

**MARGARET CRAVEN;
OR, BEAUTY OF THE
HEART**

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Margaret Craven; Or, Beauty of the Heart by Sarah Maria Fry

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SARAH MARIA FRY

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Margaret Craven; or, Beauty of the heart, by the author of 'The lost ...

Sarah Maria Fry

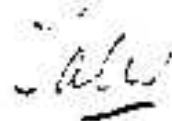


RIDE IN THE Paddock.

MARGARET CRAVEN;

OR,

BEAUTY OF THE HEART.



BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE LOST KEY," "THE GOLDEN MUSHROOM,"
AND "THE LITTLE WATERCRESS SKILKID."

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CHAPTER I.

NOT many years ago there stood, at a little distance from the dusty high road which passed through a quiet agricultural village in one of the midland counties of England, a pretty-looking house, known, from the circumstance of its having a thatched roof, by the name of "The Thatched Cottage." Over the front, as well as from the rustic porch, hung clematis, roses, and other climbing plants. Against one end was trained a large apricot tree, which, every summer might be seen thickly studded with rich golden fruit, while over the other ran a

grape vine, reaching almost to the top of the tall kitchen chimney, on the sides of which the finest clusters of grapes were always to be found. At the front of the house was the lawn, laid out very prettily, with gravel walks and beds of flowers; at the back were the small kitchen garden and the poultry yard.

Such was the home of Mrs. Shirley and her little niece, Margaret Craven. Here it was that Margaret's life had been spent ever since she could remember; for, though not an orphan, she had never known her parents. They had left England for India when she was very young, leaving her under the care of Mrs. Shirley, who was a widowed sister of Mr. Craven's. They did not then expect that their absence would exceed two or three years, but, from one cause or other, it had been so much extended, that Margaret, though she often talked of them, had from being repeatedly told that they were coming, and being then disappointed, at length almost ceased to expect that she should ever have any other home than the Thatched Cottage.

Mrs. Shirley had no children of her own, but faithfully did she fulfil a mother's duties towards her brother's child, at the same time lavishing upon her an affection which a mother's love could hardly have surpassed; and Margaret, in return, loved her with all the warmth and devotion of an affectionate and confiding nature, hidden, though it was, from those who did not know her well, by manners timid, reserved, and retiring. She loved her parents, too, but it was in a different way; it was as we love those whom we feel we ought to love, but whom we have never seen, and of whom we know but little. Mrs. Shirley herself conducted her education, carefully instilling into her young heart lessons of faith, truth, and holiness, and early leading her to the feet of that Saviour in whom she herself trusted, and whose example it was her own daily endeavour humbly to follow. The more ornamental parts of education were not neglected, but they were esteemed by Mrs. Shirley at their proper value; and, while pursuing them, Margaret was taught

never to forget that they would adorn her only for a time, while the love and favour of God, which, conscious of her own unworthiness, she must seek, by a true faith in Christ, with constant denial of self, and a daily endeavour, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk in the way of his commandments, would be her portion for ever. Thus instructed, it was no wonder that Margaret's was a happy childhood, her home a happy home. She had, it is true, no companions of her own age beyond the few young people who were occasional visitors at Mrs. Shirley's house, but she needed them not, for in her aunt she ever found a ready sharer in all her little sorrows, a glad companion in all her joys, and she wished for no other. Things had gone on in this way until the time when our story commences, at which period Margaret had just entered her eleventh year.

It was one bright morning in early spring, Mrs. Shirley was preparing breakfast, and Margaret was standing at the window, scattering crumbs for the robins, and re-