

## PATTY'S STORY.

My parents were dead, and my sole relative, the uncle who had kept me all my life at school. I had never seen him, nor had he written often to me. When he had done so, I had laughed at the misspelt words and the simple compositions. To my school-mistress he wrote once in every half-year, expressing the satisfaction he felt that I was so clever and industrious, and his hope that I should become a well-educated woman. He paid freely, too, for me to learn all that the school professed to teach, and he sent me money to spend on dress and trifles. It will be seen from this that my uncle had behaved very generously to me. Yet I disliked him. His short, ignorant letters displeased my taste; as senseless as most school girls, I did not see the good feeling and kind heart shown in the simplest phrases. I grew up considering the relationship of such a rustic uncle too hard a cross to bear, especially when the girls laughed at his blotted, blurred envelopes. At such times I rushed away to my mistress and poured into her ear the suffering my relative caused me.

When I was nineteen years old he sent for me to come home to him.

"My dear," he said, "I am only a farmer, and poor, very poor; but you shall never want while I live."

I wrote back begging for one more year at school. This was granted me, and I clung to each day as it passed with vague dread. No one can imagine the horror I had of the life before me. A country farmer's niece! A life of poverty, perhaps of menial labor; was I to succumb to this? These much-vexed questions arose day by day. Night by night I paced my room, and told the story of my coming sorrows to my friend, Sue Rivers. Before her pitying gaze I laid my sad picture, and her well-intended consolations fostered the selfish spirit within me.

We were both to leave school on the same day, and an invitation came from Mrs. Rivers for me to spend an indefinite period with her daughter. Sue was an only child, and always had her own way at home. She had bidden her mother to invite me, and hence the cordial letter. I accepted the invitation without asking permission of my uncle, though I wrote briefly to him and told him where I was going. "It is well," I said, "as you are poor, for me to be away as much as possible; I intend to earn my own living as soon as I can."

The very hour before I was to start from school with Sue, I was called down stairs to see a visitor. It was a grave-looking man, dressed in plain clothes. His manners were dignified and gentle.

"My name is Harlowe," he said, "I am a friend of your uncle's, and have brought you an urgent message from him."

"What is it?" said I.

Mr. Harlowe looked round at my school-mistress, as if to desire her to retire. "I am in Miss Barton's confidence," she said. "My message was to you alone," said Mr. Harlowe, looking at me, "but in this case I suppose I may deliver it. Mr. Barton, I am sorry to say, is in a very bad state of health. He has suffered many losses in business and has been obliged to retire from all active work. He has been looking forward to your return from school with much pleasure. He is much distressed by your last letter. Pardon me, if I say, had you but known Mr. Barton, you could not have written him such a letter. He hopes you will on no account go to Mrs. Rivers. He hopes, too, that you will accept my escort home, and I am at your service at any hour you may name."

"Impossible!" I cried; "I cannot endure a life of poverty and labor. Mrs. Baynes, speak for me."

My governess stepped forward. "Miss