

Not such as I had pictured her in my mind—coarse and hard-featured, scowling and grim; but a really pleasing young woman, of ordinary height, and the reverse of masculine in her appearance, though the hard and disproportionately large hands she displayed, the heavy nailed boots on her feet, and especially her dark hair, cropped short and combed almost straight over her forehead, certainly detracted from my fair cousin's personal attractions. Of Miss Randell's costume, perhaps the less I say the better, lest I should betray my ignorance. I am afraid, however, that according to the fashions of that day it would have been shockingly out of taste, both as to form and material; but I remember that, whatever might have been deficient, and notwithstanding the strange rough work in which my cousin had just been engaged, her face, hands, and dress were alike faultlessly clean; and this unexpected qualification enlisted my feelings, to a certain extent in her favour.

'So you have been having one of your swoonds again, have you, grandfather?' said the amazon, in a full but far from harsh or unpleasant voice, without honouring me with a glance.

'Ay, ay, the silly old man has been going off again: but no matter, he bea'n't a-going yet in 'arnest, Polly, so you needn't think it,' exclaimed the old farmer, petulantly. 'You needn't be in a hurry, Polly.'

'Who said I was in a hurry?' said my young kinswoman, apparently unmoved: 'I can wait,' she added, laughing—not a disagreeable laugh either, but just such a gentle exercise of the risible muscles as some young ladies who rejoice in a dimpled chin and a fine set of teeth rather cultivate. Now, my cousin had a fine set of teeth, white as the purest ivory, and a very engaging dimple when she smiled: so her quiet laugh was rather agreeable.

'Yes, yes; you must wait, Polly, because you can't help it, you know,' rejoined my grandfather: 'but don't you see there's a gentleman here? Why don't you speak to him?'

'Because you haven't told me his name and his business,' replied the young woman. 'Who is he, and what does he want?' she added, glancing at me, as I thought, rather superciliously. She had heard of me, no doubt, from the slatternly handmaid below; but the 'tail-cwoat,' with the dignity it conferred, was wasted on Miss Randell.

'He's Nelly's boy, your aunt Nelly's boy,' snarled rather than spoke our grandfather.

'Han't I told you he'd be turning up one of these days?'

'Is it true what that silly old man says?' demanded she, turning towards me and looking very earnestly in my face. These were the first words she had spoken, which grated harshly on my ear; but I did not like to hear her call her near relation a silly old man, whatever might have been his just desert of that title. I answered, however, that I certainly was the son of her mother's youngest sister, and I offered my hand in friendly greeting. She did not take it at first, but looked at me still more earnestly, fixing her full grey eyes very firmly on mine, when she had taken account, as it seemed, of every separate feature. At length she put her hand in mine, and grasped it energetically. 'So you are my cousin,' said she; 'and perhaps gran'ther thinks, and you think, I aren't glad to see you here. If you do, you don't know nothing about it. I am glad, and don't mind saying so.'

'Ullo, Polly! what's that you say?' shouted our aged relative, whose infirmity of deafness had probably debarred him the full benefit of my cousin's kind words, but who probably anticipated a very different scene.

'I say,' repeated Polly, in a loud and distinct tone, 'that if this young man is my poor aunt Nelly's son, and my cousin, I am glad to see him. And as you didn't behave like a father to poor aunt Nelly, you ought to make it up to my cousin, you ought.'

'Hold your stupid tongue, Polly Randell,' cried the aged man, in a tone of fierce exasperation. 'If I'd a' got the use of my limbs as I had years ago,' he added, making a vain effort to rise from his chair, and falling back heavily.

'Sit still, do,' said my cousin calmly, as though this kind of aggravating controversy were the ordinary mode of intercourse between them. 'I say, you ought to make it up to my cousin. Yes, I know what your silly head is running on now,' she added, after a pause. 'You've talked of it before now, and I see it in the twinkle of your eye; but it isn't agoing to be, for all that, and so I tell you. Has cousin had anything to eat or drink since he's been here?' she asked abruptly, as though she had said too much, or were desirous of changing the topic.

'No, Polly Randell, no,' said my grandfather; 'we've been so busy a-talking, han't we, Nelly's boy?'

'I thought so,' resumed the young housekeeper 'talking doesn't cost anything, does it grand'ther?'

I interrupted an angry retort by protesting that I had not needed any refreshment, that I had dined before leaving Fairtown, and that the object of my visit was accomplished by the interview I had with my grandfather. But my cousin interposed. If 'grand'ther' was stingy, it was no reason she should be; and besides, she wanted to talk some, as well as the old man; weren't we cousins? If I had had my dinner, she hadn't had hers, only an 'elevenner,' for she was but just come in from plough.

'What ha' you got for dinner, Polly?' demanded the helpless old man, with some appearance of interest.

'I reckon it doesn't matter to you, grand'ther,' said she: 'you've had yours.'

'Yes, it does,' he answered sharply; 'you be eating me out of house and home, you be, among you. Come now,' he added beseechingly, 'what h' you got for dinner?'

'Chitterlings, if you must know, you silly old man,' said my cousin, laughing the same laugh as before. 'Can you eat chitterlings, cousin?'

The mysterious word—mysterious to me; for at that time I did not know what CHITTERLINGS meant—the mysterious word seemed to open a new interest to our grandfather; for before I could acknowledge my ignorance, he had beckoned my cousin to his chair, and was asking her, in a loud whisper, 'How much did he weigh, Polly? how much did he weigh?'

The answer, whatever it might be, did not satisfy the inquirer: "Be ye sure, Polly? I reckon there's a stun' or two more than that." Assured of correctness in this particular, a question arose as to what portions of the slain animal were to be sold for ready money, and at how much a "stun"—one predominant idea in my grandfather's mind appearing to be that every mortal being around him, his granddaughter included, was combining to rob him of his property, and that eventually, after having been eaten out of house and home, he should die in the parish pcorhouse, and this, after boasting to me of his farm, his stock, his crops, and of his money in the bank—his money, money!

Occupied with these doleful forebodings, my grandfather—after finding that I intended returning to Fairtown that evening, and making me promise to see him again next day, when he should have something to say to me—permitted me to leave the room with my cousin; and shortly afterwards, having effected a narrow escape from the chitterlings, I retraced my