded, every circumstance by which Grandville might be known, she effectually imposed on her half-blind auditor, who, when Annette had refolded the letter, approached Grandville, and awakening him, ordered him to rise, that he might have a thorough view of him;—finding that he was diametrically opposite to what he had half expected to behold him, and very willing to dispense with his company, he desired him to leave the house. Annette, fearful that the old man had some private reason for so abruptly dismissing her father, begged to be excused remaining any longer in that apartment.—This request he immediately refused by throwing his arms around her, thus forcibly detaining her; whilst Grandville, who had felt too much of the father, to leave his daughter alone with such a man, had concealed himself on the outside of the window,—Perceiving the conduct of the justice, in the indignation of his feelings, he suddenly exclaimed, ‘Villain!’ Annette instantly made a sign to him to begone. Du Rocher cast a timid glance around, and Annette, with a view to again deceive him, assured him it was the magpie. The justice, satisfied that this was the truth, renewed his endeavours to pervert the mind of Annette, but finding that she retorted with severity every thing he said, he again attempted to take liberties with her person.—Annette, bursting from him, replied in a manner that, violently irritating his pride, and disappointing his hopes, he swore to be revenged; and rushed from the house in a state of mind little short of phrenzy.

Grandville concealed himself behind an angle of the building, till the libertine had passed; then entering the house, he pressed his daughter to his heart, bitterly lamenting the cruel necessity that compelled her incurring the

insult he had just witnessed.—Annette, with forced smiles, endeavoured to re-assure him—She spoke of the tenderness of the farmer, and sought to impress a belief on his mind of her enjoying not only a comfortable, but a secure asylum beneath his roof: but little time was allowed for conversation, and Grandville, with a sigh that spoke the agony the thought inflicted, told her that he must leave her, uncertain when he should again be able to renew the interview.—‘I have,’ he added, ‘been obliged to expend the whole of the money, of which my beloved child deprived herself to send to me; and, excepting these valued relics of my lamented wife,’ he continued, (producing a spoon and fork, that had belonged to Annette’s mother) ‘I have no means of obtaining present support; you must take these, dreadful as it is to part with them, and convert them into money; this, my Annette, must be done immediately, and when you have sold them, place the sum they will produce in the hollow of the willow tree, that stands at the entrance of the village.’ The weeping Annette promised to strictly observe the directions of her parent, again at his request vowing to preserve inviolably secret the event of having seen him, and the circumstances attending their meeting; and after again embracing in silent anguish, Grandville rushed from the cottage, and in a few seconds was lost to her view.

Annette, when conscious that she could no more behold him, and that he was gone, perhaps for ever, sunk trembling on a seat, her hands clasped, her eyes raised to heaven, whilst her lips aspirated a broken, but fervent prayer for mercy and protection for the beloved and revered being, whose life was to pay the forfeit of a hasty impulse, arising from parental solicitude.

The Magpie, in the meanwhile, had flown from his cage (which was constantly open in the day,) upon the table, and taking up in his beak the spoon Annette had left there, flew away with it unperceived by the unfortunate girl, who was too deeply engrossed with her own wretched contemplation to be alive to any external circumstances. At length the sight of the spoon and fork, her father had given her, and which she still held in her hand, awakened her attention. She arose from her seat, and anxious to first safely dispose of the farmer’s plate, she hastily threw the fork she had left on the table, into the

basket; in the agitation of her mind forgetting that she had placed a spoon beside it.—After having carried the basket into the inner room, she returned to that she had quitted; and perceiving from the window, that the Jew pedlar was returning from his rounds, she beckoned him in.

Isaac the Jew immediately bought the fork and the spoon, and Annette had just put the money into her pocket when Blageau entered; he had met the pedlar going out. Knowing that Annette had no money to purchase with, he immediately conjectured that she had been selling something; he was much affected by this idea, since he had often entreated her, in the most affectionate manner, to share with him a small sum he had been enabled to save from what he had earned since a boy.—Annette thanked him with the sincerest gratitude and pleasure for this unequivocal instance of kindness, adding, that what she had sold to the Jew would have been of no utility to have retained in her possession; had it been so, she would have proved to him her confidence in his sincerity, by availing herself of his generous proposal.

The good farmer soon after entered the room, who, finding that the lovers were together, led the conversation to the kind wish he had before expressed to each of them separately; and finally proposed that an early day should be fixed for their marriage. Blageau, transported with the goodness of his godfather, and the happiness in store for him, first expressed a grateful acknowledgement to the farmer; then turning to Annette, he entreated that she would confirm by her own lips what Monsieur Gerard had assured him, that he might believe.—Annette had listened to what had passed between Blageau and his god-father, half unconscious of what they had been saying; her mind was in a state of the most extreme solicitude, an agitation arising from her late distressing interview with her father, and apprehensions for his future preservation.

A true lover is ever alive to jealous terrors; and Blageau instantly feared that Annette had given her affections to some fortunate rival.—The many indications which appeared (in defiance of her caution), of attachment towards himself, he, with the greatest facility, misinterpreted; and thus in two minutes allowed his imagination to

destroy every feeling of happiness reason had suggested. 'Why do you not answer, Annette?' said the farmer, reading in her silence only the embarrassment of natural diffidence; 'if you love Blageau, you must surely pity the trembling impatience that the poor fellow evidently feels, to hear a confirmation of his wishes.' 'She does not love me!' exclaimed Blageau, 'Oh! Annette, you love another; but tell me—only tell me, who has doomed me to misery?—who has been so fortunate as to obtain the affections of Annette?'—'Blageau! Blageau!' exclaimed the magpie. 'That is right, my pretty sagacious mag,' said the farmer; 'is it not Annette?' Annette could not reply; but placing her hand in that of Blageau, burst into tears.

'Nay, my sweet girl," said Monsieur Gerard, (who believed that a sense of obligation had overcome her) 'do not let me see tears at a time when we should be all smiles:—I have provided for my god-son a wife, who will be a treasure to us all, he has gained the woman he loves; and surely you who have conferred all this happiness upon us, should not be the only one that is sorrowful.' 'Excuse me,' said Annette, 'but my spirits are much depressed; believe me that I feel the deepest gratitude for your extreme kindness, and have long been only restrained from the sense of my humble situation, from evincing towards Blageau, that my affection for him was equal to the disinterested attachment he has so long possessed towards me.'

As Annette ceased speaking, Madame Gerard entered the room. 'What! all together as usual!' exclaimed the farmer's wife, 'this is a sad business, nothing done when I am absent; I dare say now, Blageau, you might find better employment out of doors, than in this favourite apartment of your's?' 'Indeed I am quite of a different opinion,' answered the farmer; 'Blageau has been settling a very important business here, I assure you; that you and I will talk over at our leisure.'—'Very well,' said Madame Gerard; 'time enough, I dare say: and now, Annette, let me know what you have been doing whilst I have been out; have you looked if the plate is right, that we had out for our company yesterday?'—'Yes, Madame,' replied Annette, 'they are all right, and I will fetch them to you.'

Whilst Annette went for the plate-basket, the farmer and Blageau left the house; and when she returned, Ma-

dame Gerard was alone in the room; she took the basket from Annette, and counting the forks, found the number correct; then taking up the spoons, and finding that, after reckoning them twice, there were but eleven, she cast a look of suspicious scrutiny towards Annette. 'Here are but eleven spoons!' said she, 'what is become of the other?'—'Only eleven, Madame!' echoed Annette, 'when I counted them, there were twelve in number.'—'Reckon them again,' replied the mistress, 'you will find that I am not mistaken.' Annette, with a trembling hand, and sinking heart, re-counted the spoons; there were indeed but eleven; and Annette, overcome by this new cause of distress, stood pale and trembling, unable for some minutes to utter a word. Madame Gerard, desiring her to immediately look for the spoon, observing at the same time that it was a most extraordinary circumstance, aroused the wretched girl from the torpor that seemed to be stealing over her senses, whilst Annette, with fruitless, but anxious search, looked round the house.

Madame Gerard called her husband and Blageau into the room, which they entered just as Annette returned; declaring, that she had looked every where, but could not find the spoon. 'What spoon?' enquired the farmer. 'One of my best spoons—one that we used yesterday;' returned his wife; 'it is gone, though Annette (who you know has had the charge of it), declared that it was in the basket but half an hour ago.' 'Well, and what do you suppose has become of it?' said the farmer angrily, 'we have had enough I think of the fork; there is no occasion to entertain us again in the same way.' 'It is gone to keep the fork company, no doubt;' observed Blageau, with a forced smile, 'it was the partner of the fork, and it didn't like to be left behind, I dare say.' 'You may make light of it, if you please, sir,' said Madame Gerard; 'but if you could find both, or either of them, I should be more inclined to laugh than I feel at present.' 'Well then,' returned Blageau, 'I'll try what I can do. I will go and look under the bushes, where we dined yesterday; for Annette must have been mistaken in supposing she counted it among the others.

Annette, still pale and trembling, leant against the back of a high chair for support. Blageau, as he passed to go into the garden, glanced towards her, with a look

that he intended should re-assure her; but his eyes expressed too much solicitude and anxiety to deceive her.—‘Come, Annette, don’t stand there, looking so shocked and alarmed;’ said Monsieur Gerard, ‘I am quite sick of all this nonsensical inspection into every article; if the spoon is gone, why let it go; I warrant the loss of the whole set wouldn’t ruin me to replace; if it will, we’ll eat out of pewter, or iron, for the future;—so we’ll have no more counting, and counting, of spoons and forks.

Blageau now returned, saying, (still with forced carelessness of manner), that he could not find the lost treasure, though he had had no less important a person than Dennis, Justice du Rocher’s servant, to assist him in looking for it; so he supposed that some one had found the spoon, and had otherwise disposed of it by that time.

‘There is but little doubt, but that it is disposed of;’ replied Madame Gerard, ‘but who has taken it? that is the question.’ ‘Annette! Annette!’ said a voice. ‘Who spoke?’ enquired Madame Gerard. ‘Why, who, but poor mag, to be sure!’ answered her husband, ‘and a mighty strange thing it is, that he should call the name he is screaming out every hour in the day.’—‘It is a very singular coincidence though,’ observed Madame.

Annette, unable longer to restrain the violent emotions that had almost convulsed her, burst into a flood of tears, and, had not the arm of Blageau caught her, she would have fallen to the floor. Madame’s anger, which had carried her to a greater length than she could have premeditatedly have gone, began to lament her hastiness; saying, ‘that she did not mean to be exactly personal, but only as these things had disappeared, she must feel justified in suspecting some one, though she knew not whom, of having stolen them.’

The appearance of Monsieur du Rocher, as Madame finished this speech, gave a strange and varied alarm to the bosom of each of the little party; for, after the first salutations had passed, he instantly informed them, that he had heard from his servant of the loss of the spoon, and had come to investigate the business.—‘His clerk,’ he said, ‘had accompanied him for the purpose of taking down the examination and testimony of each individual.’ ‘Well!’ said Madame Gerard, ‘what Monsieur proposes is very reasonable; no one that is innocent can object to such a measure; and it will be a satisfaction to them to give this proof of their integrity.’



Annette, remembering the money she had in her pocket, and the vow she had made to conceal the means by which she became possessed of it, could hardly keep from fainting; still leaning on the arm of Blageau for support, she heard the farmer remonstrate with his wife on such a measure, but she was still anxious the examination should take place; the justice too loudly asserted that it was his duty to sift this business, and the farmer, firmly believing, that nothing would appear against Annette, at length gave his assent. The examination stated, that a silver fork some time before, and a silver spoon on the day preceding, had been lost; and that, as these said articles had been given to the care of Annette, suspicion must naturally attach to her, since there was presumptive proof strongly against her. 'This may be law, Monsieur,' observed Blageau, 'but it surely cannot be called justice.' Annette, bursting into a fresh flood of tears, again took her handkerchief from her pocket; in doing which, she drew out a small purse, in which she had deposited the money, she had procured for her father.

'That purse has money in it, I think, Annette! has it not?' said Madame Gerard. 'Yes, Madame,' replied the terrified girl; 'but it is my own, it is indeed!' 'Where did you get it?' resumed her mistress, 'for I know you sent last week every sous that you then possessed, to your father?' The farmer, with a look of sternness, tempered by the most anxious solicitude to have this circumstance satisfactorily explained, conjured Annette to tell him instantly, and without disguise, by what means she became possessed of the sum she held in her hand. Annette, almost sinking with the most terrible apprehensions, and the certainty that her father's existence, in all probability, depended on her secrecy, could only solemnly, and repeatedly protest, that the money was her own, honestly, and honourably, her own.

Blageau, now recollecting the Jew, and believing that he could elucidate the mystery, assured all present, that Annette had spoken the truth, for that she had that morning received it of Isaac, the Jew pedlar, who lived in the village.

Annette, terrified lest any coincidence should corroborate the present strong suspicion against her, felt her

agitation every moment increase; the justice demanded her to give up the money to him, and Annette still repeating her assertions of innocence, and that the property was her own, gave the purse and dollars to Du Rocher.

The justice ordered his clerk to set down that Blageau had averred, that he knew the Jew had paid Annette for the stolen property.—‘I said no such thing!’ Blageau indignantly replied, ‘it is not right to twist words and meanings.’ Du Rocher endeavoured to awe Blageau into silence: but such behaviour, Gerard observed, was very inimical to the purposes of justice.

Blageau now went to seek the Jew: whilst he was gone, both the farmer and his wife, the latter heartily repenting her precipitancy, declared that they were satisfied with Annette’s assurance of innocence, and did not wish to proceed any further.

Du Rocher had a private revenge to gratify, and indifferent as to the truth of the affair, so that circumstances afforded him the means of punishing Annette, he would not comply with their desire. ‘There seems such weighty reasons to believe the girl guilty of the theft,’ he said, ‘that my duty as a justice obliges me to proceed, however the compassionate bent of my disposition might incline me to let the affair drop; besides, as Blageau has gone to Isaac, we must have his examination; if Annette is innocent, she can have nothing to fear; if guilty, she deserves to suffer.’ A pretty trick she put upon me this morning,’ continued Du Rocher; ‘I called here, and found her with a fellow disguised in a great coat and large hat, with a uniform, which I compelled him to show me, exactly answering to the description sent me of a deserter: this description was brought me by my servant, whilst I was here; but having left my spectacles behind, I desired Annette to read it to me, who, with the most ready artifice in the world, effectually deceived me, by reversing every particular contained in the paper; which I discovered on returning home, but too late, for the man had gone, and no trace of him could be found.’ ‘How is this Annette? you said nothing to us of this circumstance!’ enquired Gerard. ‘I did not think it necessary to do so, sir!’ Annette tremblingly replied; ‘it was but an act of humanity, and there was no occasion to speak of it.’

Blageau now returned with the Jew: ‘Isaac,’ interro-

gated the justice, 'you bought something of that young woman this morning—did you not? for which you paid her three crowns.' 'Vat your worship say ish very right,' answered the Jew. 'Set that down,' said Du Rocher to his clerk: now, my honest friend, tell me on your veracity, what were the articles that Annette sold to you? The Jew, perceiving in a moment the reason of his being sent for, hesitated to reply, glancing a look at Annette, as though requesting her permission to make the declaration. Annette, conscious of innocence, and trusting that the avowal of the truth might be the means of proving her innocence, in defiance of the coincidence, since producing the spoon and fork must satisfy Madame Gerard immediately, and in a firm voice, desired he would truly answer every question which might be put to him. 'Vell den, Miss,' said Isaac, 'I vill do as you bids me; vat I buy of Miss Annette this morning, your vorship, vas a silver spoon and fork.'—'Was it so?' exclaimed the justice with secret exultation, 'and do you not attempt to deny it, Annette?'—'I do not,' said Annette, with a look of sudden energy in her manner, that for a moment abashed the guilty heart of her judge; 'those were indeed the articles, but they were my own property, and had never been used; let Isaac produce them, and convince Madame of my innocence; for you, sir, I have every reason to believe, that you do not wish to find me so.' 'You would repent this insolence, if offered to a temper less kind than my own,' returned Du Rocher; 'but fortunately for you, I am a man who make undeniable proof the only object of my examination.'

Annette, without further notice of her malicious persecutor, desired Isaac would produce both the spoon and fork, as proofs of her innocence that could not be contested. 'Dat I vou'd do vid de greatest pleasure,' returned the Jew, 'but, blesh my soul, I did put dem into de crushible, and dey dit all melt away.'

The heart of Annette, which had, for a moment, risen proudly in her bosom, from the firm belief of being able to substantiate the truth of her assertion, now sunk with despair, for she felt that her every hope had forsaken her.

The influence of honest Isaac's declaration had a widely different effect upon Du Rocher, he began to breathe again. 'Tell us, Annette,' exclaimed the farmer, in the utmost agitation, 'if the spoon and fork was your

own, how you came possessed of them?' 'That I cannot—must not tell!' exclaimed Annette; 'but they were mine, they were indeed.' 'There is no need, Monsieur Gerard,' said the justice, 'to trespass further on your time, for however your humanity may induce you to use these fruitless endeavours to find her innocent, the case is perfectly clear; I am more used to this business than you, and I have not a doubt of her guilt.—Clerk, call in the man we brought hither, for the purpose of conducting the prisoner, if committed, to a place of confinement.' 'Stay! stay a moment!' cried the repentant Madame Gerard, and fetching a fork and spoon of her own, she was going to the Jew, saying, 'Tell me, Isaac, tell me, were the—the spoon and fork like these?' Her husband stopped her, and taking the silver from her, before the Jew had seen it near enough to observe it particularly, desired he would describe to them the articles he had bought of Annette. 'It was veddy nice shilver ornamented, and marked vid a G.'—'This is proof incontestible,' said the justice, 'if any further was wanting.' Annette protested, that as her name was Grandville, the spoon would of course be marked with a G.; but that availed her nothing, since she felt herself obliged to conceal the manner by which she became possessed of the fork and spoon.

Du Rocher chose to consider her assertion of their being her own, a vile artifice, founded on the initial of the farmer's and her own name being the same.

Blageau, overcome by the excess of his feelings, and unable longer to endure a scene so extremely agonizing to them, left the apartment.

'I am innocent! I am innocent!' exclaimed the distracted girl.—'Prove it! prove it!' cries the farmer. 'I cannot, it is not in my power,' rejoined Annette; 'but I am innocent! I am innocent!'

The justice insisted on her being immediately taken to prison, and Annette was borne away in a state of wretchedness and despair, that the consciousness of unmerited suffering could alone have enabled her to support. Blageau was too much devoted to Annette to allow the stupor of grief to render him inactive; he believed her wholly incapable of the guilt attributed to her, or indeed of any error, more than what human nature in its most perfect state is capable of committing.

Annette had scarcely been inclosed in a small apartment within the prison, before Blageau appeared before her; the agitation of his soul spoke in his countenance; he seemed unable to trust his voice, but pressing the wretched Annette to his bosom, they mingled their tears together. The grand provost had just arrived in the village, and Annette was to be tried directly.

‘It is a great consolation to me,’ at length Annette was able to articulate, ‘that you, my dear Blageau, are assured of my integrity, and I hope that the excellent Monsieur Gerard is like you, convinced that I am so, and even Madame too: tell her that I sincerely forgive her, as being the first cause of what I fear will be my fate, because I believe precipitancy of temper to have misled her, and that her heart sincerely deploras this error of her judgement.

‘O! my dear Annette!’ replied Blageau, ‘do not talk in this distressing manner!—I cannot—will not anticipate a termination so dreadful! Let us, my love, trust to that Power who knows the innocence of your heart, that he will preserve you through this most undeserved affliction.’ ‘At all events,’ said Annette, endeavouring to be calm, ‘if it seems fit to his enerring wisdom, that I should suffer without being guilty, it is my duty to meet my fate with patient resignation; and to endeavour by my conduct, under the present circumstances, to obtain that happiness in a future state, I have so vainly sought for in this; and now, my kind friend, I have a most particular request to make of you, but you must first promise me to ask no questions.’

Blageau, all anxiety and surprise, gave the assurance required of him; and Annette, taking from her neck a cross that she had constantly worn, earnestly enjoined him to sell it immediately, and place what sum he might procure for it, in the hollow of the remarkable willow tree, that stood at the beginning of the village. ‘Dearest Annette,’ replied Blageau, ‘you shall not, whatever may be your purpose, part with a relic that I know is dear to you, as having been the gift of a beloved mother: tell me the sum that you would wish to be deposited in the tree, and do not deny me the gratification of supplying it for you.’ ‘You are all generosity and disinterested affection,’ returned Annette, in great emotion; ‘but, since you will not allow me to part with this little

momento of what I have lost, to a stranger, who would estimate it only for the money it is worth, take it yourself, dear Blageau, and wear it in remembrance of me.' Blageau took the cross in silence, pressing it to his lips, and gazing on it with looks expressive of wretchedness, then placing it to his heart, he vowed never to part from it, unless to again clasp round the neck of Annette.

Blageau, soon after taking an agonizing and affectionate leave of the unfortunate object of his love, left the prison to execute the mission she had entrusted to his charge.

Madame Gerard meanwhile, tortured by self-reproach, and firmly believing Annette innocent (extraordinary as the coincidence of circumstances was that appeared against her), accompanied by her husband, repaired to the prison, expecting to find Monsieur Du Rocher there; they were not disappointed, the justice was too deeply interested in this horrible plan of vengeance, to pursue any other business for the present, than that which related to his guiltless victim; he had already laid the case before the grand provost; who, partly from his haste to pass through the village, and partly from the artful suggestions of Du Rocher, had determined that the trial of Annette should take place without loss of time.

The farmer and his wife, on being introduced to the presence of the justice, instantly and firmly demanded that Annette should be restored to them, avowing a perfect conviction of her innocence, and a determination to proceed no further against her.

'This declaration is too late, my good friends,' replied the justice, 'the circumstances are so strong and clear against the girl, that the affair cannot now be dropt, without reflecting on the integrity of those whose duty it is to preserve rectitude of conduct, by punishing every dereliction from the laws of right.'

'Then, sir,' replied farmer Gerard, with honest indignation, 'you would do well to look to your own actions, and to so thoroughly investigate the motives of your own conduct, as to be assured, that you are indeed instigated by a love of justice, a wish to conscientiously discharge your duty, in the active part you have taken against the unfortunate and suffering Annette.'

'This is language I did not expect from you, farmer Gerard,' answered Du Rocher with a frown; 'but, in

consideration of my hearing no more of it, I will pardon the unwarrantable licence of speech with which you have chosen to indulge yourself. To say any thing farther on the subject for which you came, I must repeat to you, will be wholly useless, for the grand provost is at this moment preparing to try Annette, and I must leave you, that I may be present.'

'Before you go, Monsieur Du Rocher, to assist at the condemnation of an innocent being,' returned Monsieur Gerard; 'let me solemnly conjure you to seriously reflect, how well *you* are prepared to answer at that tribunal, where subterfuge will not preserve the guilty, nor coincidence of circumstances condemn the innocent; how are you prepared to answer for your conduct in this world? can you safely assert, that you have made no endeavour to corrupt the virtuous principles of a young being, whose poverty, and humble, but honest situation in life, tempted you to render her the lost, dishonoured object of splendid degradation? Has no feeling of revenge, of mortified pride, repulsed by innocence, urged you to a terrible and awful retaliation? Reflect before it is too late for the preservation of Annette's life, and for your own salvation.'

'This is my business,' answered the hardened Du Rocher, with a look of anger, whilst the cowardice of conscious guilt withheld a more indignant reply, and he instantly left the apartment.

Monsieur and Madame Gerard, alike conscious of the inutility of further appeal to a heart so callous as was Du Rocher's, in thoughtful silence quitted the house, and bent their unsteady and melancholy steps towards the place where the object of their agitated solicitude was about to receive her sentence of condemnation.

Blageau, when he left the prison, immediately proceeded to that part of the village where he was to deposit the money.—In a state of mind, a lover under such circumstances could alone imagine, he proceeded on his mysterious errand: the tree grew in a solitary spot, a little out of the road, and Blageau, having first looked carefully around him, to ascertain that he was not observed, slipt the paper that contained the dollars into the hollow. He was too much pained by the melancholy ideas that, in defiance of every suggestion of hope, were ever present to his mind, to feel that surprise and curiosity which would at any other time have arisen from so

mysterious a request as that Annette had made of him; he could only regard it as being, perhaps, the last desire of a beloved object, the first and last opportunity he could ever have of obliging her, to preserve whose life, he would readily have sacrificed his own. With his mind tortured by these images of melancholy, agitation, and despair, he returned to the farm; he entered the house, and throwing himself into a chair, and leaning his face on his hand, sat for several minutes lost in the wretchedness of his reflections. Starting from the distraction of thought, he took the cross from his bosom, and gazed on it, till his eyes, dimmed by tears, were scarcely capable of discerning it; laying the precious token on the table before him, he put his handkerchief to his eyes, and leaning back in his chair, wept as a child. Blageau was awakened from the excessive indulgence of his feelings, by the sound of some one entering the room; and starting from his seat, he discovered the intruder to be Dennis, Du Rocher's favourite servant.

'I ask your pardon, Monsieur Blageau,' exclaimed Dennis, 'but I thought you might like to know how things were going on.' 'Going on!' reiterated Blageau, 'surely nothing particular has occurred within the last two hours?' 'Marry, but there has though!' returned Dennis, with a look of unconcern, 'there has been quick work, I assure you.' 'For heaven's sake, do not keep me in suspence!' exclaimed the agitated Blageau; 'tell me instantly, what has occurred?' 'Annette!—' 'What of Annette?' 'Aye, what indeed, poor girl!—but those, you know, Monsieur, who chuse (as my master says) to go against the law, why they must suffer the law, you know;—to be sure, she is a pretty lass, and it is a pity she couldn't keep her hands from picking and stealing, till she was old and ugly.' 'Wretch! unfeeling miscreant!' exclaimed Blageau, in a voice of thunder, 'how do you dare to speak in this manner of the most injured being in the world!'—'Santa Maria!' exclaimed Dennis, 'I beg your pardon, Monsieur; but I thought Annette was only a poor servant, like myself; I did not know, that you would think so much of it, Monsieur.' 'Oh! Annette! Annette!' cried Blageau. 'Aye, poor Annette!' answered Dennis, 'my master has, to be sure, made quick work of it this time. As I was saying, it was but this morning that she was suspected, and here she has been taken to prison, has been tried,



condemned, and is to be executed directly." Blageau, as Dennis pronounced the last word, felt nature incapable of any further endurance of anguish, his heart sickened, his blood seemed as though it had ceased to flow, and clasping his hands on his forehead, he looked for some minutes as though all sense and feeling had forsaken him.

When he had a little recovered himself from this violent effect of grief and horror, he desired Dennis to leave him; who immediately quitted the house. For full an hour, Blageau paced the apartment with agitated and hasty steps, as though incapable of arranging his ideas, so as to decide on what plan to pursue; at one moment, he was about to rush into the presence of Annette, but in the next, the thought of disturbing the religious serenity he was assured she would acquire, by renewing agitating and painful emotions, restrained him; and he resolved not to go.

The sudden flapping of the magpie's wings, was the first sound that broke upon his ear after the departure of Dennis: such was the state of his mind, that he started with an emotion of terror; and looking for the bird, perceived him flying towards the belfry of the village church (which was near the house) with the cross of Annette in her mouth. Inwardly deprecating the carelessness that exposed his treasure to the threatening danger, Blageau hurried to the church, taking with him the keys, of which the farmer had the possession.

Annette, in the interim, had passed through a hasty trial, terminating in the fatal sentence, that condemned her to an ignominious death; and was directly after re-conducted to prison, till the short preparations could be completed, that were necessary to the execution of the terrible punishment that was awarded her.

Monsieur and Madame Gerard had interfered in vain; and in two hours after sentence having been passed upon her, the procession that was to attend her to the last scene of her sufferings, summoned her from the cell in which she was confined. The gaoler was a man of singular humanity; and had seen in Annette, an object of peculiar interest and compassion. Painful was the task to him of apprising her that all was ready; with a half reluctant step, he gained the cell, unclosing the door so gently, that his prisoner was unconscious of his approach,

though he had entered the miserable chamber. He found her kneeling on the cold stones of her prison, her hands even colder, folded on her breast, her head bent towards the floor, as though bowed in humble resignation to the will of her heavenly Father; whilst the motion of her lips, and the expression of her countenance, evinced her to be fervently engaged in the Christian consolation of pious prayer. The man gazed on her in silence, unwilling to disturb her, till the fear of incurring the displeasure of his employers by keeping them waiting, induced him to awaken her attention.

Perhaps no mind, however fortified by religious meditation, could hear such a summons as was the gaoler's task to convey, without feeling a sensation of horror and timidity. A convulsive shudder passed over her form, whilst her cheeks and lips became even more white and cold than they had before appeared: in a few seconds, recovering the fortitude she had endeavoured to acquire, she said she was ready, and followed the man from the cell to where the rest of the procession awaited her appearance; with slow steps, and in silence, broken only by the tolling of the awful bell, they proceeded to the place of execution. The villagers had assembled on either side the way, to witness this melancholy spectacle; many with looks of mere idle curiosity, others with the stern expression of countenance, that evinced their conviction of her guilt, whilst some few gazed, with tearful eyes and feelings of compassion, on the young and lovely object of their pity.

Annette, meanwhile, with eyes bent to the earth, proceeded with a slow but firm step, not daring to glance around, lest by beholding scenes that would recall the ties that bound her to earth, she should weaken the firmness, religion and conscious rectitude had inspired.

On the road to the fatal spot, they were obliged to pass close to the village church. Annette, as they gained this sacred spot, almost involuntarily paused,—she wished to offer up a prayer at the sacred altar, for the preservation of her father, and that he might be endowed with resolution to support the terrible affliction of her early and unmerited fate. A few minutes were all that were allowed her; and she had again taken her station in the melancholy train.

Nature could not wholly be resisted; and Annette

turned her eyes upon the house of farmer Gerard. The glance was but momentary, yet it recalled a thousand tender recollections, and cost the suffering girl a more painful effort than she had yet exerted, to preserve the calmness and resignation, that a few minutes were so fatally to attest.

The signal was given for proceeding to the melancholy scene of her final sufferings, now dimly seen through a vista of distant trees, when an impassioned, but trembling voice, commanded the procession to stop, eagerly exclaiming, 'She is innocent! she is innocent!—Annette, my own Annette, thou art innocent! thou art innocent!' Every eye was turned to the place from whence these agitated and unexpected tones proceeded. Blageau appeared at the belfry, holding something in his hand!—in a moment he quitted his station, and before half a minute had elapsed, the fainting Annette was strained to his bosom. Blageau, supporting her on one arm, whilst with the other he raised the fork and spoon of Madame Gerard, his exclamation of Annette is innocent! Annette is innocent! was loudly repeated by the surrounding crowd.

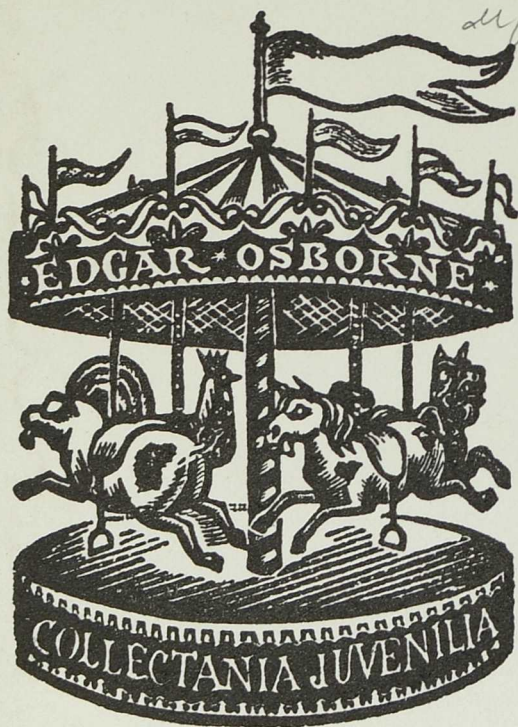
Justice Du Rocher advanced, to enquire the particulars; the proof was too strong for even cunning and malignity to pervert, Monsieur and Madame Gerard, who had heard from their house the delightful sounds Annette is innocent! pressed amidst the crowd; and the next minute, a man, wildly exclaiming, My child! my child! rushed through the surrounding villagers, and received from the arms of Blageau the but half-conscious Annette.

The voice of her father uttering mingled sentences of affection and thankfulness, revived the injured sufferer; but she had scarcely recognized her parent, before Du Rocher, with the satisfaction of a dæmon, ordered his soldiers to tear Grandville from her embrace, and to imprison him as a deserter. 'At your peril!' exclaimed a voice; and instantly an officer, who had followed Grandville, presented a paper to the inspection of the justice, written by the officer, Grandville had offended; in which was contained, not merely a pardon, but an acknowledgement of error on the part of the captain, and a noble request to be forgiven by Grandville.

The father of Annette now publicly revealed the manner by which Annette became possessed of the fork and spoon. Du Rocher, abashed and confounded, silently retreated amidst the looks and whispered contempt of the assembled inhabitants of the village, whilst the little party, whose wretchedness he had sought, returned to a happy home, to first render thanks to a merciful and just Judge for the wonderful preservation they had experienced from the severest affliction; and then to enjoy the happiness of which a life of religious and moral rectitude rendered them (as far as human nature can be) deserving of obtaining.

THE END.

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