

Reminiscences of a School-girl. For the Calliopean.
S L A N D E R.

My first room-mate, on entering the school, was Mary T. . . ., any only daughter of respectable parents, residing in the village of L. . . . Her mother having been for some years an invalid, Mary had grown up chiefly under the superintendence of servants; and as her mother was so nervous as to render noise insupportable, my little friend took up her abode in the kitchen, with 'the girl.' Now, as this office was seldom filled by the same individual, longer than six or twelve months, Mary was consequently brought under the influence of almost every temper and grade of this class of persons. She was a giddy, playful creature; caring for nothing but fun and mischief; and, although taught to read; yet, during childhood, she never opened a book, except in the presence of a teacher; or when, as a punishment for some misdemeanor, she was shut in mamma's room, to learn verses or catechism. The natural result of such training was, that the poor child had no resources in her own mind, and being of an active temperament, she must find something with which to busy herself—thus every trivial occurrence which took place in her own family, or among neighbors, was hailed as something to break the tedium of monotony.

This propensity was fostered by observing, that most of her indulgences depended on keeping the good will of the servant girl; and also, that whenever a new one came, the best way of securing her favor, was to traduce her predecessor; making invidious comparisons, and detailing to Ann all the minutiae of Betty's character.

Things went on in this manner until Mary was about fourteen years of age, when she was sent to a boarding school, where she had been nearly a year, at the time of my entrance. Naturally warm hearted and ardent, she soon professed an attachment; of the truth of which she endeavored to convince me, by at once making me her confidant. She had been long enough in the school to become acquainted with the persons and business of all its inmates, and but for my disposition to sleep a few hours out of every twenty-four, she would have entertained me whole nights with the relation of rare secrets. Having been brought up under the immediate watchcare of my mother, who taught me, as a first principle, to "mind my own business," I was for some time at a loss to comprehend the admonitions and cautions of my devoted friend and guardian spirit, as my enthusiastic companion styled herself. She had a wonderful facility in finding out who were teachers' favorites, and who were plotting and scheming to make themselves appear better than they really were, in the eyes of our preceptor—could pick out deep meanings from simple sentences, and detect plans in what others would regard as unmeaning glances—knew just what all the pupils said and thought of each other—pitying one who was imposed upon, and another who was rendering herself odious by her officiousness, being extremely anxious to have every individual in her proper place. But, besides all that passed in our own community, her head was stored with intelligence from abroad. By means of the day scholars she knew all the principal personages of the town, with their opinions of each and all the ladies of the Institution, frequently remarking that such a girl, who was regarded as mild and amiable would yet be found out, and that she was really afraid the boldness and indecorum of Misses second- and so would be the ruin of the school. As a necessary consequence of being thus burdened with the affairs of others, poor Mary often found her own neglected. Returning from the classroom, she would often sit down and weep bitterly declaring she had not time to prepare her lessons; and as for those who accomplished so much more than herself, she understood how they got along, and only wished the teachers could see through their recitations as well as she could, they would not be thought so remarkably clever. During the first two or three weeks of our acquaintance I was almost bewildered. Deeply interested in my studies, and not being able with my as yet feeble perceptive faculties to discern either syrens or harpies about me, I felt great unwillingness to believe myself in a situation, where all my powers must be engrossed and exerted in continual efforts to keep up with the intrigues and machinations of my companions; yet as Miss T. . . . had been there so long, and certainly did know

the secrets of nearly every body in the house, how could she be mistaken? However, after a little time, I began to discover that these evils, if existing, were not so frightful as represented, and allowing that some remarks were made upon my character, appearance, &c., I did not apprehend any serious injury, and concluded to let them pass without fretting myself or suffering my feelings to be soured by matters of such little importance. Thinking that Mary needlessly harassed herself, I remonstrated with her; but she quickly told me, that she had learned by experience, not to be so easily duped, and would rather make herself miserable in studying to outwit her adversaries, than become a laughing stock of the community as I had rendered myself by my simplicity. Finding she would take her own way I resolved to treat her kindly, but give little heed to her tales or surmises. By adhering to this resolution, I managed to live without quarrelling with her but was very much annoyed. Among the students was Caroline R. . . ., a girl of superior abilities and apparent worth, to whom I became almost instinctively attached, for as she recited in several classes with Mary and myself, the power with which her mind appeared to grasp knowledge, and the clearness and animation with which her thoughts were expressed, at once engaged my attention and admiration. Now, unfortunately, to this young lady Mary had a decided aversion; and daily was I obliged to hear a long "rigmarole" about the "artful creature." One day on coming from the composition class, in which Caroline had been more than usually successful, Mary came in with a bounce and rudely pushing the door exclaimed,—"that Miss R. . . . is the most detestable hypocrite I ever saw in my life. There she sat in the class all good humour and sweetness just because she knew she had the best composition, and the instant we came out, commenced showing off her wit and consequence." "Indeed," replied I, "I did not observe any thing of the kind." "Oh no, I suppose not, nor that she was making sport of you, mimicking the manner you read your piece!" "Mimicking me! When? Where?" "Why just as we came out of the door. I saw her winking and making up a mouth to Jane C. . . . in mockery of you." "Nonsense Mary, I was looking directly at her and observed no such movement, 'twas only your imagination." "Very well, if you don't care I'm sure I needn't for 'twas merely on your account I was insulted. I'll risk her making fun of me, she knows I'll soon be even with her; and as to that composition, she borrowed every word of it; but one thing I really hope,—that you'll get enough of your beloved Caroline, and that she'll make a fool of you to her heart's content."

Endeavoring to reason with her, was but to multiply words and increase contention; therefore, whenever she commenced railing, I maintained a rigid silence; so that she, finding me a heartless being, who could not appreciate the confidence reposed in me, obtained permission to change her room-mate. But poor Mary went from room to room, successively, until she had tried nearly every lady in the house; never remaining long with any, and ever embroiled in petty jealousies and disturbances. She remained in the school a little more than a year from the time we separated, during which period her teachers labored in vain to correct her fault; it seemed to have taken such a hold on her soul as to become incorporated with nature itself, and inseparable from her existence.

Three years after leaving the Institution she married, and went to reside with her mother-in-law. This was the situation, of all others, calculated to call forth the vigorous exercise of her peculiar disposition. The last time I met her, she held me, for two hours, by the string of my cloak, while she poured into my ear a long complaint, of the meanness, tyranny and cruelty of her husband's relatives; with a few, not very tender, reflections on the husband himself—then, suddenly recollecting herself, begged me not to say anything of the matter to any one, as she would not care to provoke such a revengeful set;—but she knew me of old; therefore, had unbosomed her trouble, as I would not repeat a syllable, etc. etc.,—ending her wail by asking me if I did not think her the most unfortunate being in creation. Since becoming more acquainted with human nature and pondering over the various traits of Mary's character, I am well convinced that this sad propensity was no innate part of her soul, but the natural result of her early education, and that had her