

"My aunt will inform you," said Rose, coloring deeply. "Is there anything else I can do for you, ma'am?"

"Yes! sit down by me, and tell me how you would like to live in a fine house, and be dressed like a young lady?"

"Oh! I am happier far as I am," cried Rose, turning death pale. "I would not leave my beloved aunt and this dear cottage, to be mistress of the world!"

"So—I like you for that. It is right to be grateful to one to whom you owe so much. But you will soon be able to reward your friend for her services in a more profitable way than by spending your life with her."

"Were I to devote a long life to her comfort," cried Rose, passionately, "I could never repay her for all that she has done for me."

The old lady laughed outright at this sally, and Rose almost hated her for her mistimed mirth.

"She was a friend to me when I had no friends," she continued vehemently, "and no inducement shall ever make me consent to leave her."

"Why, what a vixen have we got here," cried the old lady, gazing admiringly upon the flashing eyes of the indignant Rose. "Had I brought you up, my lady, you would not have had such a proud will of your own—and you look so fair and meek, one would not think you would dare to contradict a woman of my condition."

"Pardon me, madam, if I have said anything disrespectful," said Rose, trembling with agitation. "The thought of being separated from my aunt, made me forget myself."

"And me too," said the old lady, tapping the flushed cheek of the beautiful girl with her fan.

"Well, I forgive you, as you are ignorant of the august personage to whom you are speaking. I suppose that I must never expect you to love me as well as you do your adopted aunt, even if nature has given to me a superior claim. But here comes the good woman with the tea; we shall soon know all about it."

Rose felt angry at her aunt being called by such a homely appellation. In her eyes she looked more like a lady than the proud stranger, and she thought that she deserved to be treated with more respect.

But the provoking old lady seemed highly amused by the poutings of poor Rose; and unconscious of having offended her, she said of her, and to her, a thousand obliging things.

At tea, she praised the grace with which she poured out that beverage, which she proclaimed

excellent, and the bread and butter and ham, the very best she had ever tasted.

"You milk the cows, of course?" she said, nodding to Rose.

"Yes!"

"And make the bread and butter?"

"Yes!"

"It is no wonder that they are so good," said the old lady. "My little neat handed Phillis, what else can you do?"

"Read and write indifferently well," said Rose, entering at last into the old lady's humour; "know a little of French and a little of music, but not much."

"Indeed! and pray who taught you these accomplishments?"

"Oh! the *good woman*, my aunt there; and many other things not worth mentioning."

"And how came you by this knowledge?" asked the old lady, turning with some surprise to Jane Redgrave.

"My mother was a clergyman's daughter," said Jane, meekly. "My grandfather was a learned man, from whom I received a liberal education."

"The more fortunate for Rose," said the old lady. "But now that our tea is over, we will, if you please, retire into another room, and leave our young friend the task of clearing away. I must have a long and earnest conversation with you, Mrs. Redgrave."

Jane led the way to the little chamber which the stranger was to occupy, the arrangements of which met with her entire satisfaction.

"Everything is so pretty and neat about you," she said, "that I quite envy your rural felicity."

"You must not judge by externals, madam," replied Jane. "Taste and cleanliness may improve our humble condition, but they can neither lighten nor remove the sorrows of the heart."

The old lady looked earnestly at the speaker.

"Yes!" she said, "you have known grief. It is written too plainly upon that fine face to be concealed. I must know your history, and how you came by this sweet child of mine. I call her mine, for I have every reason to believe that she is the daughter of my favorite nephew, the man who passed in these parts for a Mr. Armyn Redgrave. You seem surprised. Perhaps you knew this unhappy boy?"

"Alas, madam! but too well;" and the pale face of Jane Redgrave was suffused with a crimson glow. "If you will patiently listen to a long and painful story, I will relate to you all I know of him."

With many interruptions, on both sides, of tears and sighs, Jane Redgrave recapitulated her sad