



THE MAIDS OF TAUNTON.

A Story of the Olden Time.

*'Twas a stormy night in winter, and the snow was falling fast,
While around the gabled Manor howled the wild wind's angry blast ;
But we heeded not the tempest, thought not of the outside cold,
As around the fire we listened to the tale Grandfather told.'*

“ Long ago, when James the Second was the ruler of our land,
In the ancient town of Taunton did an old, old school-house stand ;
And when, from the ivied belfry twelve deep strokes boomed on the air,
Down the wide stone steps each morning came a troop of maidens fair,
Little daughters of old England, spending in that school-house grey,
Busy hours of eager school-life, working diligent each day ;
Welcoming, like you, the noontide, when their tasks aside were laid,
And beneath the spreading beeches gladsomely they danced and played.

“ Happy, merry maids of Taunton ! In their sheltered school-girl life,
Little reeked they of the tumult, of the warfare and the strife
Raging in the country round them, filling English hearts with woe.
(Those were troublous times and awful ; England's King was England's foe).
But one day there rose a whisper, loud and louder still it grew ;
Till erelong, among the people, soon the joyful tidings flew.
For the Royal Duke of Monmouth had arrived from o'er the sea,
And he fain would save his country from its monarch's tyranny.
Hundreds flocked around his standard, ready for his sake to die,
Gladly following their leader, on to Death or Victory !