

# THE BRITISH WORKWOMAN.









## Mary Hepburn.

MRS Mary Hepburn left her home among the Perthshire Hills, and came to Edinburgh in quest of her first situation. Domestic servant, no one could say that her prospects in life were very brilliant. As she stands on the platform of the Waverley railway station, bewildered with the bustle around her, and carefully guarding her little property of box and bundle, we may give a short sketch of her previous life and family history.

The eldest daughter of a farm labourer, Mary had been hard at work from her earliest years. Her careful, patient mother, with many cares and crosses, would have found her daily task almost hopeless had it not been for the sensible, affectionate little maid who was the first-born of her large family. Up early and down late, scrubbing, mending, and keeping baby, the young girl scarcely knew an hour's relaxation from one week's end to another. When the Sabbath-day came round, it was a real pleasure to her, not that Mary at this early period of her life had much interest in religion, but Sunday was a pleasant change in her life to rest on her carefully-kept best frock and bonnet, and fellow father or mother through the quiet corn-fields and green lanes to the village church. This was a pleasure indeed! For Mary loved her parents, who in their turn were kind and considerate to their helpful little girl. They were not what would be called religious people, but they were both of good moral character, and attended to all the outward duties of religion.

Sunday evening was a happy time in the little cottage, the whole family were at home; father and mother glad of the quietest hour when they might talk over all the varying interests of a large family.

But now Mary was sixteen years of age, and it was quite time that she should be earning wages for herself, and laying past a little money for the necessities of the future. The young girl's appearance and disposition were much in her favour. Well-grown for her years, and with a candid and gentle expression in her fresh young face and clear brown eyes, she always made a favourable impression on strangers, and further knowledge of her was not disappointing. Active and obliging, unselfish and good-tempered, she was as a workman in the crowded cottage home, and many were the teams that whirled, with father carrying her box, she would hurry way to the railway station, bound for Edinburgh, with all its unknown glories and delights.

But as time moves the cottage, and soon now returns to Mary, whom we left on the railway platform earnestly looking out for her aunt, who had taken upon the charge of her till she was provided with a suitable situation, she led Mary into the home where her aunt's welcome as she led Mary into the girl's heart, such a little when she looked round the

dull dark place. Not because it was a poor shop! Mary had known, nothing but poverty all her life. Still, at home how different everything was! Nothing could be fresher than the mountain breeze that blew into the cottage window; nothing could be cleaner than the checked linen drapery of the kitchen bed; while here! the stifling atmosphere, the confusion of small wares, the murky dimness of the bedroom beyond the shop, quite depressed the country girl. She went to take off her bonnet, and looked out of the bedroom window. It opened into a damp dirty court, where ragged children were at play—children so unlike her own little brothers and sisters that tears filled the poor girl's eyes, as memory called up her childhood's home and all the dear ones there. How could she ever live in such a place as this?

comfortable situation for her young relative. Her influence, however, was not very powerful, and for several years the girl earned her bread as general servant. But at the end of five years we but her very different place. She was now parlour-woman in a gentleman's family at Grange, Edinburgh, where she was both comfortable and happy, and had to remain for a long time. She had visited her home twice during those years, and once she had taken advantage of an extraordinary sale to visit her mother and grandmother near Inverness. This old woman was the widow of a shopkeeper, whose life had been lost on the Grampian Hills during a storm, and she had been allowed to remain on in the little hut free-forever for life, and nothing would induce her to leave it, or to reside nearer her son's



"WATCHING WITH GRAVE INTEREST THE MOWER AT HIS WORK."—See Page 91.

What would mother think of the confusion and disorder of the little shop, and business of the room beyond? Her aunt's voice roused her from her reverie. "Mary, my dear, just come here for a minute, and lend a hand with the mangle. I have more work on my hands than I'll ever get through—that's a good girl," she added approvingly. Mary, always ready to oblige, tucked up her sleeves, and began in good earnest to work.

But a time that evening the old woman looked at her young visitor with well-pleased eyes. What a filly obliging girl! might she not keep her for a month or two to help with the shop? What a treat it would be to herself! . . . But Mrs. Cartwright was not a selfish person. She knew quite well that such a plan would be no advantage to Mary, and she instantly resolved to do all in her power to procure a

family. She slung to the old home where she had lived for fifty years, and known all the joys and sorrows of a life-time. This old grandmother has been introduced to our readers as she is involved in the rest of Mary's story. Shortly after entering upon her duties at Grange, a great revolution had taken place in Mary's thoughts and feelings with regard to religion. She had always been attentive outward duties, she never neglected church-going habits, reading while in all respects her behaviour was commendable in the eyes of her father and mother. But that was all—there was no love to God in her heart, no thought of Jesus as a Saviour; no sense of her own need of salvation. But a great change was at hand. She had gone with a fellow-servant one evening to hear an aged spiritual power whose opening words at once arrested her attention.

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Very earnestly did the preacher hold up Jesus as the only Saviour for a lost and guilty world, and with rapid attention Mary listened. It was an odd text, often heard before, but it came to her heart with a new power. She knew before—the power of the Holy Spirit. She felt that she herself was lost unless this Saviour would have mercy upon her. It was the turning point of her life; with heart-felt simplicity and earnestness she gave herself to Jesus, to be His and His only, for life or for death. And now a new joy filled her heart; new hopes were born, and a glorious future seemed to open out before her. But merciful young believers. She was to be brought out of it, in the good providence of God, but not until she had first suffered some darkness and distress of soul. This will be fully shown in our narrative proceeds.

Having much leisure time in her employers' house, she earnestly endeavoured to devote this to special religious work—in the Sunday school, and in the distribution of tracts. In this work she experienced much joy,





