NANCY LAMBERT, A STORY OF LANCASHIRE LIFE

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ANONYMOUS

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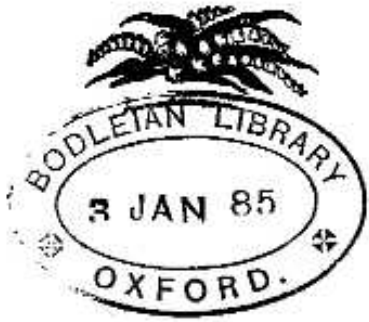
"Old Mrs. Royle fell in love with the child from the moment she first saw her."—*Page* 117.

NANCY LAMBERT.

A Story of Lancashire Life.



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CONTENTS.

NANCY LAMBERT.

CHAPTER I.

A SAD PICTURE.

IN a dark and miserable back kitchen stood a wretched looking woman making pretence "to wash up," as she called her ineffectual efforts to wipe a few cracked plates and dishes with a greasy dishcloth. Her dress consisted of bed-gown and torn apron, unwashed and unmended, a wincey petticoat, still older and more dirty,—not to mention boots out at toe and down at heel. Her iron-grey locks straggled over a grimy face, or hung in disorder behind a much worn bonnet, perched gipsy fashion on her head.

From time to time she paused in her work, as if looking out for an expected arrival or listening for a footstep. Presently the latch of the outer

door was raised, and the door itself opened somewhat slowly; whereupon the woman called hastily to the new comer,—

"Alice Ann! Alice Ann! is't thee come in at last? I've been waitin' of thee this hour and more. Hand me o'er thy money, wilt ta? Thee father 'll be shouting for his supper afore 'tis nigh ready, and we'll have t' street raised, as it were last neet, wi' his cursing and swearing and carrying on."

So speaking she came forward from the dirty inner kitchen, or scullery, just described, and held out her hand impatiently for the money she had just demanded of her daughter. She dropt her hand as quickly, however, on perceiving a large draper's parcel and paper bag in the hand of Alice.

"Now then," she screamed at the highest pitch of her rough voice, "what on earth have yo' been up to, Alice Ann? and where hast gotten all that rubbitch from? If thou's been spending a single ha'penny o' thy wages, I'll put both thee and thy parcel a top o' th' fire."

And she actually stepped up to the girl as if prepared to carry her threat into execution, for she was in a flaming passion. And one of