

the Thankful Heart had now become the chief aim of her existence ; but she must needs bide her time in patience, for impatience had never in her life gained her anything.

But Patience is a sure horse, however slow, and, jogging steadily forward, carried Miss Nancy at last almost within reach of her desire. There came an evening when over dessert the squire said, " I shall be late for lunch to-morrow. Todd is coming from St. Edmunds' to go over the upland pastures with me. He is to meet me at eleven o'clock at the 'Thankful Heart.' "

He said it ; and Miss Nancy heard it, and though pale with sudden rapture, still survived.

But good steed as Patience may be, she cannot avert the inevitable, and as poor Miss Nancy perceived from her window, the next morning was a wet one, and not a little wet, but sullenly pouring. She watched the weather with a failing heart all breakfast time, and well aware that in face of it any request preferred to Aunt Norreys could only meet with a most reasonable refusal, ended by trusting to her old expedient of escaping from Trimmer to join the squire at the last moment. But Miss Nancy was unskilful in strategy, and the enemy had overwhelming advantages, and presently surprised her in the act of flight, arrayed in a singular collection of such garments as lay at her command ; an old hat of the squire's which could come to no further harm, her own red cloak, her strongest boots, and by way of great precautions, a cast-off pair of Trimmer's goloshes.

" Miss Nancy ! " exclaimed the astounded Trimmer.

" I am just going out with daddy, Trimmer, faltered the guilty young lady.

" Oh, are you, Miss Nancy ? " rejoined Trimmer grimly. " now you will do nothing of the sort."

" Trimmer, " said Miss Nancy desperately, " I must go."

" Miss Nancy, take those things off immediately. "

" Trimmer, I *will* go ! "

" Miss *Arminel* ! " said Trimmer in a fearful voice, for Miss Nancy's rebellious moments were so few and fleeting as to be an astonishment when they did come.

" I mean, Trimmer, mayn't I go? Oh, Trimmer, if I sit under the apron of the gig ? "