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LINE FIELDS

**MARY, THE MAID OF THE INN
(1802)**

TRANSCRIPTION BY
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In
English Nights Entertainments
(1802),
pp. 46-48.

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Microfilm PDFs

The Maid of the Inn¹

Who is she, the poor maniac, whose wildly-fixed eyes
Seem a heart overcharg'd to express?
She weeps not, yet often and deeply she sighs;
She never complains, but her silence implies
The composure of settled distress.

'No aid, no compassion the maniac will seek;
Cold and hunger awake not her care:
Thro' her rags do the winds of the winter blow bleak
On her poor withered bosom, half bare; and her cheek
Has the death pale hue of despair.

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'Yet cheerful [sic] and happy, nor distant the day,
Poor MARY the maniac has been;
The Traveller remembers who journeyed this way
No damsel so lovely, no damsel so gay,
As MARY the Maid of the Inn.

'Her cheerful address fill'd the guests with delight,
As she welcom'd them in with a smile:
Her heart was a stranger to childish affright,
And MARY would walk by the Abbey at night,
When the wind whistled down the dark aisle.

'She lov'd, and young Richard had settled the day,
And she hop'd to be happy for life;
But Richard was idle and worthless; and they
Who knew him would pity poor MARY, and say,
That she was too good for his wife.

¹ It is originally entitled *Mary, The Maid of the Inn*; Nevertheless in the source used for the transcription (*English Nights Entertainments* (1802)) it is entitled *The Maid of the Inn*.

"Twas in autumn, and stormy and dark was the night,
And fast were the windows and door;
Two guests sat enjoying the fire, that burnt bright,
And smoking in silence with tranquil delight,
They listen'd to hear the wind roar.

"'Tis pleasant," cried one, "seated by the fire-side,
"To hear the wind whistle without:"
"A fine night for the abbey," his comrade replied;
"Methinks a man's courage would now be well tried,
"Who should wander the ruins about.

"I myself, like a school boy, should tremble to hear
"The hoarse ivy shake over my head:
"And could fancy I saw, half persuaded by fear,
"Some ugly old abbot's white spirit appear;
"For this wind might awaken the dead!"

"I'll wager a dinner," the other one cried,
"That MARY would venture there now!"
"Then wager and lose!" with a sneer he replied;
"I'll warrant she'd fancy a ghost by her side,
"And faint if she saw a white cow."

"Will MARY this charge on her courage allow?"
His companion exclaim'd with a smile:
"I shall win; for I know she will venture there now,
"And earn a new bonnet, by bringing a bough
"From the elder that grows in the aisle."

'With fearless good humour did MARY comply,
And her way to the abbey she bent;
The night it was dark, and the wind it was high,
And as a hollowly howling it swept through the sky;
She shiver'd with cold as she went.

'O'er the path so well known still proceeded the maid,
Where the abbey rose dim on the sight:
Thro' the gate-way she enter'd, she felt not afraid;
Yet the ruins were lonely and wild, and their shade
Seem'd to deepen the gloom of the night.

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All around her was silent, save when the rude blast
Howl'd dismally round the old pile:
Over weed-cover'd fragment still fearless she past,
And arriv'd at the innermost ruin at last,
Where the elder tree grew in the aisle.

Well pleas'd did she reach it, and quickly drew near,
And hastily gather'd the bough;
When the sound of a voice seem'd to rise on her ear;
She paus'd, and she listened, all eager to hear,
And her heart panted fearfully now.

The wind blew, the hoarse ivy shook over her head;
She listen'd –nought else could she hear;
The wind ceas'd; her heart sunk in her bosom with dread;
For she heard in the ruins distinctly the tread
Of footsteps approaching her near.

Behind a wide column half breathless with fear,
She crept to conceal herself there,
That instant the moon o'er a dark cloud shone clear,
And she saw in the moon-light two ruffians appear,
And between them a corpse did they bear.

Then Mary could feel her heart-blood curdled cold!
Again the rough wind hurried by –
It blew off the hat of the one, and behold,
Even close to the feet of poor Mary it roll'd –
She felt, and expected to die.

“Curse the hat!” he exclaims, “Nay, come on, and first hide
“The dead body,” his comrade replies;
She beheld him in safety pass on by her side;
She seizes the hat; fear her courage supplied,
And fast through the abbey she flies.

She ran with wild speed; she rush’d in at the door;
She gaz’d horribly eager around;
Then her limbs could support their faint burthen no more,
And, exhausted and breathless, she sunk on the floor,
Unable to utter a sound.

Ere yet her pale lips could the story impart,
For a moment the hat met her view –
Her eyes from that object convulsively start,
For – oh! God, what cold horror then thrill’d thro’ her heart,
When the name of her Richard she knew!

Where the old abbey stands, on the common hard by,
His gibbet is now to be seen:
Not far from the road it engages the eye;
The traveller beholds² it, and thinks with a sigh
Of poor MARY the Maid of the Inn.

² Originally there was an errata: hehold