

neighbourhood. She had reached the Boglegite! alone, upon the highroad, pursued, as she supposed, by Daft Davie; and now "momently" expecting to encounter old Kate, whom she had been taught, through mental gossip, to look upon as a sort of witch or hobgoblin. The bewildered feelings of an imaginative child of eight years old may easily be figured; and her joy, when, looking round, and Davie no longer in sight, she beheld help hastening towards her, in its more agreeable shape of his pleasing-looking sister. Mary gently took the little trembler by the hand, whose heart-beatings were almost audible, and whose tears now flowed fast, and, as she led her back to Mrs. Douglas, she completely won her heart, by her kind and sensible soothing—and such were the circumstances of Mary's first meeting with her future mistress. That wayward heart was not ungrateful. Her deliverer from such complicated terrors became an object of peculiar interest to Laura. Mrs. Douglas was much attracted by Mary's mild, ingenious countenance, and still more by the remarkable union of modesty and self-possession in one so young; which at all times characterised her demeanour. Her pale but perfectly regular beauty both of features and form, which would have charmed a sculptor, had no gaudy attraction to strike the common observer, on a cursory survey, either with admiration or distrust; and, won by her darling and only daughter's importunities, she was speedily prevailed upon, after a few satisfactory preliminaries, to receive Mary, then eighteen, at the Hall; where, notwithstanding what Mrs. Douglas considered the disadvantages of her rusticity and Scottish dialect, she was appointed to the office of being Miss Laura's personal attendant. To many it would not have been an easy nor an enviable situation. Laura had most of the faults which flattered vanity, impetuous temper, and precocious talents usually engender in the nurseries of misrule; a prejudice was speedily created in the servants' hall against Mary, as a favourite and a puritan. Her beauty drew upon her impertinences of a nature equally new and embarrassing to her, both from the lackeys, and the male visitors at the Hall; and she did not discover in its hearts, that example of wisdom and benignity her warm fancy had figured—they were, in fact, neither more nor less than ordinary two-vivored fashionable-living personages, but with sufficient taste for the beauty and benefit of exemplary moral conduct, to notice and reward it in their daughter's favourite servant; and her warmer heart and unconscious disposition, readily found excuses for them in their surrounding temptations. She was eating their bread, and benefiting her beloved parents through their liberality; and her duty was to serve, not to censure them.

And thus, through varying circumstances, and changes of positions between country and town life, their mutual relation remained unbroken, until Laura had nearly completed her eighteenth year, and Mary her twenty-seventh. Then Laura one day found Mary weeping over an open letter, which she did not attempt to hide, but betrayed considerable agitation in delivering up to her. It contained dishonourable proposals from a young nobleman of high rank and fortune, who had followed Laura to the country as her professed and permitted admirer, and to whose union with their daughter her parents were ambitiously looking forward; and her indignant amazement may be imagined when she read, together with extravagantly expressed admiration of the superior beauty of her *waiting-maid*, a by no means covert intimation of his devoirs to herself having been prosecuted principally for the purpose of affording him opportunities of seeing her "who, from the first moment he beheld her, had reigned unrivalled in his heart." The impulses of deeply wounded pride and vanity were precipitately acted upon; their worst suggestions against Mary were temporarily adopted by Laura, and proclaimed outweighing the testimony of years. Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, who anticipated in this disclosure the overthrow of their cherished hopes for the splendid establishment of their daughter, would not believe but that Mary had been greatly to blame; and her dismissal from the Hall was summarily determined upon. Laura's vanity rather than her predilection had favoured the addresses of her recreant admirer, and she soon repented of her haste. Her secret heart deeply reproved her for the unjust condemnation she had drawn upon the innocent Mary; but the feeling how

wrong she had been, did not help to appease her wounded pride, nor operate to repair the mischief. She, however, parted from her with tears and protestations of continued regard; and these completely sufficed to restore her to the clinging affection of her she had so cruelly injured.

But the consequences of this disturbance extended farther. Mary's fond mother, who was at the time oppressed by illness, was heart-stricken when she heard of the opprobrium cast upon the fair name of her darling child, and never recovered from the shock. And, a very few weeks after, Laura, revenging upon herself the infidelity of a lover who never had possessed her preference, but whose vanity she thought to retaliate upon, committed the imprudence of bestowing her hand clandestinely upon his rival; a young man of showy pretensions, but without fortune, whose addresses her parents had forbidden.

It would be irrelevant to my purpose to relate all the causes of the implacable displeasure of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas at this rash act, or to follow their young, infatuated, once idolised Laura, through its train of disastrous consequences; who, unforgiven, soon accompanied her husband to the East Indies.

On hearing of her departure, Mary stole, at dead of night, to a favourite haunt of her regretted young lady called "Laura's Bower," and there committed her first and only theft, in prosecution of a cherished superstition. This was the transplanting of a flower, to emblem the departed to a foreign land; which, if done with due observances relative to time, property, and secrecy, its drooping or flourishing leaves would faithfully continue to indicate the condition of the absent one. Mary, as most appropriate, chose a rose plant, which she placed in her cottage window, and watched and tended through several years, feeding her affectionate thoughts with associated favours, concerning her whom it was set to commemorate, without having obtained any sure intimation even of her being in existence. That cottage was no longer the same. The vicissitudes of the interval had been great to both parties. Mary had lost her father and elder brother; married, and become a childless widow. She was living in another home, but on the same road side, and not far from the dwelling of her birth; her only companions, her poor imbecile brother, and his constant follower, a now aged, wiry terrier; her Bible, her spinning-wheel, and her treasured leafy oracle; when her second meeting took place with her loved regretted mistress, under circumstances occasioning a more than nine days' wonder amongst her humble neighbours.

I cannot, I believe, more briefly and graphically describe this *true incident*, than by giving it in the native words of the rustic bard who made it the subject of a well-remembered ballad, entitled:

MARY'S ROSIE TREE.

"Wae's me, my bonny rosie bush,
That glinted at my hand
Sae mony simmers, cheerily!
Now, wha's dune me this wrang?

"O Davie, feckless innocent!
I trow it has been ye;
Nane else in a' the parishen
Wad harmed my bonnie tree:

"I stole it frae my leddy's bower,
In sorrow, no wi' shame;
And set it for a prophecy,
When she gaed far frae hame.

"It was my pleasant company
Through mony an eerie hour;
For, oh, *her een* had tented it—
That was a sweeter flower.