

"The snow's coming down very fast,
No shelter is found on the tree ;
When you hear this un pitying blast,
I pray you take pity on me.

"The hips and the haws are all gone,
I can find neither berry nor sloe ;
The ground is as hard as a stone,
And I'm almost buried in snow.

"My dear little nest, once so neat,
Is now empty, and ragged, and torn ;
On some trees should I now take my seat,
I'd be frozen quite fast, before morn.

"Oh, throw me a morsel of bread !
Take me in by the side of your fire ;
And when I am warmed and fed,
I'll whistle without other hire.

"Till the sun be again shining bright,
And the snow is all gone, let me stay ;
Oh, see what a terrible night !
I shall die if you drive me away !

"And when you come forth in the morn,
And are talking and walking around ;
Oh, how will your bosom be torn,
When you see me lie dead on the ground !

"Then pity a poor little thing,
And throw me a part of your store ;
I'll fly off in the first of the spring,
And never will trouble you more."

"I am sure I understand all this, mamma," said Rosamond ; "and 'The poor Piedmontese and his Marmot.' "*

So far, so good ; but Rosamond went on to "Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard."

"Take care, Rosamond," said her mother ; "you know I warned you that you could not yet understand it, when you wanted to learn it by heart."

* See Miss Lucy Aikin's "Poetry for Children."

"But the lines sound so very pretty, and Laura has them all by heart."

"But I never learnt them by heart till I understood them ; and I never understood them till they had been explained to me."

"I think I understand them well enough," said Rosamond.

"Begin, and let us hear," cried Godfrey.

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day."

"What is meant by 'curfew'? What is meant by 'tolls'? and what is a 'knell'? and what is meant by 'parting day'?"

"Godfrey, I cannot tell the meaning of every word ; but I know the general meaning. It means that the day is going ; that it is evening ; that it is growing dark. Now let me go on."

"Go on," said Godfrey, "and let us see what you will do when you come to 'the pomp of heraldry ;' to 'the long drawn aisle and fretted vault ;' to 'the village Hampden ;' to 'some mute inglorious Milton ;' and to 'some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.' You ! who have not come to Cromwell yet in the History of England !"

"Well, I give it up," said Rosamond, overpowered with all these difficulties ; "but, at least, I know the meaning of—

"The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed."

"Oh, I grant you the swallow," said Godfrey ; "but not 'the cock's shrill clarion.'"

"It means the cock's crowing, which is like a clarion, or trumpet."

"How came you to know that?"

“Because Laura told me.”

“And now, Godfrey, you, who have been so severe upon your sister, do you understand all the poetry you have learnt by heart?” said his father.

“Try me,” said Godfrey.

He began with some lines from Pope’s Homer, in Sarpedon’s speech to Glaucus—

“Why, on these shores, are we with joy survey’d-
Admired as heroes, and as gods obey’d?”

He went on to--

“Brave, though we fall, and honour’d if we live;
Or let us glory gain, or glory give.”

And though he was a little perplexed to explain the last line, yet he convinced his judges that he understood it; he showed them that he was master of the sense, and felt the spirit of the whole of the speech. Greatly elated with this success, he cast a look of triumph upon Rosamond, and began, in an heroic tone,

Ruin seize thee, ruthless king!
Confusion on thy banners wait;
Though fann’d by conquest’s crimson wing,
They mock the air in idle state;
Helm, nor hauberk’s twist.ed mail,
Nor e’en thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail.”

“Gently, gently, my boy! Tell us, Godfrey,” said his father, “who is this ‘ruthless king,’ and why is ruin to seize him? and what are ‘banners’? how were they ‘fann’d by conquest’s crimson wing’? and what is ‘helm or hauberk’s twisted mail’?”

Fortunately for Godfrey, he had read carefully certain notes of Mason’s to this poem; and he answered readily,

that “the ruthless king was Edward the First, who conquered Wales; and when he conquered Wales had put all the Welsh bards, or poets, to death; that it was for this crime ruin was



to seize him, though his banners, that is, the colours his soldiers carried in battle, were then victorious.

“‘Fann’d by conquest’s crimson wing,’ was only another way of saying this,” Godfrey observed. “Hauberk’s twisted