

I did so with perfect ease, and as she applied the key to open it, she expressed her astonishment at my having grown so tall, and added with a cunning smile, "but ill weeds always grow apace, you know."

After searching for some little time, she took out a bundle of papers and handing them to me, she said, there you'll find all about the story I've so often told you, but mind you "she continued," how much soever I should like, myself, to see it fairly written out, you musn't talk of printing it, not at least while your poor old Aunt's alive, but when I'm dead and gone, and laid by my Fanny's side, for I must be buried there, you may then do what you will with it.

On the arrival of the last mail but one from England, I received a letter. The envelope was edged with black, the seal was of the same colour, and impressed with the family cypher. It was, I knew, the messenger of death, and on opening it with a trembling hand, not knowing what branch of the family tree had been lopped off, I found it contained an account of my Aunt Phœbe's death.

It was from poor old Janet, my Aunt's servant of all work already referred to, and is so much of a curiosity that I must give it to the reader, although it has nothing to do with my story, further than announcing to me the removal of the only bar to its publication.

It ran as follows:—

BOKS.WOOD COTTIDGE, August 22nd,

Dear Maister Phillip,—I tak up me pen to inform ye that yer Ant my puir guid Mistress is no more, she departed this life last Sabbath morn at sixteen minnits efter twa o' the clock, without a grone or a struggle, just like a wic bairn gangin' to sleep on its mither's bosom, her head was on mine at the time, and O Maister Phillip it wad hae done yer heart guid to hae heard her talk as she did, the varra neet o' her departure, aboot heaven and her joining Fanny Millway their, and how happy they would be together, an then, just as her hour was come, she told me to kiss her farewell for it was getting dark she said, and she was going, and when she saw me greeting as if my heart wad break, "dinna fret Jennet," she said, "its only for a little, ye'll soon be comin efter me." "God grant it may be sae I wad hae said," but could na my heart was too full to speak, but I can say it now for its waesome to think how she can get on without me, but aiblins Fanny Millway may be some help to her.

This to Maister Phillip M——,
from his poor servant,
to command.

JANET RUSSEL.

P. S. Some story anent this Fauny Millway that your Aunt was aye gurring me greet about, will be prented noo that she's dead an gane, leastwise she used to say it wad be, an if it sud I'd like to see it.

J. R.

Poor old Janet! and so you shall if you've not gone home to your beloved Mistress before these pages reach you.

CHAPTER II.

THE POOR.

Let not ambition mark their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.

GRAY.

"No, Bella, no! you'll never marry William Armstrong, and therefore its very wrong and very sinful in you, to encourage his comings here or to keep company with him."

This was said in a weak and faltering voice to her sister, by a poor young woman in the last stage of consumption.

It was a bright evening, one of the brightest and softest of an unusually early harvest. The rest of the family, and it was a large one, had been out all day at work as was their wont at this busy season, some to reap, others to assist in housing or stacking the rich ripe sheaves while the little ones were profitably employed in glean- ing up the scattered heads of wheat left on the stubble, when the field was cleared of all at least that the farmer thought worth his notice.

So profitable indeed was this glean- ing that the three youngest children of this very family have seldom been known to bring home less, than what amounted, when thrashed out, to nearly a peck of wheat, worth, at the time I speak of, not less than half a crown, better than three shillings our money.

But I perceive that I have commenced my tale at the wrong end, or rather in the middle. I will therefore try agnin and begin at the beginning.

My story, be it premised, has nothing to do with "lordly halls and ladies' bowers," not a coach or barouche or phaeton, not even a one horse shay with its luxuriantly soft cushioned seat will ever be seen in it. So that the young little minxes of readers, whose heads have been stuffed with fictitious tales about balls and routes and masquerades, and other fashionable follies, may skip these unpretending pages, in which little or nothing will be found but the "simple annals of the poor."