

reluctant, to speak of my mother; and drew from him—still reluctantly—a few expressions of regret that he had dealt harshly towards her, and for her after sorrows and early death. But he would make it up to me, he would, so he said.

He had very little curiosity to know my history; and I felt so sure that it would have so little interest to him, and so little excite his sympathy, that I was almost silent regarding the events of my life. I was, I hope and believe, more anxious to arouse his anxieties and concern respecting the awful eternity on the brink of which he was evidently tottering; but he listened first with stolid indifference, and then with undisguised impatience to my words. He didn't know—he reckoned 'twas all right—he had been a good sort of man, he believed—he hadn't wronged anybody—had always paid his dues, always—gone to church sometimes, when he was able. Oh! he was all right, so I needn't bother. From this it seemed impossible to move him.

Day by day, too, I went, at my cousin's invitation, out into the fields where she was at work. She was not only kind but cordial. She knew why our grandfather had sought me out, she said; and she was glad he had found me. If he left me half what he was worth, she shouldn't mind that, for it was no more than my right; I was as near of kin to him as she was, and he owed me something for being so hard to 'poor aunt Nelly.' Yes, she was glad, she repeated, again and again, that she had got a cousin. I was so *unked* to feel all alone in the world; and since her own mother died, she had felt all alone: her father did not care for her now, he had another wife and a young family growing up. This—put in different words—was the substance of my cousin's communications.

Several days passed away, and it was not only desirable but necessary for me to return to business. I said so; and it was easy to perceive that the intimation was not unwelcome to my grandfather, who, I have no doubt, began to consider that feeding an idle mouth was the reverse of profitable. 'Ah! business mustn't be neglected, eh? Nelly's boy,' said he, 'keep thy business, and thy business 'll keep thee, eh?'—and then he fell into one of his dozing fits.

Let me say here, that after the surprise of my arrival, and his recognition of me as 'Nelly's boy,' he had shown no more emotion regarding me; and though he had more than once hinted that he had something of importance to com-

municate, he had not yet approached the subject, whatever it might be. Now, however, it broke out.

It was two or three hours after noon, through the morning I had been, as usual, with my cousin on the farm, helping her after a fashion, if I remember rightly, in some agricultural labour till I was tired. Then I had left her to finish her day's work, while I strolled home on the plea of spending an hour or two with my grandfather. So much for explanation,

'Nelly's boy,' broke out Mr. M——, suddenly rousing himself from his torpor—'Polly Randell be a rare 'un, bean't she?'

I could truly answer this question in the affirmative; and I did so.

'A rare 'un, a rare 'un,' repeated my grandfather, approvingly. 'Nelly's boy, you shall marry her.'

Marry her! Polly Randell! my cousin! My wildest guesses would not have hit upon this solution of my grandfather's crotchet, at which the Fairtown attorney had hinted. I nearly laughed aloud; but I did not. I merely said, Impossible!—of course my grandfather was joking.

Joking! no; why should he joke? I was to be Polly Randell's husband, and she my wife: it was perfectly settled, in his mind.

'But, grandfather, this cannot be,' said I

Not be, when he had settled it? the old propensity to the exercise of arbitrary tyranny breaking out afresh, as it was ever breaking out—helpless as he was—and provoking rebellion, personal neglect, and personal tyranny, as its natural result. Not be, when he had said it? I was not married already, was I? He had put that question to me, in a light indifferent sort of way, I then remembered, in our first interview.

'No, not married, certainly, grandfather; but certainly engaged to be married as soon as a propitious time comes.'

'You must break off that match, Nelly's boy,' said he.

'Sir! my dear grandfather!'

'Break it off, break it off,' he repeated hastily.

'I cannot do that,' said I, sternly, if I spoke as I felt.

Why couldn't I? Was the girl I wanted to marry better than Polly Randell?

I was not entitled, and it would be very impertinent in me, to draw comparisons. I had

too much respect for my cousin, I said, to permit myself to do so.

Well, was she richer? was she as rich as Polly Randell was likely to be some day?

'I judge not, sir, but what then?'

'What then, Nelly's boy? what then?' The question seemed so ludicrous that the aged man laughed derisively as he repeated it.

There was a short silence, and I hoped the discussion would drop, but it did not.

'Nelly's boy,' said he, trembling with excitement, 'I've worked and worked and stur' and stur'; I've got together farm and stock and crop, and there's money in the bank—money, money; and I bean't going to have it parted when I be dead. There's Polly Randell has been athrowing herself away on a furriner, or wants to (here was the secret, then, of my grandfather's anxiety to find 'Nelly's boy'), and here's you athrowing yourself away on a furriner, and it isn't going to be;' and he struck the table fiercely with his clenched fist, reminding me of the day when I had shrunk with affright from that hand, armed as it then was with a heavy whip. But I was a boy then, a man now, and he—well, well. He paused when he had struck the table, and looked at me threateningly.

'And you can be so unnatural, then, and so unwise, as to risk the happiness of your granddaughter, to say nothing of the wealth of which you boast, as to seek to wed her with one of whom you know so little as you know of me, and against her will, in the miserable expectation of the property remaining unbroken in the hands of your descendants? For shame—think better of it.'

'I say it isn't going to be,' resumed my grandfather, following the current of his own thoughts, and giving no heed to my remonstrances; 'and the first of you two that crosses me doesn't have stick nor stone, nor hoof, nor clod, nor farthing.'

'That first will I be, then,' I said. 'I did not come here to rob my cousin of the just reward of her faithful services; and I rejoice—not that I have offended you, grandfather; but—'

He did not give me time to complete the sentence I had begun. Passion gained the mastery:—he foamed at the mouth—bade me begone—strove to rise, and then sank back in his chair exhausted.

I bade farewell to my cousin that evening. I would willingly have kept from her the cause of