

She recovered her voice on hearing this explanation, and, highly indignant, cried :

"It's lees your telling, George Harris, an' ye ken weel."

"Naw, my girl, better folk than 'e 'ave been there before : Robie McKeltie be naw more strite-laced than be other chaps."

"I dinna believe you, for a leeing callant. I wadna credit yer aith," she exclaimed.

Harris laughed loud. "Well, my lass," he said, "yonder kemmes Mistress Halloran : thee had better speer o' 'er the news ; may it please thee more than moine ;" and saying this, he touched his horse with his whip, and crying "Gee up," was soon out of sight in a turn of the road, and the indignant Nellie heard his laughter rising, in the clear atmosphere, loud above the rumble of the wagon-wheels.

"Hae ye seen Robie McKeltie this morn'?" she abruptly asked of Mistress Halloran, as soon as she was within speaking distance.

"Faix, I didn't, Nellie," Mrs. Halloran answered ; "the poor fellow was caught by the perlice yester morning, sure. It is a hard case Dinny Mahoney's affther telling, and he'll be locked up, poor fallow, and get nothin to eat but bread and wather, at all, at all."

Nellie's eyes glared fiercely. "Mistress Halloran," she cried, "I nae thoct possible o' you, that you wad gang spreadin' lees o' decent people, just like that daft haverel, George Harris, anent the hail kintrie side. Shame to you, Mistress Halloran !"

"Indade, Miss Nellie," retorted Mrs. Halloran, "ye'd be more apt to tell lees nor meself. I niver tould a lie in all my life, and if Robie McKeltie has got into a scrape it's his look-out, and not mine, be gorrah," and Mrs. Halloran drove off in high dudgeon, wondering greatly at the change of deportment in Bonnie Nellie. Nellie meanwhile, caring little what Mrs. Halloran or any one else thought of her, pursued her way mechanically ; and, on arriving at the market, delivered her sweet butter and fresh eggs to her expectant customers, and it was well for her they were

honest people, for she could not reckon, nor did she attempt it, the money that she received from them. Thankful when her business was done, she hurriedly retraced her way over the beautiful road she had set out to travel on that morning in such high spirits. Its loveliness was as the bleak, naked desert to her now. Fine elms waved their graceful arms over her path unmarked ; the fragrance of the lilac was unperceived ; flower-gardens were passed unnoticed ; blooming hedges, budding horse-chestnuts and acacias, were as dried, dead, leafless things ; the gurgling of the clear, refreshing, and gushing springs, as they trickled down the bank, or crossed her path, had no music in them. Had these been animated, keenly would this neglect have been felt. Nellie was not used so to pass them. Each one was as an old friend, and usually she would stop opposite some favorite, and quote over it appropriate words from Burns and Hogg,—words she had learnt from the infirm grandmother whose stay she was. The dogs, however, wondered at not receiving the usual greeting from Bonnie Nellie : sometimes it was an ugly little cur, that sat with disappointed look as she passed him by ; sometimes it was a thorough-bred terrier that fixed its large black eyes in astonishment at her neglect ; and then a great Newfoundland followed unobserved, and finding it useless to continue the pursuit, with head hanging down would retrace its steps. So she sped on, her cheeks burning, and her hands and feet cold as ice. One moment she was shivering with cold ; the next, her blood ran like fire through her veins. Frequently she was offered a seat in some cart slowly returning from market, but she felt that the pace of the poor tired horse would drive her distracted, and the kindly offers were abruptly declined.

Home was at last gained ; she entered, and, without speaking, flung herself on the low chair she usually occupied at the hearth opposite to her grandmother, and, burying her face in her apron, burst into a violent fit of hysterical crying and sobbing.