

she, who shunned and hated her fellow beings, loved and pitied all inferior animals, writhing ever with inward agony, if she witnessed any act of cruelty inflicted upon them. The feline race were her peculiar favorites, and she cherished always two or more grimalkins, that she caressed, and fed almost to repletion. Yet this extreme indulgence was not without alloy to the objects of her care, since she compelled them to endure the solitude to which she condemned herself—permitting them to hold no intercourse with the external world, and inflicting on them condign punishment, with a rod kept for that purpose, whenever, eluding her vigilance, they made their escape through the seldom opened door.

Yet, singular and unlovely as she was, I ever regarded Deaf Molly with peculiar interest and pity. I deeply commiserated the utter solitude of her feelings and existence, and to my sister and myself, it was a joyful event, when on a holiday afternoon, we were permitted to go, like little Red-Ridinghood, with “a pot of butter and a custard,” or some equally acceptable dainty, across the green fields to the lone dwelling of poor old Molly.

How joyously we went on our way towards the swelling height of beautiful Nonantum—leaping with childish glee across the dancing streams, pausing to gather anemones in every sheltered nook, and climbing many a craggy ledge to pluck the scarlet columbine, whose tuft of tasseled flowers, nodding often on the farthest point of a jutting rock high above our heads, became a prize more coveted from the very difficulty which lay in the way of its attainment.

And then, when after many pleasant loiterings we reached at last the remote chamber of our deaf friend, and gave the usual signal of our presence, by pushing the flexile willow stick, which we had carefully peeled, through the key-hole, how impatiently we waited to hear the key turn in the heavy lock, and how gladly leaped our hearts as she cautiously unclosed the door, and with kindly greeting, motioned us to enter. But the most joyous moment of all was, when we gave the precious basket into her outstretched hand, and marked the glad sparkle of her eye as she removed the napkin and scanned its dainty contents. With shrugs and winks, and strange grimaces, would she express her thanks, pointing at the same time, with a cautionary gesture, towards the door, to intimate, with habitual suspicion, that there were listeners on the other side.

And then, to testify her hospitable feeling, she would, seeking to amuse us, direct our attention in her uncouth manner, to the various articles for

use or ornament, contained in her apartment, which certainly presented a singular *melange* to our wondering eyes. Ancient looking utensils were hung against the walls, intermingled with a few of more modern and every day shape, and on a venerable table of strange form, as it then appeared to me, beneath which skulked the frightened cats, stood various articles of old fashioned china, all of different patterns, and such as now would be esteemed of priceless worth by the fanciers of such antique *bijouterie*.

Nearly in the centre of the room stood a huge chest of drawers, carved and quaint, reaching almost to the ceiling, and looking very much as if it had just walked out of place, for some especial purpose of its own. But the objects which chiefly attracted our childish admiration were a pair of tiny brass scales, polished almost to dazzling brightness, which hung side by side with an iron tripod, invented for what use it would be impossible to say. In my simplicity, I imagined them to be composed of precious metal, and attached to them an inordinate value, from the circumstance of their being the only shining articles among the dusty and rust-eaten valuables which constituted poor Molly's worldly wealth.

When our visit ended, and we prepared to depart, Molly would bestow upon us a few withered apples, or a handful of decayed nuts, and stealthily unclosing her door, thrust us out, bidding us hasten home, and be sure to keep out of the wicked boys' way. And truly, a joyous sense of liberty came over our young spirits when we quitted the singular abode of that strange woman, and with gay and glad hearts bounded on our homeward path, talking of all we had seen, and even then planning another visit at no distant day, through those pleasant fields, to the solitary home of Deaf Molly.

No kindness or gentleness seemed to have any effect in ameliorating the peculiarities of old Molly. As time wore on, they became even more marked,—her antipathies grew stronger, and her suspicious temper more alive to real or fancied wrong. Still she might be seen at early dawn, or when the shades of evening darkened the landscape, stealing along the hill side, with a cautious step, and restless eye that glanced furtively around as if eager to detect some lurking foe, for whom she was ever on the watch. Yet they who noted her from year to year, could perceive her gait gradually falter, and her low figure stoop as though the hand of time were pressing heavily upon her. She climbed the hills with a less elastic step, and the basket which ever hung upon her arm seemed, from its weight,