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Vol. XXI. The London Chronicle. No. 1636.

From THURSDAY, JUNE 11, to SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 1767.

The Farmer's Daughter of Essex. By JAMES PENN, Vicar of Clavering cum Langley, in Essex, and Lecturer of St. Ann and Agnes, Aldersgate. 12mo. pp. 223.



HE ingenious Author of this work, in his preface, shews himself well aware of the surprize it may occasion, that one of his function should produce a Novel, and how ready many will be to exclaim, he should rather have published a sermon; on which he observes, that, instead of sermons, an opera, a play, or a novel, engross the taste of the present age; wherefore, the "writer of the following sheets, says he, hath conformed to that taste; and if the reader should censure the parson, it is humbly hoped he will excuse the Author, his intention being both to entertain and improve."

Few readers, we believe, will think Mr. Penn has fallen short in this intention; if any do, they must be the Polly Honeycombs of the age, who, from the name of novel, expect (and too seldom are balked) nothing but intrigue, and gratification for their impertinent curiosity, mixed with ridiculous absurdities, but seldom meet with the least degree of that instruction and improvement necessary to form young minds to virtue.

Miss D—, the Farmer's daughter, received a most virtuous and refined education, under the eye of one of the best of men and tenderest of fathers. She was, early in life, admired by Mr. S—; he asked her in marriage; consent was granted, after Mr. D— had made enquiry into his character, which proved exceeding good in the neighbourhood where he lived; for, though a thorough profligate, he took care to preserve good appearances at home, while he engaged in the vilest debauches abroad.—The time for the wedding was fixed; a few days before which, Mr. S— pretended to be under a necessity of going into Somersetshire, and requested his intended wife might stay with his sister during the journey: this was agreed to; he set out; but his absence was very short; he was brought back in a post-chaise, having, it was said, been thrown from his horse, and much bruised and wounded. Miss D—'s tenderness for him, induced her to stay at his house, hoping, by her assiduity, and the sister's assistance, he might soon be recovered. The consequence of her fondness was as follows: "Notwithstanding his indisposition, says she, the hours seemed to pass pleasantly away, love being the principal subject of our conversation, and frequent the wishes for the day when our happiness would be completed. One night, when we had entered deeply into these matters, and reason was absorbed in love, he, who had been long watching the favourable opportunity of gratifying the base design upon my honour, said, "My dear, why should we protract the bliss, which we so ardently wish to enjoy?" I stood amazed, and confounded, at his saying. He drew me towards him, and declared, with the most solemn vows, his sincerity. I endeavoured to release myself, and called out for help, but in vain, for he clasped me in his arms, and prevented me. He solicited, I denied; he promised, I trembled; he vowed, I believed.—Ere the guilty scene was closed, my conscience smote me; and, when the guilty scene was closed, something from within told me, that I had done wrong. Oh, what trouble and sorrow did I feel at heart! The mind, before calm and serene, was now restless and disturbed. My innocence, never to

be restored, was no more, and happiness exchanged for misery."

To calm her inquietude, he promised a private marriage, previous to the public, by a special licence; it was accordingly performed; but in the basest manner; by a pretended clergyman, and a forged licence. She became satisfied; a day was again fixed, he having thrown off his feigned indisposition for their espousal. A short time before its arrival, he proposed to take an airing; lest he should catch cold, the window-blinds were drawn up: and, after some hours riding, Miss D— found herself brought to London. Mr. S— told her, that he had brought her hither, only that she might furnish herself with some new wearing apparel, and other necessaries. She was carried to a house provided by her deceiver, (who assured her he had wrote to her father about their marriage) and there remained with him a considerable time, never once hearing from her family, nor having any acquaintance. During this period, however, she found out the deception of the licence, and learnt that she was looked upon in a loose light in the neighbourhood. Their residence, it must be observed, was in a part of the town very distant from his own house.

At length, one evening Mr. S— took her to the opera, and thence to a pretended friend's house, where, it being late, they stayed all night; next morning he left her early, pretending business: She waited for him there the whole day; at night a porter brought a note from him, informing her he was obliged to stay late in parliament. The morning following she received another note, wherein he informed her, that his affairs being much distressed, he was obliged immediately to leave town; that she must not expect to see him again, nor to return to her former habitation, which, he said, was in the hands of his creditors; and that she need not doubt of civil treatment from the people she was with, if she would comply with their request. The surprize occasioned by this incident caused some days violent illness; when she was a little recovered, the mistress of the house told her, she must either commence prostitute for her support, or turn out of the house. The latter she did not hesitate to resolve on; and having sold what trinkets she had about her, found herself mistress of about forty pounds.

Miss D—, after meeting with many mortifications on account of the manner in which she had lived with Mr. S—, went into service in a merchant's family; the master took a liking to her, and one day, imagining his wife out, and finding no inducements could prevail to seduce her, he resolved upon force; her mistress being in the next room, prevented the infamous design; but immediately obliged her to leave the house. She got another service; and, though in a family which had the strongest appearance of sanctity, the libidinous desires of her master and his brother soon induced her to quit it. Shortly after this she was seized with a violent fever, which exhausted all her money, and obliged her to pawn most of her cloaths. She entered into a third service; but was too weak to labour but to commence beggar. Her success was so small that she could not pay for a lodging, and was therefore obliged to rest in empty houses, at doors, or any other wretched place she could meet with.—One day she met with her base betrayer, the cause of all her misery, and, telling who she was, he gave her a shilling;

"Cruel recompence, says she, to a needy wretch, for virtue lost!"

Driven by the horror of her fate to despair, she once attempted to destroy herself, but providence frustrated the design.—She at length resolved to return to her parents. In passing through a village, a footman who had formerly served her, and now recollected her features, commiserating her distress, gave her what money he had, amounting to half a guinea, four shillings, and some halfpence: She went to buy a pair of shoes with part of the money, when dropping a half crown, the cobbler picked it up, and insisted it was his. She demanding it from him, a mob gathered round her, and the cobbler accused her of stealing his shoes: a Justice of Peace must decide the cause; when she, having been searched, and the half guinea discovered, was concluded a thief, notwithstanding the told who had given her the money. She was dismissed with disgrace and threats; and the Justice having sent an account to the footman's master, he was turned away for his benevolence.

After variety of other equally distressful incidents, all which are related in the most pathetic manner by this reverend Novellist, she arrived at the village where her father lived. Mr. S— was now seeking means to take away her life, fearing his villainy would at length be published; this design he would probably have accomplished, had not her father casually come to the place where she was confined, just as she was going to be conveyed away. She discovered herself to Mr. D—, who received her with the greatest tenderness, as did all the rest of her family; and thus was this unfortunate victim of a rich villain's lust restored to peace and tranquillity. Her father informed her, that he had made the most diligent search after her, ever since she was first lost, but, by Mr. S—'s contrivance, all in vain.

A few years after she was so happily reinstated, Mr. S—, whose conscience would never suffer him to be happy, died; he left our heroine ten thousand pounds, which his widow came immediately and paid her. In her company she brought her brother, who falling in love with this hitherto unfortunate beauty, their marriage was some time after concluded; as was that of the widow S— with Mr. D—'s eldest son.

Sir Robert, Miss D—'s husband, being called on the Grand Jury, a poor distressed man was charged with a murder: In the course of the trial, he proved innocent, and was acquitted. Some time after, he came begging at the gate of Sir Robert's house, and desired to speak with the Mistress: At an interview which was granted him, he proved to be the footman who had relieved in her distress, for which he had lost his place; since when, a series of misfortunes had reduced him to the necessity of begging. He was now rewarded for his humanity by the grant of a farm of sixty pounds a year.

A poor woman, with three children, next implored their charity; but, on being admitted, and hearing who the house belonged to, wanted hastily to depart; this was related, and Sir Robert and his Lady were very desirous to know the cause. On enquiry, she acknowledged herself the person who had passed for Mr. S—'s sister, and been a principal instrument in the artifice used to seduce Miss D—, for which she had received a large recompence. Sir Robert dismissed her with these words: "Virtue, that Virtue, however severe its distresses are at first, will, at the last, meet with its reward as

[Price Two-pence Halfpenny.]