

WATTY and MEG; or, The Wife Reformed.

“We dream in courtship, but awake in wedlock.”—POPE.

KEEN the frosty winds were blawin',
Deep the snaw had wreathed the ploughs;
Watty, weary't a' day sawin',
Dannert down to Mungo Blew's.

DRYSTER Jock was sitting, crackie,
Wi' Patie Tamson o' the Hill—
“Come awa,” quo Johnny, “Watty!
Haith, we se ha'e anither jill.”

WATTY, glad to see Jack Jabos,
And sae mony neighbours roun',
Kicket frae his shoon the sna'-ba's,
Syne ayont the fire sat down.

OWER a board wi' bannocks heapest,
Cheese an stowps and glasses stood;
Some were roaring, ither sleepet,
Ithers quietly chewt their cude.

JOCK was selling Patie some tallow—
A' the rest a racket hel'—
A' but Watty, wha, poor fellow,
Sat and smoket by himsel'.

MUNGO hil't him up a tooth-fu',
Drank his health and Mag's in ane;
WATTY, puffin' out a mouthfu',
Pledged him wi' a weary grane.

“What's the matter, Watty, wi' you?
Troth, your chafes are fa'in in;
Something's wrang—I'm vext to see you—
Gude-sake, but ye're desp'r't thin!”

“Ay,” quo' Watty, “things are alter't;
But it's past redemption now—
L—d, I wish I had been halter'd
—When I married Maggy How.

“I've been poor, and vext, and raggy,
Try't wi' troubles no that sma'—
Them I bore; but marrying Maggy
Laid the cap-stane o' them a'.

“Night and day she's ever yelpin',
Wi' the weans she ne'er can' kreen;
When she's tired wi' perfect screepin',
Then she fees like fire on me.

“See you, Mungo, when she'll clash on
Wi' her overlasting clack,
Whiles I've had my nieve, in passion,
Liftet up to break her back.”

“Oh, for gude-sake, keep frae cuffets!”
Mungo shook his head and said it;
Woe! I ken what sort o' life it's,
Ken ye, Watty, how I did?

“After Boss and I was kippit,
Fact, she grew like ony bear,
Brak my shins, and when I tippl't,
Harl't out my verra hair!”

“For a wee I quietly knuckl't;
But when naething wad prevail,
Up my claes and cash I buckl't—
‘Bess, for ever fare ye weel.’

“Then her din grew less and less aye—
Fact, I gart her change her tune;
Now a better wify than Bessy
Never stept in leather shoon.

“Try this, Watty, when ye see her
Raging like a roaring flood,
Swear that moment that ye'll lea' her;
That's the way to keep her gude.”

Laughing, sangs, and lasses' skirls
Echo'd now out thro' the roof.
“Done!” quo' Pate, and syne his airls
Nail't the Dryster's wauket loof.

In the thrang o' story-telling,
Shaking hauns and ither cheer,
With't a chap comes on the hallen,—
“Mungo, is our Watty here?”

Maggie's weel-kent tongue and hurry
Dartet through him like a knife,
Open the door flew—like a fury
In came Watty's scawlin' wife.

“Nasty, gude-for-naething being
Oh, ye snuffy, drucken sow!
Bringin' wife and weans to ruin,
Drinkin' here wi' sic a crew!

“Devil nor your legs were broken!
Sic a life nae flesh endures—
Toil'in' like a slave to sloken
You, ye dyvour, and your w—!

“Rise, ye drunken beast o' Bethel!
Drink's your night and day's desire,
Rise this precious hour, or faith I'll
Fling your whisky i' the fire.”

WATTY heard her tongue unhalloed,
Pay't his groat wi' little din,
Left the house while Maggy followed
Flytin' a' the road behin'.

Fowl frae every door cam' lampin';
Maggy curs't them ane and a',
Clappit wi' her hauns, and stampin',
Lost her bachals i' the snaw.

HAME at length, she turned the gavel,
Wi' a face as white's a clout,
Ragin' like a verra deevil,
Pitchin' stools and chairs about.

“Ye'll sit wi' your limmers round ye!
Hang you, sir, I'll be your death!
Little hauds my haunds, confound you!
But I'll cleave you to the teeth.”

WATTY, wha' midst this crafion
Eyed her whyles but daurna speak,
Sat like patient resignation,
Trem'lin' by the ingle cheek.

Sad his wee drap brose he sippet,
Maggy's tongue went like a bell,
Quietly to his bed he slippet,
Sighin' often to himself:

“Nane are free frae some vexation,
Ik ane has his ills to dree;
But through a' the hale crafion,
Is a mortal vext like me?”

A' night lang he rout and gauntet,
Sleep nor rest he couldna' tak'!
Maggy aft wi' horror hauntet,
Mum'lin' started at his back.

Soon as e'er the morning peepet,
Up raise Watty, wae'fu' chiel.
Kissed his weanies, while they sleepet,
Wauken't Meg, and sought fareweel.

“Fareweel, Meg! and oh, may heaven
Keep you aye within his care;
Watty's heart ye've lang been grievin',
Now he'll ne'er fash you mair.

“Happy could I be beside you,
Happy baith at morn and e'en;
A' the ills did e'er betide you,
Watty aye turn't out your frien'.

But ye ever like to see me
Vext and watty, late and air,
Fareweel, Meg, I've sworn to lea' thee,
So thou'll never see me mair.”

Meg a' sabbin' sae to lose him,
Sic a change had never wist,
Hold his haun' close to her bosom,
While her heart was like to burst.

“Oh, my Watty, will ye lea' me
Frien'less, helpless, to despair!
Oh! for this ae time forgi' me,
Never will I vex you mair.”

“Aye, ye've aft said that and broken
A' your vows ten times a week:
Na, na, Meg! see there's a token
Glitterin' for my bonnet check.

“Over the seas I march this mornin',
Listet, testet, sworn an' a',
Forced by your confounded girnin';
Fareweel Meg! for I'm awa'.”

Then poor Maggy's tears and clamour
Gusht afresh and louder grew,
While the weans wi' mournfu' yammer
Round their sabbin' mother flew.

“Through the yirth I'll wander wi' you—
Stay, O Watty! stay at hame,
Here upo' my knees I'll gi'e you
Any vow you like to name.

“See your poor young lammies pleadin',
Will you gang and break our heart;
No a house to put our head in!
No a frien' to tak' our part!”

Ik a word came like a bullet;
Watty's heart begoud to shake;
On a kist he laid his wallet,
Dightet laith his een and spake—

“If ance mair I could by writin'
Lea' the sagers and stay still,
Wad ye swear to drop yer flytin'?"—
“Yes, O Watty, yes I will.”

“Then,” quo' Watty, “mind be honest;
Aye to keep your temper stiver;
Gin ye break this dreadfu' promise,
Never mair expect to thrive:—

“Marget How! this hour ye solemn
Swear by everything that's gude,
Ne'er again your spouse to scart' him,
While life warns your heart and bluid—

“That you'll ne'er in Mungo's seek me,
Ne'er put 'drucken' to my name,
Never out at e'enin' steek me,
Never gloom when I come hame—

“That you'll ne'er, liko Bessy Millar,
Kick my shins and rug my hair;
Lastly, I'm to keep the siller—
This upon your soul you swear?”

“O-h!” quo' Meg,—“Aweel,” quo' Watty,
“Fareweel! faith I'll try the seas.”
“Oh, stan' still,” quo' Meg, and grat aye,
“Ony, ony way ye please.”

Maggy syne, because he prest her,
Swore to a' thing ower again;
Watty lap, and danc't, and kiss'd her;
Wow! but he was wond'rous fain.

Down he threw his staff victorious;
Aff gaed bonnet, claes, and shoon;
Syne below the blankets, glorious,
Held anither Hinny-Moon!