

The Fugitive

By Mrs. Mary Robinson

Oft have I seen yon Solitary Man
Pacing the upland meadow. On his brow
Sits melancholy, mark'd with decent pride,
As it would fly the busy, taunting world,
And feed upon reflection. Sometimes, near
The foot of an old Tree, he takes his seat
And with the page of legendary lore
Cheats the dull hour, while Evening's saber eye
Looks tearful as it closes. In the dell
By the swift brook he loiters, sad and mute,
Save when a struggling sigh, half murmur'd, steals
From his wrung bosom. To the rising moon,
His eye rais'd wistfully, expression fraught,
He' pours the cherish'd anguish of his Soul,
Silent yet eloquent: For not a sound
That might alarm the night's lone centinel,
The dull-eyed Owl, escapes his trembling lip,
Unapt in supplication. He is young,
And yet the stamp of thought so tempers youth,
That all its fires are faded. What is He?
And why, when morning sails upon the breeze,
Fanning the blue hill's summit, does he stay
Loit'ring and sullen, like a Truant boy,
Beside the woodland glen; or sretch'd along
On the green slope, watch his slow wasting form
Reflected, trembling, on the river's breast?

His garb is coarse and threadbare, and his cheek
Is prematurely faded. The check'd tear,
Dimming his dark eye's lustre, seems to say,
"This world is now, to rue, a barren waste,
"A desart, full of weeds and wounding thorns,
"And I am weary: for my journey here
"Has been, though short, but cheerless." Is it so?
Poor Traveller! Oh tell me, tell me all—
For I, like thee, am but a Fugitive
An alien from delight, in this dark scene!

And, now I mark thy features, I behold
The cause of thy complaining. Thou art here
A. persecuted Exile! one, whose soul

Unbow'd by guilt, demands no patronage
From blunted feeling, or the frozen hand
Of gilded Ostentation. Thou, poor Priest!
Art here, a Stranger, from thy kindred torn—
Thy kindred massacred! thy quiet home,
The rural palace of some village scant,
Shelter'd by vineyards, skirted by fair meads,
And by the music of a hallow rill
Made ever chearful, now thou hast exchang'd
For stranger woods and vallies.

What of that!

Here, or on torrid desarts; o'er the world
Of trackless waves, or on the frozen cliffs
Of black Siberia, thou art not alone!
For there, on each, on all, The DEITY
Is thy companion still! Then, exiled MAN!
Be chearful as the Lark that o'er yon hill
In Nature's language, wild, yet musical,
Hails the Creator! nor thus, sullenly
Repine, that, through the day, the sunny beam
Of lust'rous fortune gilds the palace roof,
While thy short path, in this wild labyrinth,
Is lost in transient shadow.

Who, that lives,

Hath not his portion of calamity?
Who, that feels, can boast a tranquil bosom?
The fever, throbbing in the Tyrant's veins
In quick, strong language, tells the daring wretch
That He is mortal, like the poorest slave
Who wears his chain, yet healthfully suspires.
The sweetest Rose will wither, while the storm
Passes the mountain thistle. The bold Bird,
Whose strong eye braves the ever burning Orb,
Falls like the Summer Fly, and has at most,
But his allotted sojourn. EXILED MAN!
Be chearful! Thou art not a fugitive!
All are thy kindred—all thy brothers, here—
The hoping—trembling Creatures—of *one* God!