

this was now hidden from me by a red woollen nightcap.

With a weak and piping voice, he demanded who I was, and what I wanted. I replied by placing before him the advertisement which had brought me to S—. He trembled violently; and grasping me by the wrist, held me tight and drew me towards him, nearer and nearer. 'It is Nelly's boy,' he cried, with an exceeding bitter cry; and releasing his hold upon me, he sank back in the chair.

#### CHAPTER LIII.

I AM ACKNOWLEDGED BY MY GRANDFATHER, AND INTRODUCED TO MY COUSIN.

'Tis only one of his swoonds. He'll be all right by'm by,' said the servant girl, whom I had hastily summoned when my grandfather fell back, apparently insensible.

'Does he often have such attacks as this, then?' I asked, somewhat surprised at the indifference with which the damsel looked upon what seemed to me a serious affair.

'Oh, yes, to be sure: he is sitch a silly old man, you know,' said she, without moving a muscle.

'Well, but surely something should be done for him,' said I; for the 'silly old man' gave no sign of returning consciousness, but lay back on his chair, with his clenched hands falling at his sides, and his glazed eyes fixed and staring on vacancy. 'Had you not better send for his granddaughter?' I suggested.

'I should catch it if I did, I reckon,' said she: 'but I'll soon set him up again;' and while I looked on with stupid astonishment, the strong-armed lass lifted the old man bodily on to his chair, roughly pulling him forward with one hand, while with the other she snatched off his red nightcap, and then, stooping over him, she blew with all the force of her lungs into his ear. 'That'll do, I guess, for this time,' said she, stepping back a pace or two, and watching complacently the effects of this strange treatment.

It certainly was effectual, for in less than a minute consciousness returned, ushered in by what might have passed for a deep groan, only it was more like a grunt.

'What ha' you been doing to me?' he piped feebly, and looking threateningly at his rough helper.

'Nawthing,' said she, 'only you've bin poorly agin, and I've bin and brought you to, you silly old man.'

'Oh,' he growled, 'and a nice way of bringing to you've got; but I'll make it all straight with you some of these days. Go along, what d'ye stand staring at! But where's my cap, you witch! you want me to catch my death o' cold, do ye?'

A sharp retort seemed to rise to the girl's lips: but perhaps she remembered the stranger in the 'tail-coat,' and therefore refrained. Silently and contemptuously she picked up the cap, and replaced it on my grandfather's bald head, and then vanished.

This was the first scene I witnessed in my grandfather's house, and I shall pass over very briefly the history of the week that I remained in the neighbourhood.

But first let me explain, that though reduced to a state of pitiable bodily helplessness, it did not appear to me that the mind of my aged relative was radically weakened. Certainly, the sharp and incessant grasping after money, which I suppose had marked him through life as a miser, and the sense of his importance as a rich man, together with his love of arbitrary tyranny, a specimen of which I had witnessed so many years before, and which had been at the foundation of my poor mother's errors and sufferings—these clung to him in his extremity; and it was a daily and hourly source of inexpressible wretchedness to him that, retaining the will, he had lost the power of exercising his propensities, and that, according as he had meted to others, was the same measure meted to him again.

The death of my aunt Martha was the first blow which fell with any weight on the old farmer; for though she had exercised some control over him, she had inherited too much of his own thrifty disposition not to be his faithful slave and coadjutor. The death of his married daughter, which left him childless, did not afflict him so severely, however, as did the after marriage of his son-in-law, Randall, to a second wife. Then, as I was given to understand, his rage rose almost to insanity; and, threatening disinheritance in case of disobedience, he insisted on taking to his home the only child of the former marriage. It was thus that my cousin, who has already been introduced by name as 'Polly Randell,' became the drudge and companion of our grandfather.

She was, as the attorney had told me, a mere girl, but her will was as strong and her temper as determined as the old farmer's; and by the time she became a woman, from being the sport of tyranny, she had learned to tyrannize. Meanwhile, in her way—a way which he highly ap-

proved—she had become so useful that her services could not easily be dispensed with by her grandfather. Alike ignorant of and disdainful of all feminine accomplishments, for which, indeed, there was little requirements in my grandfather's household, she saved him the full wages of a labouring man by her industry in the work of the farm. This was the state of affairs when the old farmer was suddenly stricken with paralysis. From that time he had been compelled to give up much of the management of his business to his masculine granddaughter, and had resigned himself into her hands. Not entirely, however; for, in the solitude of his chamber, thoughts of other days came into his mind. He remembered that he once had another daughter; perhaps he thought with remorse of his harsh rejection of her, and his cruel pertinacity of parental displeasure. At any rate, he remembered that she had been thrust from his door with an infant in her arms; that, a few years afterwards, that infant, grown into a boy, had been commended to his affection and forgiveness by his dying child—but all in vain. He had brooded over all this, till, irritated by neglect and stung with indifference, he had consulted his attorney at Fairtown about seeking for that boy; and the advertisement which drew me to Blankshire was the result of the conference. Having brought my needful explanation to this point, I continue my narrative.

The likeness, fancied or real, which my grandfather had discovered in my countenance to his once favourite daughter, and which produced the temporary emotion I have described, paved the way for his full acknowledgment of my claims to relationship when I placed before him my mother's portrait and the marriage certificate, and gave him some of the earlier recollections of my life.

'It is Nelly's boy,' he repeated; 'and I'll make a man on him, I will. He shall ha' the farm, stocking and all: and the silly old man has got money in the bank, too, Nelly's boy: money, money.' And his eyes twinkled as he spoke of money.

'We will not talk of this now,' I said, 'my cousin, you know——'

'Ah, Polly Randell. She is a good'un, she is. Ha' you seen her, Nelly's boy?'

I was saved the trouble of replying, for during our conversation I heard sounds of voices in conversation below, and of heavy boots in the passage and on the stairs, and at this moment the door opened, and there entered—Polly Randell herself.