

**AUNT MARTHA:
OR THE SPINSTER**

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Aunt Martha: or the spinster by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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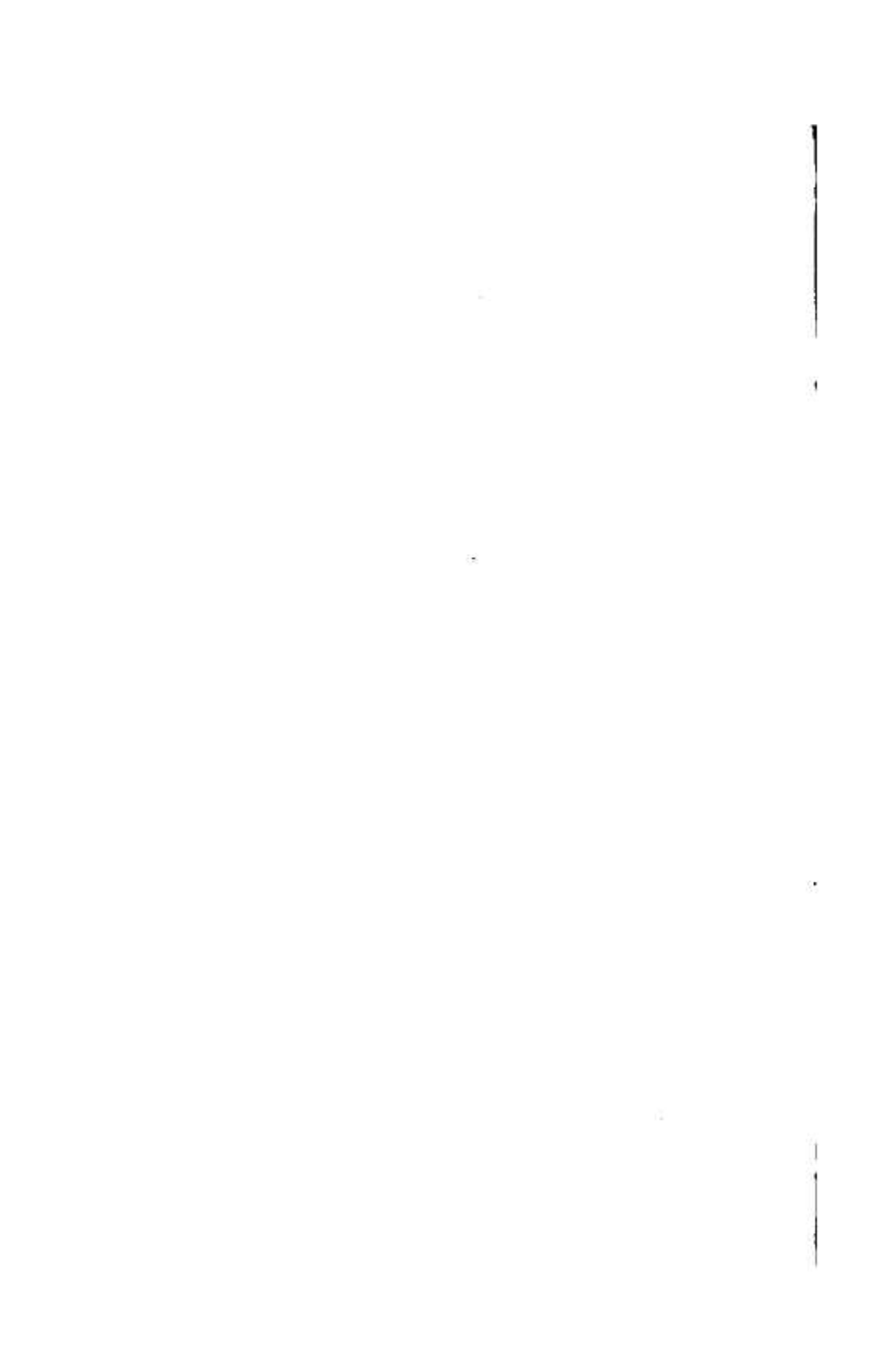
OR

THE SPINSTER.



LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1843.



AUNT MARTHA;

OR,

THE SPINSTER.

Nor very far from the town of C——, is a pretty half-way house, a commodious sort of country inn; it stands upon the brow of a hill, looking down upon an old manor house and handsome grounds, the entrance to which is under a very beautiful avenue; the trees are of such regular and perfect growth that they completely arch over at the top.

At the time my narrative commences, which was on the 30th of August, 17—, two ladies

and a gentleman were walking from the inn, down this avenue, preceded by a little curly-headed urchin, who marched on at a brisk pace, apparently thinking that he was raised to a personage of great consequence, having been called upon by his father ("mine host of the inn") to "get his hat, and shew these strangers the way to the good old house."

"You will find it sadly desolate now," said the poor old man, "and I have not the heart to go with you; I never like to pass that gate now, save when I go by myself, and think about my own dear mistress, and her precious child; for she was a good mistress to me."

"Is she not living, then?" said the gentleman.

"Oh, yes, she is living; at least she was only one month ago. She always comes here for one month in the summer, and then she bides here with us, for she never likes to go to the

old house to sleep. She built this inn for me ; for I, in times past, was butler to her and my good master, but my poor master died ; and one after another she lost all her large family ; and she has none but her I call her pet lamb left. But I hinder you, sir ; and I can as well tell you when you return, and your dinner shall be all ready 'gainst you come back." So saying, he pushed onwards his little boy, with a parting injunction to "mind his manners to the gentry."

The manor house is in a very pretty situation ; but every approach to it wore an air of complete desolation—the drive to the entrance, the paths, and the garden, were completely overgrown with nettles and rank grass. The windows of the house were all fastened up. Close to it extended a large lake, the water of which lay calm and placid, reflecting every-thing on its margin. The travellers

followed their guide around the house in silence.

“Cannot we enter the house, my boy?”

“No, sir; no one goes in, unless it be mistress, or father, when she is here.”

“Have you never been inside?” said the elder lady of the two.

“No, sir—that’s *ms’am*,” said the boy, (seeming to recollect the injunction given him by his father,) “I’ve never been in nor wish to.”

“Why not?” said the young lady, stooping down to a level with the little fellow, who, from the bashfulness of childhood, turned his head half round, and thereby defeated her purpose, which was to gain a nearer view of his sweet open countenance; but on her again repeating her question in a kind soft voice, he turned fully round, and fixing his full blue eyes on her face—

“’Tis so dismal,” said the boy; “and little

missy cries so when she comes here; and my father and mother cry; I don't like coming here at all, except down under yonder hedge, where the best blackberries grow."

"Well, then, I suppose you will be wishing to return," said the gentleman.

"Oh, no, I am not afraid *now*, with so *many* people; I'll stay as long as you like."

"Thank you, my little fellow; but we must be going, and you may lead the way home again." The child directly scrambled out from the high grass, in which he was nearly hid, back into what once had been the road.

"Really, Ellen," said the gentleman, to his pretty fair companion, who was leaning on his arm; "it is a sweet spot, but sadly *desolate*, indeed."

"Yes," said she, "I should feel more inclined to pull it down altogether than to leave it so."