

FAIR ELEANOR.

THE bell struck one and shook the silent tower ;
The graves give up their dead : fair Eleanor
Walk'd by the castle-gate, and looked in :
A hollow groan ran thro' the dreary vaults.

She shriek'd aloud, and sunk upon the steps,
On the cold stone her pale cheek. Sickly smells
Of death, issue as from a sepulchre,
And all is silent but the sighing vaults.

Chill death withdraws his hand, and she revives ;
Amazed she finds herself upon her feet,
And, like a ghost, thro' narrow passages
Walking, feeling the cold walls with her hands.

Fancy returns, and now she thinks of bones
And grinning skulls, and corruptible death
Wrapt in his shroud ; and now fancies she hears
Deep sighs, and sees pale sickly ghosts gliding.

At length, no fancy, but reality
Distracts her. A rushing sound, and the feet
Of one that fled, approaches.—Ellen stood,
Like a dumb statue, froze to stone with fear.

The wretch approaches, crying, “ The deed is done
“ Take this, and send it by whom thou wilt send ;
“ It is my life—send it to Eleanor :—
“ He’s dead, and howling after me for blood !

“ Take this,” he cried ; and thrust into her arms
A wet napkin, wrapt about ; then rush’d
Past, howling : she received into her arms
Pale death, and follow’d on the wings of fear.

They pass’d swift thro’ the outer gate ; the wretch,
Howling, leap’d o’er the wall into the moat,
Stifling in mud. Fair Ellen pass’d the bridge,
And heard a gloomy voice cry, “ Is it done ?”

As the deer wounded Ellen flew over
The pathless plain ; as the arrows that fly
By night ; destruction flies, and strikes in darkness.
She fled from fear, till at her house arrived.

Her maids await her ; on her bed she falls,
That bed of joy where erst her lord hath press'd :
“ Ah, woman's fear !” she cried, “ Ah, cursed duke !
“ Ah, my dear lord ! ah, wretched Eleanor !

“ My lord was like a flower upon the brows
“ Of lusty May ! Ah, life as frail as flower !
“ O ghastly death ! withdraw thy cruel hand,
“ Seek'st thou that flower to deck thy horrid temples ?

“ My lord was like a star in highest heaven
“ Drawn down to earth by spells and wickedness ;
“ My lord was like the opening eyes of day,
“ When western winds creep softly o'er the flowers.

“ But he is darken'd ; like the summer's noon
“ Clouded ; fall'n like the stately tree, cut down ;
“ The breath of heaven dwelt among his leaves.
“ O Eleanor, weak woman, fill'd with woe !”

Thus having spoke, she raised up her head,
And saw the bloody napkin by her side,
Which in her arms she brought ; and now, tenfold
More terrified, saw it unfold itself.

Her eyes were fix'd ; the bloody cloth unfolds,
 Disclosing to her sight the murder'd head
 Of her dear lord, all ghastly pale, clotted
 With gory blood ; it groan'd, and thus it spake :

“ O Eleanor, behold thy husband's head
 “ Who, sleeping on the stones of yonder tower,
 “ Was 'reft of life by the accursed duke !
 “ A hired villain turn'd my sleep to death !

“ O Eleanor, beware the cursed duke,
 “ O give not him thy hand, now I am dead ;
 “ He seeks thy love ; who, coward, in the night,
 “ Hired a villain to bereave my life.”

She sat with dead cold limbs, stiffen'd to stone ;
 She took the gory head up in her arms ;
 She kiss'd the pale lips ; she had no tears to shed ;
 She hugg'd it to her breast, and groan'd her last.

