

“ Kitty, a fair but frozen Maid ”

MR. URBAN,—I do not know whether you may have observed that in the recently-published autobiography of Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace is quoted, in a slightly

different and fuller form, the riddle familiar to all lovers of Miss Austen, which begins—

“Kitty, a fair but frozen maid,”

and of which Mr. Woodhouse tried in vain to remember the whole. Mr. Wallace, who is apparently unaware what classic ground he is treading, extracts it from some old MSS. of his father's, and gives no intimation as to its authorship, but he gives what Mr. Woodhouse was unable to recall, the latter half of the poem :

“Kitty, a fair but frozen maid,
Kindled a flame I yet deplore :
The hood-wink'd boy I called to aid,
Though of his near approach afraid,
So fatal to my suit before.”

“That,” says Emma's father, “is all that I can recollect of it ; but it is very clever all the way through. I can only recollect the first stanza, and there were several.”

Mr. Wallace's version is as follows :

“Kitty, a fair but frozen maid,
Kindled a flame I *still* deplore,
The hood-wink'd boy *was called in aid*
So fatal to my suit before.
Tell me, ye fair, this urchin's name,
Who still mankind annoys ;
Cupid and he are not the same,
Though each can raise or quench a flame
And both are hood-wink'd boys.”

The variants in wording, which I have italicised, and the omission of Mr. Woodhouse's fourth line, which the form of the second verse proves to be necessary, suggest that this version was perhaps written down from memory. The more interesting question is, however, whether we have now the whole poem, and if so, who wrote it, and where does it come from ? Mr. Woodhouse uses the expression “several” stanzas ; but none of us, I suppose, would accept the dear old man's unsupported testimony as to any question of fact ; especially as his desultory mind was probably already straying to the more interesting topic of “poor Isabella,” of

whom the riddle made him think, because "she was very near being christened Catherine after her grand-mamma." *A priori*, then, I think, the assumption is that this is the whole, since the problem—(it is a riddle only in the most elementary sense, like Samson's, or the old English riddles)—has been propounded in the five new lines.

As to the authorship, Emma answers her father, with a touch of impatience not quite unpardonable, that she had it copied out on her second page, that she had taken it from the "Elegant Extracts," and that it was Garrick's. One hesitates to impugn Miss Woodhouse's accuracy, but one humble admirer has been hitherto unable to find it in the "Elegant Extracts" (Weybridge, 1816), though there is another epigram on another Kitty with which any lady less precise and positive might possibly have confused it.

Lastly, I confess with shame that I cannot solve the problem. If, therefore, you can throw light on any of these points, you will, dear Mr. Urban, greatly oblige.

ROSE SIDGWICK.

[NOTE.—Miss Woodhouse may have taken it from "Elegant Extracts," of which there were many editions differing in contents: but Sylvanus Urban cannot find this poem in the three or four editions he has searched. However, it appears in David Garrick's "Poetical Works" (1785), vol. ii. p. 507:

A RIDDLE.

Kitty, a fair, but frozen maid,
Kindled a flame I still deplore;
The hood-wink'd boy I call'd in aid,
Much of his near approach afraid,
So fatal to my suit before.

At length, propitious to my pray'r,
The little urchin came;
At once he sought the midway air,
And soon he clear'd, with dextrous care,
The bitter relicks of my flame.

To Kitty, Fanny now succeeds,
She kindles slow, but lasting fires:
With care my appetite she feeds;
Each day some willing victim bleeds
To satisfy my strange desires.