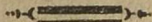


THE LADY

IN THE

ARBOUR.



BY MRS. SHERWOOD,

Author of "Little Henry and his Bearer,"
 &c. &c.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HOULSTON AND CO.

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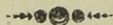
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THE LADY IN THE ARBOUR.

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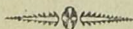
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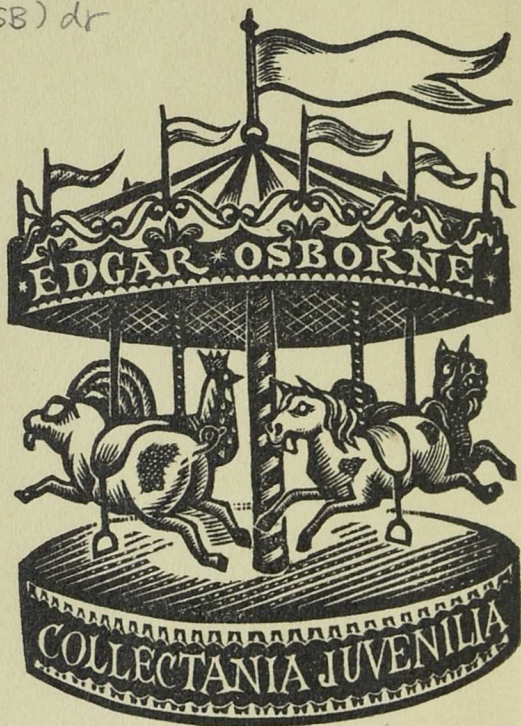
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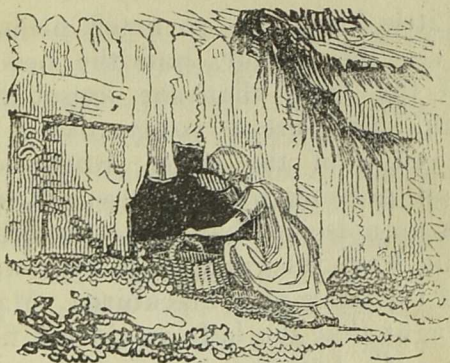
LADY in the ARBOUR.

LITTLE Mary was an orphan ; she never remembered either her father or her mother, or any of those of her family, who had gone before her in times past. When she was a very little baby, she was placed under the care of a poor woman, called Jane Price, who gave her food and clothes indeed, though of a coarse kind, but never taught her any good, and often used her very hardly. Whenever the ground was not covered with snow, Mary used to be sent to work out of doors, sometimes to pick sticks, and sometimes to drive away the birds from a field or garden, and sometimes to gather the little tufts of wool which the sheep left upon the briars in their way from one field to another ; and when she came home

at night to Jane's cottage, which stood at the very bottom of a long lane, far from every other house, she was glad to get a bit of bread and a draught of skim milk or thin broth.

All this while she had never heard of God, or entered a place of worship, or even seen a book, unless it might be the old Bible, which had lain on a shelf over the cottage chimney till it had gathered as much dust as would have made Jane rich all her life had it been turned into gold.

Such had been the life of poor little Mary, when, one summer's evening, Jane bade her go out, and not come back till she had filled her apron with sticks. Mary had some distance to go for these sticks, because she had gathered all those which were near the cottage; so she passed up the lane a good way, and at last came to a place where some fine tall trees hung over a paling,



and shaded the way all across. Mary peeped through the paling, and saw a great many bits of stick on the other side; and, as the paling was broken in one place, she contrived to push through the gap, and soon found herself in a very fine wood, beyond which, at a little distance, she saw a fall of water, and by the fall, in a shady spot, a bower, in which sat an old lady, dressed in black, who was reading very quietly all alone in this sweet place.

Little Mary was so much pleased to see the arbour, and the brook, and the lady, that she forgot her work, and crept softly down to the edge of the water, where she stood peeping at the lady. There was no noise in that place but what came from the running of the water and the song of a blackbird. Mary thought that the lady would not find her out; but she did, and she was not angry, for she called the little girl to come to her, and held out her



hand to her, as if she thought herself no better than the poor ragged child who stood before her. And I dare say that was no more than the truth: for the lady was a servant of that dear Saviour who said, *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.* Mary was at first frightened; but the lady looked so kindly, that her fear wore away, and she came up close to her. The lady then asked her many questions, and she told her all she knew about herself.

While Mary was telling her story, a tear came into the lady's eye, which Mary wondered at. Then, when the little girl had told every thing, the lady talked to her, and asked her if she could read, and if she ever went to church; and when the little girl said no, the lady spoke to her about the God who had made her, and told her that she must try to please him, because he could see

every thing she did; "and he saw you too," said she, "when you crept through the pales to take the sticks. These sticks, my little girl, are mine, not yours, and you have not had leave to take them: but I will give you leave, and then God will not be angry if you take them; and you need never again creep through the paling, but go a little higher up the lane, and get over the stile. And whenever you come here, you may look for me in this arbour; and if I am here I will talk to you, and tell you a little more about God, and in what way you must try to please him." So the lady sent little Mary to gather her sticks.

The next evening Mary came to the same wood, and saw the lady again, and the next and the next day she did the same; and every day the lady talked to her, and told her a little more and more about God: and she

told her a great deal about her Saviour, and about heaven, where holy children go when they die; and hell, where people go who refuse to love their blessed Saviour. If you will examine your Bible, you will find a great many things which the lady told little Mary. All that long sweet summer was passed in this way by Mary; almost every evening she met the lady in her arbour, and heard her talk about her God. O! how much did little Mary love that lady!

At length, however, the evenings got shorter, and the lady one day said to Mary, "It is getting too cold for me to sit in my arbour: what will you do, Mary, all the winter without seeing me? shall you not forget all I have taught you?"

"No," replied the little girl, "I shall never forget you, lady, nor all your kind words, and what you have taught me about God. But will you

never come again?" and Mary began to cry.

"Yes," said the lady, "I will hope to come to-morrow; so do not cry, Mary. You will, I trust, see me again."

Mary was comforted with this, and went to the wood the next day as early as Jane would give her leave; but when she got into the little valley, by the brook, no lady was in the arbour. Mary thought the place looked very, very sad; and she sat down on the green step at the foot of the bower. There Mary waited and waited till the sun went down behind the wood, and the wind began to blow very cold. The little girl began to cry; and while she was crying, she heard her own name, which some one was repeating in a loud voice. She looked up, and saw Jane Price, who was come to look after her. "What are you doing here, child?" said Jane, very angrily. "Why don't you come home?"

“I am waiting for the lady,” replied Mary.

“And what is the use of waiting for her?” said Jane; “what has she ever given you but a few sticks? what use are friends to poor folks, who cannot find in their hearts to give them a farthing? Go home, naughty girl; and if ever I find you here again, I will make you remember.”

Jane then dragged the little girl from her seat, and was pulling her roughly away, when the lady was



seen coming along a little winding path. "What is the matter here?" said the lady. "Do not be angry with the little girl: she has been waiting for me; and I have been at your house, to ask you if you will part with this little girl, and let me have her for a maid."

O how did little Mary tremble lest Jane Price should say no! and I dare say Jane would have said no, if the lady had not taken two bright guineas and offered them to Jane, if she would part with Mary.

So Jane took the guineas; and, bidding Mary be a good girl, she walked away without shedding one tear, and the happy little girl was left with the lady.

O how she did jump and run, as the lady led her through the wood to her own neat house! and how clean and nice little Mary looked when she was washed and dressed the next morning!



So little Mary helped to wait on the old lady; and when the lady was unable to help herself, from very great age, Mary was like a daughter to her, and served her night and day.

Many years are past since that old lady died: but Mary is still alive, and is ever looking forward to that blessed time when she shall meet again with that beloved friend who first led her to the knowledge of her Saviour.

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