

Original.

D A M E H A N S ;

OR, THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A NOTABLE HOUSEWIFE.

BY MRS. SEBA SMITH.

MARGUERITE was as smart, tidy a little body at the age of sixteen, as one would wish to see; rather short, and somewhat plump, with red cheeks and sparkling grey eyes; a step light and free, and a half shrewish, half coquettish air, that made her the admiration of all the young men, and the torment of all the girls in the village. True, now and then a luckless swain would venture to insinuate something about a turn up nose, and thin lips, and hint that her temper was none of the sweetest; but he was instantly suspected to be in the predicament of the fox with the grapes, and the circumstance served but to make the little maiden still more popular— for lovers may be compared to moths, no sooner does one get singed in the blaze, than all the rest are eager to try the same experiment.

It is impossible to tell what havoc the little rustic might have made, had she not all at once determined to stop competition, by starting upon the career of a married woman. Now, this was exactly in accordance with that natural promptitude of character, for which she was distinguished; for she was a stirring body, and disposed to 'go ahead' in the world. So, when she and a young farmer by the name of Hans, became associated in destiny, every voice pronounced it a good match, every disinterested lover conceding the point, for somehow they had discovered Marguerite to be a terrible termagant; and so over-industrious, that she would neither rest herself, nor permit any one else about her to do so. Hans was thrifty and prudent, and Marguerite diligent, healthy and exceedingly active, so that if any body could grow rich, it must be farmer Hans and little dame Marguerite.

Public expectation was more than realized. Every year added to their wealth, and Marguerite became the most notable housewife in the country. A girl who had staid any time with the dame, had made her fortune for life; for she was instantly known to be neat, smart and capable; a little of the vixen withal, but that was no objection to a man who literally wanted a "help-meet." Indeed, the point seems to be every where admitted, that a *very* notable housewife must be a scold, and all that is gained at the expense of the temper. We wont stop to argue the matter; but leave it to those more curious in these points than we profess to be.

Marguerite's house was kept in the most unexceptionable order; and the webs of linen, all of her own manufacture, which she piled away in huge oaken chests, became the envy of all the good women in the neighborhood. Her dress had been originally a little the smartest of all in the village; but as she became more involved in domestic ambition, it lost its smart, genteel air, and retained little else than its extreme neatness of aspect. Gradually, too, she refrained from attending church upon the Sabbath, as her cares continued to engross her attention; and, it was remarked, that dame Marguerite could not keep still long enough for prayers.

Her light was the last to be extinguished at night; and the sound of her broom and duster, and the shrill tones of her voice, calling to her maids, the first to be heard in the morning. Indeed, in her eager activity, she seemed to have anticipated the steam-going speed of modern days.

"Get up, you lazy jades," she one Monday morning called to her maids, "to-day we must wash, to-morrow iron, the next day churn, Thursday make cheese, Friday brew, Saturday bake, and heaps of spinning and weaving besides, and here it is daylight and not a stroke of work done yet."

Thus she went on, always upon the high pressure principle, for the sight of a particle of dust was enough to throw her into a paroxysm of cleaning, which found no relief, until every room, pantry and hall, had received a thorough ablution. Nor was this all, for when to other eyes not a shadow of stain could be perceptible, Marguerite would insist upon accomplishing the regular process of cleansing, lest, as she said, "it should grow dirty."

Hans remonstrated, but all in vain. Gradually he learned to scrape his shoes until half worn from their soles, and to tread on tip-toe over his wife's nicely scoured floors, and to move about his own house, as if it were never designed for use, till these things ceased to annoy him; and he consoled himself by thinking, never man had a neater or smarter wife.

True, indeed, there never was such a worker known. Morning, noon and night, she bustled about, her little hard heels making their incessant clatter; and the wrinkles grew upon her brow, and the silver mingled with her hair, all unconsciously it would seem, for she had no time to note such trifles. If allusion were ever made to the childless lot of the couple, it was at once conceded, that dame Marguerite had no time for such matters; and, indeed, it was thought to be a doubt whether she would ever find time to die. Hans shook his head, for his wife had never known an hour's illness; and her brisk, wiry frame, seemed to redouble its activity as years gathered around it.

He had become feeble and bowed with age, and daily did his trembling step and falling strength admonish him that his time was at hand. Not so, Marguerite; her foot became almost echoless in its elastic tread, and her capacity for exertion increased daily. If her husband ventured to hint that all is vanity, and the time was come when she ought to abate some of her extreme solicitude about the things of this world, Marguerite's decisive "it must be done," put a stop at once to his homily, and silenced all remonstrance.

The priest came with pious warnings, to which the dame listened with ill-restrained impatience; and when he was gone, made herself ample amends by working later at night, and a little more than ordinary upon the next Sabbath.

At length Hans fell ill, and was unable to leave his bed. Great was the surprise of the neighbors, to observe, that Marguerite never approached him, to administer in any way either to his comfort or relief. There she was, bustling about from garret to cellar, sweeping, dusting and scrubbing, turning the wheel, and plying the

boom, but uttering a word to none. Her eyes were deep sunk and passionless, her step was brisk as ever, but utterly echoless, and none could ever detect the slightest shadow, when she passed between the light and the wall. Vague and horrible were the surmises, but no one dared to give them utterance.

The night that Hans died, he relieved his mind of the dreadful secret. He gave it as his solemn belief, that his wife had been dead for many weeks. One night, when he had been long in bed, and his wife, as usual, busy at work, for she needed little sleep, he was awakened by the angry voice of Marguerite, who seemed engaged in some violent altercation, amounting, indeed, to a regular pitched battle, with the brandishing of brooms, kettles, and other feminine weapons. Knowing his wife's repugnance to any sort of interference in her household economy, he quietly looked on, wondering that he could see no one with whom she was engaged. The tumult at length subsided; his wife grew calm, and the only remaining evidence of the contest, was a dense suffocating heat, and a strong odor of sulphur. Then, for the first time, did the truth flash upon him. Marguerite had been engaged in mortal combat with the prince of darkness, who had attempted to abstract her, bodily, from the world. But he had failed in the main object, that of carrying off the body, the active dame having proved more than his match, and he was obliged, perforce, to be content with only the spirit.

Hans died and was buried; while his indefatigable wife continued 'up to the ears' in work, and took no sort of notice of all that was going on. The neighbors closed the door of her dwelling, and left the spectre housewife to her ceaseless toil. Gradually that part of the village was abandoned; for people were appalled at hearing the perpetual clatter of female labor, from one, who neither ate, drank or slept, and who, according to the ordinary course of nature, ought to have been in her grave years before.

The priest was wont to assert, that dame Marguerite fought hard for her body, but in the last battle she had forgotten every paternoster, and so was unable to save her soul; and she was thence held up by him, as a warning to all, who neglect making provisions for the soul, by donations to the church.

The common faith was, that dame Marguerite, in punishment for her excessive worldliness, was doomed to perpetual toil, for a whole legion of imps who despoiled her linen, disarranged her house, and devoured her choicest cookery faster than she could repair the mischief they had done; and thus she remained a lasting warning, also, to all over-anxious housewives.

Talking.—It has been said in praise of some men, that they could talk whole hours together upon any thing; but it must be owned to the honor of the other sex, that there are many among them who can talk whole hours together upon nothing. I have known a woman branch out into a long extempore dissertation on the edging of a petticoat, and chide her servant for breaking a china cup, in all the figures of rhetoric.—*Addison.*

Original.

THE FEMALE SPY;*

A DOMESTIC TALE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

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BY SAMUEL WOODWORTH.

AFTER the battle of Stillwater, alluded to before, the situation of General Burgoyne, as before stated, became very precarious. His Indian auxiliaries deserted daily; and his army, reduced to little more than five thousand men, was limited to half their usual allowance of provisions. His stock of forage was entirely exhausted, and his horses were perishing in great numbers. In the mean time the American army had fortunately become so largely augmented, as to make him dilident of rendering good his retreat. To aggravate his distress, no intelligence had yet been received from Sir Henry Clinton, whom he expected would make a diversion in his favor from New-York. But Sir Henry's messenger, with an account of the taking of Fort Montgomery, we have seen, was compelled to disgorge his despatches, and had been hanged as a spy.

In the exigency in which he now found himself placed, Burgoyne resolved to examine the possibility of dislodging the Americans from their posts on the left, by which means, he would be enabled to retreat to the lakes. For this purpose he drew out fifteen hundred men, which he headed himself, attended by Generals Phillips, Reidesel, and Frazer. This detachment had scarcely formed, within less than half a mile of the American entrenchments, when a furious attack was made on its left; but Major Ackland, at the head of the British grenadiers, sustained it with great firmness.

The Americans soon extended their attack along the whole front of the German troops, which were posted on the right of the grenadiers; and marched a body around their flank, to prevent their retreat. On this movement the British light infantry, with a part of the twenty-fourth regiment, instantly formed, to cover the retreat of the troops into the camp. Their left wing, in the mean time, overpowered by numbers, were obliged to retreat, and would inevitably have been *all cut to pieces*, but for the intervention of the same troops, which had just been covering the retreat on the right.

The whole detachment was now under the necessity of retiring; but scarcely had the British troops entered the lines, when the Americans led by General Arnold, pressed forward, and under a tremendous fire of grape-shot and musketry, assaulted the works throughout their whole extent, from right to left.

Toward the close of the day, a part of the left of the Americans forced the entrenchments, and Arnold, with a few men, actually entered the works; but his horse being killed, and he himself being badly wounded in the leg, they were forced out of them; and it being now nearly dark, they desisted from the attack. On the left of Arnold's detachment, Jackson's regiment, of Massachusetts, and led by lieutenant-colonel Brooks, was still more successful. It completely turned the right of the en-