

**THE SICKNESS AND  
HEALTH OF THE  
PEOPLE OF BLEABURN**

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The Sickness and Health of the People of Bleaburn by Harriet Martineau

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PEOPLE OF BLEABURN.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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WHEN, about three years ago, the following tale appeared in "Household Words," relatives and friends in this country did not need the familiar and endeared name given, with questionable propriety, to the Heroine, to tell them that it was founded on fact, and no exaggeration of a beautiful reality. Within a few weeks, — so far as a self-forgetting humility made partial disclosures, even in private letters, of a remarkable passage in her experiences, — the knowledge, before confined almost entirely to her kindred, has been given to thousands of readers, in the Memoir of one, who, throughout her whole life, as well as

during her blessed and peculiar ministrations in a far-distant, obscure, and disease-smitten village, deserved the title of "The Good Lady." The natural feeling, therefore, which heretofore shrank from the republication of the story, lest truth and fiction might be confounded, can hardly object now to its being sent forth on a new mission of beneficence. The slight anachronisms can be easily corrected; and though the design of the author, in clothing a noble example in an attractive garb for the instruction of the people, led to the invention of incidents and the picturing of imaginary scenes, the veritable occurrences amply justify the fictitious representations, and make the narrative true — in the sense in which it is most important to have it true — to the bright, energetic, unselfish, religious character of Mary Pickard. The portrait is a correct likeness, if a portion of the scenery and figures of the background are the creation of fancy.

So, we trust, there are no private reasons to forbid, even if there would be a natural



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reluctance to assent to, the reappearance, in a volume by itself, of "The Sickness and Health of the People of Bleaburn."

But, independent of all reference to the singular occurrences which suggested it, this tale has merits of its own, instructive and important lessons, which render its wide circulation desirable. In a form that will invite and command attention, it enforces duties to be discharged, portrays qualities of head and heart to be cultivated, exhibits, either as warning or encouragement, conduct to be avoided or imitated, in every human life; for it describes that which exists substantially, and to some extent, in all communities, and may exist, in a degree, under any roof. The evils, physical and moral, of ignorance and superstition; the weakness, selfishness, perils, of panic and fear; the true use of the discipline of trial; the contrast between faithfulness and unfaithfulness in the season of temptation; the manner in which trouble reveals the good and evil of the heart; and, above all, the effective influence of a cheerful, firm,

intelligent, conscientious, rational piety, adhering trustfully to the plain commandment of duty, and going quietly, but steadfastly, about its work of mercy, — are presented with a graphic simplicity and truthfulness. No one can read it without being made better, by getting from it some hints at least of the preparation of head and heart for those scenes of poverty, suffering, or sickness, which enter into our human lot, and cannot always be escaped. How to inspire courage in the desponding and despairing; how to deal with blind prejudices; how to cheer and nurse the sick; how to change selfish terror into helpful sympathy; how to reprove by example the cowardice that attracts the very evil it would avoid; how to accept humbly and confidently the hardest tasks Providence calls upon us to fulfil, and by so doing find seemingly insurmountable difficulties fade away as the morning mist before the sun, — these are some of the lessons which will steal into the bosoms, and leave their impress on the souls, even of those who take

up this little book merely for amusement. And certainly this would be a sufficient recommendation, were it entirely, as to a considerable extent it is, imaginary, as to the representative persons and incidents.

Still we cannot and would not dissociate the story from the actual experience which suggested it; for its republication may accomplish a greater good than simply increasing the circulation and usefulness of an instructive tale. Those who read it will, we trust, desire to know more of the spirit of one, whose Christian fidelity and benevolence are so vividly represented, and be led to seek her Memoir; thus they will learn, that in respect to high principles, generous sympathies, gentle affections, unswerving fidelity to conscience, and trustful faith, the months spent in serving the destitute, ignorant, and suffering, in the daily presence of disease and death, without a thought of praise or reward, were after all no strange episode in her life, but only one manifestation, made prominent by circumstance, of a character always and