BLACK JENNY:

A TALE FOUNDED ON FACTS.

BY MRS. MOODIE.

"STEENY, are you ready? the boat is waiting. Throw down your books, and make as much haste as you can to the river; or we shall be too late to join Captain Howard's party this beautiful afternoon," cried a fine-looking lad of fourteen, popping his head into the study where Mrs. Risdon's sons were engaged in their lessons.

Stephen Risdon shook his head:—"You must go without me to-day, Walter; I have particular reasons for wishing to stay at home."

"Nonsense: the day is so fine, the water glitters like silver, and is as smooth as glass;—you must come."

"Indeed, I must not."

"Has your father forbidden you to go?"

"No, it is my own choice."

"Your reasons, lad; can you give me a good excuse for declining my uncle's invitation?"

"I hope so; I will walk a little way with you, on your return to the boat, and tell you my motive for refusing to accompany you."

Stephen took down his cap, and, carefully closing

the door after him, put his arm within Walter Howard's, and proceeded towards the Thames, which lay glittering before them, winding its majestic course amongst the meads and groves of Richmond.

"Well, Steeny!" cried his impatient companion, "why cannot you accompany us?"

"My brother Richard was invited by your good Uncle to join your party to-day on the water," said Stephen.

"Well, I know that; but Mr. Risdon told Uncle this morning that Richard had displeased him, and that he had, to punish him, forbidden him to go."

"True; but poor Dick is so fond of the water, and of every thing connected with boating, that he had reckoned for weeks on this water-frolic; and his disappointment is almost more than he has fortitude to bear. Besides, he is very sorry for his past fault, which I thought but a slight one, and feel conscious of often having been guilty of the same myself."

"And what was it?"

"Laughing at Mr. Taylor, our writing-master, for his odd manner of speaking. Papa caught him in the very act, and told him severely of his cruelty in mocking the defects of others; and he ended by saying that, as he did not know how to

conduct himself like a gentleman, he was not fit to mingle in genteel society, and that he should not join Mr. Howard's party in the afternoon, without he begged Mr. Taylor's pardon for his rudeness. Dick was too proud to do this before Mr. Taylor went away, and Papa would not listen to my entreaties for him to forgive my brother and let him go. After Papa left the study, Richard burst into tears, and said he should be perfectly wretched if I went without him; and, as we are not forbidden to walk and play in the garden, I promised him faithfully that I would stay at home."

"And you mean to keep your promise?"

"Certainly."

"Well, Steeny, you are a good fellow; but I think you very foolish for losing such a glorious opportunity of enjoying yourself. So good bye; I wish you a pleasant game at bat and ball, and a very sentimental walk in the garden with Master Dick."

Away ran Walter Howard: Stephen stopped a moment on the brow of the hill to see the party embark. The gay boat was launched upon the crystal tide, amidst the shouts of her joyous young crew. The breeze, which had gently swept over the meadows of uncut hay, giving to them that undulatory motion which resembles the waves of a summer sea, filled the white sails of the little

vessel, and she shot like a swan down the majestic stream, adding another pleasing object to the delightful landscape.

"How beautiful," said Stephen, turning reluctantly away; "how I should have enjoyed the sail!" But there was a something in young Risdon's heart, which more than repaid him for this act of self-denial—the pleasing consciousness of having done a generous action; and, long before he reached the garden gate, all traces of regret had vanished from his smiling countenance. In the garden he met his father.

"How, my boy!—you at home; were you too late to join Captain Howard's party?

"No, Papa; but I preferred staying at home."

"How was that, Stephen; yesterday you were so very anxious to go?"

"Yes—but poor Richard. Dear Papa, I could not be happy at another person's expense. How could I enjoy myself, when I knew that he was alone and miserable?" The tears sprung into Stephen's eyes; he turned hastily from his father, and joined his brother in the study.

Mr. Risdon was much affected at this proof of his son's generosity. He loved them both tenderly, and his severity in the morning had been dictated by the kindest feelings. He followed Stephen into the study, and found the lads with their arms en-

twined about each other's neck, and Richard leaning upon Stephen's bosom.—"Dear Steeny," he said, "I did not wish you to make this sacrifice for me. I was very selfish in wanting you to remain at home; it is not fair that you should be punished for my fault."

"It is no sacrifice, no punishment, dear Richard. I thought it would be at the time; but I am so happy that I staid at home, my heart seems quite full of love to every one."

"My dear boys," said Mr. Risdon, taking a hand of each, "this little proof of your affection for each other has made me happy also. Richard, I forgive you for your past fault, because I believe that your repentance is sincere. Stephen, your kindness to your brother shall not be unrewarded. You cannot now go upon the water; but you shall go to London this afternoon with me, and choose the bows and arrows I promised you, against the next grand archery."

The eyes of the brothers glistened with pleasure, nor were they backward in expressing, with childish eloquence, the joy of their hearts. Their books were speedily consigned to the shelf. The carriage was ordered to the door; and the boys amused their father, during a delightful ride, in describing the pleasure they should feel in learning the use of the bow. This led to a long and entertaining discus-

sion upon the antiquity of the weapon, of the celebrity of the English archers, and the fame of Robin Hood and his merry men, and brought to their remembrance the ballad of "Chevy Chace," and the famous anecdote of William Tell, till the boys, with all the enthusiasm of youth, already, in idea, rivalled those renowned archers, and longed for the time when they should take their places among the young people who had made this, for some months, a favourite diversion in their village. They were impatient to reach London, and, for once in their lives, paid little regard to the lovely scenes through which they were passing.

In their way to the fashionable shop in which these long-coveted weapons were to be procured, Mr. Risdon stopped at a pastry-cook's, in order to give the brothers a little treat after their ride. Whilst they were discussing some excellent new buns, a respectable-looking man, in very mean apparel, entered the shop, leading by the hand a pale emaciated little boy, of six years old: in a subdued voice he asked the master of the shop if he had a stale loaf for him:—"I would not beg of you so often," he said, "but I have had no work this week—my poor wife is ill—the children are crying for food, and we are greatly distressed."

"Had you come yesterday, Copley, I had saved a basket-full of odd scraps for you," said the bene-

volent pastry-cook; "but they were all given away this morning: however, give me your basket, and I will see what I can do for you."

"Oh, sir, I know not how we shall ever repay you for your kindness," returned the man. "My wife was too ill to be left alone, and the children too young to be trusted in the streets without a guide: I could not come out before, and so the poor little things went supperless to bed;—indeed, sir, neither they nor I have tasted food since noon yesterday."

Stephen, who had been listening attentively to every word that passed between the pastry-cook and his pensioner, suddenly put down the cake he was eating, for he felt as though it would choke him, and looked earnestly in his father's face without speaking a word. Mr. Risdon understood the mute appeal to his benevolence; but he was anxious to hear something more from the unfortunate mechanic, for such he appeared to be, before he offered him any pecuniary assistance.

"Copley," said the pastry-cook, "have you got a customer for your horse?"

The man shook his head.—"I have only applied to one gentleman yet, and he answered me very roughly: however, he promised to come up and look at him, but I have seen nothing of him since; and the children cried so bitterly at the thought of

parting with the poor thing, that I felt glad of it. However, I now desire to sell the creature, for it is half starved: it is cruel to keep it any longer; and, in my present situation, I feel that it is dishonest."

"Papa," whispered Richard Risdon, "how can so poor a man afford to keep a horse?"

"That, my boy, is a mystery to me:"—then, turning to the stranger, he said, "My good fellow, is it possible that you can have a horse to dispose of?"

The man looked at the pastry-cook, and a melancholy smile passed over his wasted features.—"You may well be surprised, sir, to hear a half-starved, ill-dressed person like me talking of his horse; but I have as pretty a pony to sell as ever you saw."

"And how did you come by it?"

"Honestly enough," returned the mechanic; "and, although an expense to us now, poor little Jenny was once a great comfort. If you, sir, will condescend to listen to me for a few minutes, I will give you the history of my horse."

Mr. Risdon's curiosity was greatly excited; besides, he felt strongly interested in the poor man and his family, while the boys quite forgot their bows and their buns, in their eager desire to unravel the mystery of how it was possible for a mendicant to possess a horse of his own.

"Six years ago, sir," pursued the poor man, "I came to London with my wife and two small children, to follow the trade of a journeyman blacksmith. I was reckoned a good hand at my business in the country; and, being a strong, industrious fellow, I soon got employed by a master in the trade, who was so well pleased with my method of managing restive horses, that I had to shoe every spirited and valuable animal that was sent to our forge. Besides my skill as a blacksmith, I knew a great deal about horses, and had received from my old master in the country, many valuable receipts for the different disorders with which that noble animal is afflicted. I was requested, one day, by a gentleman's head groom, to go over to Highgate, to dress the foot of one of his master's blood horses, which had been lamed at Ascot Heath races. I complied with his wishes, and accordingly went; and, whilst I was there, a very valuable little mare, and a great favourite with John's master, died a few hours after foaling, leaving one of the prettiest little black foals you ever saw. 'Squire Gerald gave orders for the little orphan to be killed, as it was impossible, he said, for it to be reared without its mother. I thought otherwise, and I told John that I was sure that I could rear the foal for his master. The 'Squire laughed at my wishing to become the crea-

ture's foster-mother; and he said, that if I thought I could rear the foal, I was welcome to keep it, and to make what I could of it, for the benefit of my family. I carried it home in my master's luggage cart; and, as I had no place in which I could rear the little stranger, but the room which I occupied with my wife and children, I carried the foal thither in my arms. I rented a large garret in St. Giles's; and, whilst the place was decently furnished, it possessed many comforts. Poor little Jenny had to travel up four pair of stairs before I could introduce her to my wife and children; and it was really amusing to witness the surprise and pleasure which all of them expressed at this odd addition to our family circle. My wife undertook to act the part of nurse, and Jenny was given her place at the feet of the children's bed, and regularly fed during the day, and several times in the night, out of a small tea-pot. For the first fortnight, she appeared thin and puling, and scarcely took any notice of those around her, though the children were always patting, and kissing, and calling her, their own black horsey, and tendering to her their own scanty rations of bread and butter. But after this period was passed, the little stranger soon grew sleek and strong, and was as playful as a kitten, racing round the chamber, springing over the stools, and tossing her silken mane and tail with all the

pride and wantonness of conscious health and spirits. Her form was perfect symmetry, her eyes large and bright, her skin black and shining; and, from her constant association with human beings, her face had an expression of human intelligence. In all her frolics, she carefully avoided running against the children. If the baby was crawling upon the floor, she would stop in the midst of her maddest gambols, lick its innocent hands and face, and caress it with the utmost affection. It was curious to observe how well she understood the looks and signs of the children; how jealous she was of their regard; how proud she seemed to be when cantering, with one of them on her back, round and round the room; how gently she would throw them off upon the bed, when tired with her burden, answering their boisterous shouts of laughter with a low, whinnying sound, which seemed to laugh to them again. She slept upon their bed, shared their meals, and was an active agent in all their sports. 'I do not know what we should do without Jenny,' was my wife's constant remark: 'she amuses and keeps the children quiet; and they are contented to stay in doors all day, if they can but play and romp about the room with Jenny.' But hard times came on, sir: I broke my arm, and was for many months thrown out of work. I found it a difficult matter to provide bread for the

children; and Jenny, no longer a foal, had grown almost imperceptibly into a fine pony. We talked of selling her to buy bread. The children wept at the intelligence: immured in a garret in St. Giles's, she was the only comfort they enjoyed. They came crying round me: they held up their little hands, and implored me not to part with Jenny; for, if I sold their dear black pet, it would break their hearts. My wife pleaded for the children; and from that time, the subject was, dropped. Jenny, too, seemed to understand our poverty. She was only fed with the scraps that the children could spare from their meals; but she never demanded by her former winning importunities more. I know that the poor little rogues have often starved themselves to feed her; and, when I was forced by dire necessity to sell all my furniture, they would lie down by Jenny on the floor, without a murmur, and fling their half-frozen arms about her to keep themselves warm. A few weeks ago, my wife fell sick; and the death of my master threw me quite out of employ. I felt that something must be done; and I walked to Highgate, in the hope of obtaining a few pounds upon Jenny, by selling her to 'Squire Gerald. But the 'Squire had removed into the country; and his successor, a proud cold man, gave me an impatient hearing, promised to look at the creature, of the truth of whose history

he seemed to entertain many doubts, and, finally, never came near us. If it had not been for the benevolence of this worthy man, who, visiting a poor family in the same house, accidentally heard of our distress, we must ere this have perished for want. This, sir, is the history of myself and my horse; and, should you know any gentleman who wants a gentle animal for the use of his children, I would thankfully part with her for a few pounds."

Stephen and Richard Risdon clung eagerly to their father's arm. "Dear, dear papa, do buy Jenny: we would love her, and treat her quite kindly for this poor man's sake."

"I am willing to grant your request, my boys," said Mr. Risdon; "but, if I buy the pony, I cannot afford to purchase the bows also. Now, which do you prefer, the costly toys you were so eager to possess, or this poor man's horse? The one will be an act of charity, the other the mere gratification of vanity, and, at best, but an unprofitable amusement."

"There can be no choice, papa. We can make a bow out of an ash tree; but we cannot procure for money again a creature so faithful and docile, and whose history is so curious and entertaining," said Stephen.

"Can I see the pony?" said Mr. Risdon, turn-

ing to the man: "perhaps you will bring it hither for us to look at."

"Indeed, sir, that is beyond my power to do; for the animal has never left the garret, since the hour I carried her thither; and how she is to be removed, I scarcely know at present. But, if you can condescend to visit our wretched abode, I will gladly show you the way."

Wishing to be of service to the poor fellow and his family, Mr. Risdon dismissed his carriage, and, accompanied by his sons, followed the blacksmith on foot to the wretched abode of want and misery. The house in which Copley and his family resided, had once been the dwelling of some wealthy merchant; but its numerous stories and apartments, divested of their former comforts, obscured by dirt, and darkened from want of repair, looked more like so many dens for thieves, each separately forming an asylum for the indigent and afflicted poor, whose squalid appearance and tattered garments form, in London, such a shocking contrast to the gay apparel and splendid equipages of the rich and great. Mr. Risdon and his sons followed Copley up the first three flights of stairs without any personal inconvenience; but the last ascent was so dark, and the steps which led to it so narrow and broken away, that they were several times in danger of

falling. A feeble light at length broke from above, and a child, in a plaintive voice, said, "Father, is that you?" This was quickly followed by a low neigh, such as horses accustomed to feed in the same meadow often greet each other with, after a short absence, and a black head was immediately thrust through the aperture.

"You see, sir," said the blacksmith, "that Jenny knows my step, and is among the first to welcome me."

Trifling as this circumstance was, it almost affected the kind-hearted Mr. Risdon to tears. The attachment of the brute creature had in it a touch of human tenderness; and he paused a moment on the threshold of the miserable unfurnished apartment, before he could summon sufficient resolution to enter it.

On a bed of straw, in a corner of the wide desolate apartment, lay a young woman, not exceeding six-and-thirty years of age, covered with an old tattered cloak. Close by her side, and supporting her mother's head upon her knees, sat a tall, pale, fair little girl of ten years old, whose meek and resigned countenance bespoke her early acquaintance with grief. A boy, two years younger, was knitting stockings for sale: and two clean, but half-naked little ones, yet in their infancy, were reclining upon the floor, in the very

act of playing with Jenny, who, having said her how-d' ye-do to her master, was quietly reclining upon the floor, in the midst of the group, suffering the baby to twine its little fingers in her long mane, then shaking it over the delighted infant's face, who laughed and crowed, and talked to the pony in a language more unintelligible to the visitors than that of its black playmate.

With a feeling of reverence, Mr. Risdon approached the bed on which the sick woman was extended, and, giving her his hand, expressed the hope that she was better.

"Thank God, sir, the fever has left me, and I shall feel better when I have taken a morsel of food; at present I am too weak to rise." She cast a wistful look towards the basket of broken cakes and bread, which Copley had received from the good pastry-cook. The children had silently gathered round their father, and each, without speaking a word, was holding up his hand for something to eat. Even Jenny's silence was eloquent, and her hollow temples proved that she was suffering from want.

"Poor hearts," said Copley, as he distributed to each a share, "they are very hungry; you must forgive them, sir, for their rudeness."

"Make no excuses, Copley," said Mr. Risdon, walking to the dusty window to conceal his emo-

tion; "I too am a father." Then, fearing lest the idea of parting with Jenny should distress the children, he whispered to the blacksmith, "I will settle with you the price of the pony elsewhere."

"You may speak out, sir," said Copley: "the children are prepared to part with her. Anne, James, and William," he continued, addressing himself to the three who were of age to understand him: "which would you rather, that this kind gentleman took care of Jenny, and fed her well, and used her well, or that she should remain with us to die for want of proper air and food?" The children looked up with tears in their eyes; but each replied with apparent cheerfulness, "We love poor Jenny too well to wish her to stay with us."

"You are good, dutiful children," said Mr. Risdon; "and you shall neither part with Jenny, nor longer want food, whilst I can procure for you, without injuring myself, the necessaries of life. Copley," he continued, turning to the blacksmith, "can you groom horses?"

"One should not praise one's self, I 've heard, sir," said Copley; "but it is what I have been accustomed to from my youth."

"I want a person to take care of my horses, having just parted with my groom: you shall live upon my estate at Richmond; and, though I mean

to purchase Jenny for my boys, your children shall still enjoy the company of their old play-fellow in fine pastures, where they may run races with her all day long."

The children uttered a shout of joy at this unhoped-for intimation. Poor Copley was too much overcome to speak; and the young Risdons thanked their father in the most lively terms for anticipating their wishes.

How to remove Jenny was the next thing to be thought of; and this, for some time, appeared a matter of no small difficulty. At length, after much consultation on the subject, Mr. Risdon suggested the idea of letting her down into the street through the window, by means of ropes and pulleys; and he told Copley that he would give the necessary orders, and send people on the morrow to assist him in effecting her removal. He then withdrew, leaving Copley and his family quite happy in the possession of fifteen pounds for the pony, and, ordering his carriage, returned to Richmond, not a little pleased at his afternoon's visit to the metropolis.

"Dear Stephen, are not you glad that we did not go on the water to-day?" whispered Richard to his brother, as the carriage stopped at their father's mansion, and they were greeted by the party who had just returned from their aquatic excursion.

Walter was eloquent in his description of their trip, and related with much vivacity all they had seen and heard. The brothers listened to him with interest; but they had enjoyed the pleasure of conferring a benefit on a distressed fellow-creature. Their joy was of a more exalted nature, and they no longer envied Walter his short-lived gratification.

"Walter will forget his voyage before the week is out," said Mr. Risdon; "but you will still be happy in the possession of Black Jenny, and in witnessing the happiness of poor Copley and his family."

The next morning Jenny arrived in a cart, accompanied by Copley and his wife and children, dressed in new clothes, and all wearing smiling faces. The boys ran out to welcome the party, and to caress their new favourite. If the honest blacksmith and his family were delighted with the snug little cottage they were to consider as their future home, the rapture of Jenny, at finding herself, for the first time in her life, in a wide paddock, in the possession of air and liberty, is beyond the power of my pen to describe. Regardless of the voice of her old master, or the children, she bounded round and round the field, snuffing the fresh breeze, leaping and capering with joy; or wheeling about with the velocity of thought, mak-

ing the green sward tremble beneath her hoofs. When tired of these diversions, she cast herself upon the grass, rolling upon it, and neighing aloud in all the wantonness of liberty.

"I fear Jenny will never be tame again, or come when we call her," said James Copley, regarding his frolicsome companion with a sorrowful eye.

"If you had been shut up in prison all your life," said his father, "like poor Jenny, you would hardly know what to make of your liberty."

The next day Jenny came as usual to receive her breakfast from the hands of her old companions, and suffered herself to be bridled and saddled with the greatest docility. Her beauty and gentleness excited the admiration of all who saw her; and few could have imagined, from the fleetness and elegance of her movements, that she had been educated and brought up in a garret.

AN INFANT'S DIRGE.

BY J. F. HOLLINGS, ESQ.

Sleep—behold thy couch is spread,
Early dweller with the dead!
Where the moss is bright of hue,
And the speedwell glistens blue,
And the daisy, trembling near,
Bows beneath its dewy tear.