

Deborah's Parrot,

A Village Tale

By Mrs. Mary Robinson

'Twas in a little western town
An ancient Maiden dwelt:
Her name was Miss, or Mistress, Brown,
Or Deborah, or Debby: She
Was doom'd a Spinster pure to be,
For soft delights her breast ne'er felt:
Yet, she had watchful Ears and Eyes
For ev'ry youthful neighbour,
And never did she cease to labour
A tripping female to surprise.

And why was she so wond'rous pure,
So stiff, so solemn—so demure?
Why did she watch with so much care
The roving youth, the wand'ring fair?
The tattler, Fame, has said that she
A Spinster's life had long detested,
But 'twas her quiet destiny,
 Never to be molested
And had Miss DEBBY'S form been grac'd,
Fame adds,—She had not been so chaste;—
But since for frailty she would roam,
She ne'er was taught—to look at *home*.

Miss DEBBY was of mien demure
 And blush'd, like any maid!
She could not saucy man endure
 Lest she should be betray'd!
She never fail'd at dance or fair
To watch the wily lurcher's snare;
At Church, she was a model Godly!
Though sometimes she had other eyes
Than those, uplifted to the skies,
 Leering most oddly!
And Scandal, ever busy, thought
She rarely practic'd—what she taught.

Her dress was always stiff brocade,
 With laces broad and dear;

Fine Cobwebs! that would thinly shade
Her shrivell'd cheek of sallow hue,
While, like a Spider, her keen eye,
Which never shed soft pity's tear,
Small holes in others' geer could spy,
And microscopic follies, prying view.
And sorely vex'd was ev'ry simple thing
That wander'd near her never-tiring sting!
MISS DEBBY had a PARROT, who,
If Fame speaks true,
Could prate, and tell what neighbours did,
And yet the saucy rogue was never chid!
Sometimes, he talk'd of roving Spouses
Who wander'd from their quiet houses:
Sometimes, he call'd a Spinster pure
By names, that Virtue can't indure!
And sometimes told an ancient Dame
Such tales as made her blush with shame!
Then gabbled how a giddy Miss
Would give the boist'rous Squire a kiss!
But chiefly he was taught to cry,
Who with the Parson toy'd? O fie!"

This little joke, Miss DEBBY taught him,
To vex a young and pretty neighbour;
But by her scandal-zealous labour
To shame she brought him!
For, the Old PARROT, like his teacher
Was but a false and canting preacher,
And many a gamesome pair had sworn
Such lessons were not to be borne.

At last, Miss DEBBY sore was flouted
And by her angry neighbours scouted,
She never knew one hour of rest,
Of ev'ry Saucy Boor, the jest:
The young despis'd her, and the Sage
Look'd back on Time's impartial page;
They knew that youth was giv'n to prove
The season of extatic joy,
That none but Cynics would destroy,
The early buds of Love.
They also knew that DEBBY sigh'd
For charms that envious Time deny'd;
That she was vex'd with jealous Spleen
That Hymen pass'd her by, unseen.

For though the Spinster's wealth was known,
Gold will not purchase Love—alone.
She, and her PARROT, now were thought
The torments of their little Sphere;
He, because mischievously taught,
And She, because a maid austere!—
In short, she deem'd it wise to leave
A Place, where none remain'd, to grieve.

Soon, to a distant town remov'd,
Miss DEBBY'S gold an husband bought;
And all she had her PARROT taught,
(Her PARROT now no more belov'd,)
Was quite forgotten. But, alas!
As Fate would have it come to pass,
Her Spouse was giv'n to jealous rage,
For, both in *Person* and in *Age*,
He was the partner of his love,
Ordain'd her second Self to prove!
One day, Old JENKINS had been out
With merry friends to dine,
And, freely talking, had, no doubt
Been also free with wine.
One said, of all the wanton gay
In the whole parish search it round,
None like the PARSON could be found,
Where a frail Maid was in the way.
Another thought the Parson sure
To win the heart of maid or wife;
And would have freely pledg'd his life
That young, or old, or rich or poor
None could defy
The magic of his roving eye!

JENKINS went home, but all the night
He dream'd of this strange tale!
Yet, bless'd his stars! with proud delight,
His partner was not young, nor frail.
Next morning, at the breakfast table.
The PARROT, loud as he was able,
Was heard repeatedly to cry,
Who with the Parson toy'd? O fie!"

Old JENKINS listen'd, and grew pale,
The PAILROT then, more loudly scream'd,
And MISTRESS JENKINS heard the tale

And much alarm'd she seem'd!
Trembling she tried to stop his breath,
Her lips and cheek as pale as death!
The more she trembled, still the more
Old JENKINS view'd her o'er and o'er;
And now her yellow cheek was spread
With blushes of the deepest red.

And now again the PARROT'S Tale
Made his old Tutoress doubly pale,
For cowardice and guilt, they say
Are the twin brothers of the soul,
So MISTRESS JENKINS, her dismay
Could not controul!
While the accuser, now grown bold;
Thrice o'er, the tale of mischief told.

Now JENKINS from the table rose,
“*Who with the Parson toyd?*” he cried.
“So MISTRESS FRAILTY, you must play,
“And sport, your wanton hours away.
“And with your gold, a pretty joke,
“You thought to buy a pleasant cloak;
“A screen to hide your shame—but know
“I will not *blind* to ruin go.—
“I am no *modern Spouse*, dy'e see,
“*Gold* will not *gild disgrace*, with me!”
Some say he seiz'd his fearful bride,
And came to blows!
Day after day, the contest dire
Augmented, with resistless ire!
And many a drubbing DEBBY bought
For mischief, she her PARROT taught!

Thus, SLANDER turns against its maker;
And if this little Story reaches
A SPINSTER, who her PARROT teaches,
Let her a better task pursue,
And here, the certain VENGEANCE view
Which surely will, in TIME, O'ERTAKE HER.