under that Will are to be administered, the fortune left by the Will is squandered away; the legatees under the Will are reduced to such a miserable condition that they would be sufficiently punished, if they had committed an enormous crime in having money left them; and the Will itself is made a dead letter. All through the deplorable cause, everything that everybody in it, except one man, knows already, is referred to that only one man who don't know it, to find out—all through the deplorable cause, everybody must have copies, over and over again, of everything that has accumulated about it in the way of cartloads of papers (or must pay for them without having them, which is the usual course, for nobody wants them); and must go down the middle and up again, through such an infernal country-dance of costs and fees and nonsense and corruption, as was never dreamed of in the wildest visions of a Witch's Sabbath. Equity sends questions to Law, Law sends questions back to Equity; Law finds it can't do this, Equity finds it can't do that; neither can so much as say it can't do anything, without this solicitor instructing and this counsel appearing for A, and that solicitor instructing and that counsel appearing for B; and so on through the whole alphabet, like the history of the Apple Pie. And thus, through years and years, and lives and lives, everything goes on, constantly beginning over and over again, and nothing ever ends. And we can't get out of the suit on any terms, for we are made parties to it, and *must be* parties to it, whether we like it or not. But it won't do to think of it! When my great Uncle, poor Tom Jarndyce, began to think of it, it was the beginning of the end!"

"The Mr. Jarndyce, sir, whose story I have heard?"

He nodded gravely. "I was his heir, and this was his house, Esther. When I came here, it was bleak, indeed. He had left the signs of his misery upon it."

"How changed it must be now!" I said.

"It had been called, before his time, the Peaks. He gave it its present name, and lived here shut up: day and night poring over the wicked heaps of papers in the suit, and hoping against hope to disentangle it from its mystification and bring it to a close. In the meantime, the place became dilapidated, the wind whistled through the cracked walls, the rain fell through the broken roof, the weeds choked the passage to the rotting door. When I brought what remained of him home here, the brains seemed to me to have been blown out of the house too; it was so shattered and ruined."

He walked a little to and fro, after saying this to himself with a shudder, and then looked at me, and brightened, and came and sat down again with his hands in his pockets.

"I told you this was the Growlery, my dear. Where was I?"

I reminded him, at the hopeful change he had made in Bleak House.

"Bleak House: true. There is, in that city of London there, some property of ours, which is much at this day what Bleak House was then,—I say property of ours, meaning of the Suit's, but I ought to call it the property of Costs; for Costs is the only power on earth that will ever get anything out of it now, or will ever know it for anything but an eyesore and a heartsore. It is a street of perishing blind houses, with their eyes stoned out; without a pane of glass, without so much as a window-frame, with the bare blank shutters tumbling from their hinges and falling asunder; the iron rails peeling away in flakes of rust; the chimneys sinking in; the stone steps to every door (and every door might be Death's Door) turning stagnant green; the very crutches on which the ruins are propped, decaying. Although Bleak House was not in Chancery, its master was, and it was stamped with the same seal. These are the Great Seal's impressions, my dear, all over England—the children know them!"

"How changed it is!" I said again.

"Why, so it is," he answered much more cheerfully; "and it is wisdom in you to keep me to the bright side of the picture." (The idea of my wisdom!) "These are things I never talk about, or even think about, excepting in the Growlery, here. If you consider it right to mention them to Rick and Ada," looking seriously at me, "you can. I leave it to your discretion, Esther."

"I hope, sir"—said I.

"I think you had better call me Guardian, my dear."

I felt that I was choking again—I taxed myself with it, "Esther, now, you know you are!" when he feigned to say this slightly, as if it were a whim, instead of a thoughtful tenderness. But I gave the housekeeping keys the least shake in the world as a reminder to myself, and folding my hands in a still more determined manner on the basket, looked at him quietly.

"I hope, Guardian," said I, "that you may not trust too much to my discretion. I hope you may not mistake me. I am afraid it will be a disappointment to you to know that I am not clever—but it really is the truth; and you would soon find it out if I had not the honesty to confess it."

He did not seem at all disappointed: quite the contrary. He told me, with a smile all over his face, that he knew me very well indeed, and that I was quite clever enough for him.

"I hope I may turn out so," said I, "but I am much afraid of it, Guardian."

"You are clever enough to be the good little woman of our lives here, my dear," he returned, playfully; "the little old woman of the Child's (I don't mean Skimpole's) Rhyme.

> "'Little old woman, and whither so high?'—
> 'To sweep the cobwebs out of the sky.'

You will sweep them so neatly out of *our* sky, in the course of your housekeeping, Esther, that one of these days, we shall have to abandon the Growlery, and nail up the door."

This was the beginning of my being called Old Woman, and Little Old Woman, and Cobweb, and Mrs. Shipton, and Mother Hubbard, and Dame Durden, and so many names of that sort, that my own name soon became quite lost among them.

"However," said Mr. Jarndyce, "to return to our gossip. Here's Rick, a fine young fellow full of promise. What's to be done with him?"

O my goodness, the idea of asking my advice on such a point!

"Here he is, Esther," said Mr. Jarndyce, comfortably putting his hands in his pockets and stretching out his legs. "He must have a profession; he must make some choice for himself. There will be a world more Wiglomeration about it, I suppose, but it must be done."

"More what, Guardian?" said I.

"More Wiglomeration," said he. "It's the only name I know for the thing. He is a ward in Chancery, my dear. Kenge and Carboy will have somethingto say about it; Master Somebody—a sort of ridiculous Sexton, digging graves for the merits of causes in a back room at the end of Quality Court, Chancery Lane—will have something to say about it; Counsel will have something to say about it; the Chancellor will have something to say about it; the

Satellites will have something to say about it; they will all have to be handsomely fee'd, all round, about it; the whole thing will be vastly ceremonious, wordy, unsatisfactory, and expensive, and I call it, in general, Wiglomeration. How mankind ever came to be afflicted with Wiglomeration, or for whose sins these young people ever fell into a pit of it, I don't know; so it is."

He began to rub his head again, and to hint that he felt the wind. But it was a delightful instance of his kindness towards me, that whether he rubbed his head, or walked about, or did both, his face was sure to recover its benignant expression as it looked at mine; and he was sure to turn comfortable again, and put his hands in his pockets and stretch out his legs.

"Perhaps it would be best, first of all," said I, "to ask Mr. Richard what he inclines to himself."

"Exactly so," he returned. "That's what I mean! You know, just accustom yourself to talk it over, with your tact and in your quiet way, with him and Ada, and see what you all make of it. We are sure to come at the heart of the matter by your means, little woman."

I really was frightened at the thought of the importance I was attaining, and the number of things that were being confided to me. I had not meant this at all; I had meant that he should speak to Richard. But of course I said nothing in reply, except that I would do my best, though I feared (I really felt it necessary to repeat this) that he thought me much more sagacious than I was. At which my guardian only laughed the pleasantest laugh I ever heard.

"Come!" he said, rising and pushing back his chair. "I think we may have done with the Growlery for one day! Only a concluding word. Esther, my dear, do you wish to ask me anything?"

He looked so attentively at me, that I looked attentively at him, and felt sure I understood him.

"About myself, sir?" said I.

"Yes."

"Guardian," said I, venturing to put my hand, which was suddenly colder than I could have wished, in his, "nothing! I am quite sure that if there were anything I ought to know, or had any need to know, I should not have to ask you to tell it to me. If my whole reliance and confidence were not placed in you, I must have a hard heart indeed. I have nothing to ask you; nothing in the world."

He drew my hand through his arm, and we went away to look for Ada. From that hour I felt quite easy with him, quite unreserved, quite content to know no more, quite happy.

We lived, at first, rather a busy life at Bleak House; for we had to become acquainted with many residents in and out of the neighbourhood who knew Mr. Jarndyce. It seemed to Ada and me that everybody knew him, who wanted to do anything with anybody else's money. It amazed us, when we began to sort his letters, and to answer some of them for him in the Growlery of a morning, to find how the great object of the lives of nearly all his correspondents appeared to be to form themselves into committees for getting in and laying out money. The ladies were as desperate as the gentlemen; indeed, I think they were even more so. They threw themselves into committees in the most impassioned manner, and collected subscriptions with a vehemence quite extraordinary. It appeared to us that some of them must pass their whole lives in dealing out subscription-cards to the whole Post-office Directory—shilling cards, half-crown cards, half-sovereign cards, penny cards. They wanted everything. They wanted wearing apparel, they wanted linen rags, they wanted money, they wanted coals, they wanted soup, they wanted interest, they wanted autographs, they wanted flannel, they wanted whatever Mr. Jarndyce had—or had not. Their objects were as various as their demands. They were going to raise new buildings, they were going to pay off debts on old buildings, they were going to establish in a picturesque building (engraving of proposed West Elevation attached) the Sisterhood of Mediæval Marys; they were going to give a testimonial to Mrs. Jellyby; they were going to have their Secretary's portrait painted, and presented to his mother-in-law, whose deep devotion to him was well known; they were going to get up everything, I really believe, from five hundred thousand tracts to an annuity, and from a marble monument to a silver tea-pot. They took a multitude of titles. They were the Women of England, the Daughters of Britain, the Sisters of all the Cardinal Virtues separately, the Females of America, the Ladies of a hundred denominations. They appeared to be always excited about canvassing and electing. They seemed to our poor wits, and according to their own accounts, to be constantly polling people by tens of thousands, yet never bringing their candidates in for anything. It made our heads ache to think, on the whole, what feverish lives they must lead.

Among the ladies who were most distinguished for this rapacious benevolence (if I may use the expression), was a Mrs. Pardiggle, who seemed, as I judged from the number of her letters to Mr. Jarndyce, to be almost as powerful a correspondent as Mrs. Jellyby herself. We observed that the wind always changed, when Mrs. Pardiggle became the subject of conversation: and that it invariably interrupted Mr. Jarndyce, and prevented his going any farther, when he had remarked that there were two classes of charitable people; one, the people who did a little and made a great deal of noise; the other, the people who did a great deal and made no noise at all. We were therefore curious to see Mrs. Pardiggle, suspecting her to be a type of the former class; and were glad when she called one day with her five young sons.

She was a formidable style of lady, with spectacles, a prominent nose, and a loud voice, who had the effect of wanting a great deal of room. And she really did, for she knocked down little chairs with her skirts that were quite a great way off. As only Ada and I were at home, we received her timidly; for she seemed to come in like cold weather, and to make the little Pardiggles blue as they followed.

"These, young ladies," said Mrs. Pardiggle, with great volubility, after the first salutations, "are my five boys. You may have seen their names in a printed subscription list (perhaps more than once), in the possession of our esteemed friend Mr. Jarndyce. Egbert, my eldest (twelve), is the boy who sent out his pocket-money, to the amount of five-and-threepence, to the Tockahoopo Indians. Oswald, my second (ten-and-a-half), is the child who contributed two-and-ninepence to the Great National Smithers Testimonial. Francis, my third (nine), one-and-sixpence-halfpenny; Felix, my fourth (seven), eightpence to the Superannuated Widows; Alfred, my youngest (five), has voluntarily enrolled himself in the Infant Bonds of Joy, and is pledged never, through life, to use tobacco in any form."

We had never seen such dissatisfied children. It was not merely that they were weazen and shrivelled—though they were certainly that too—but they looked absolutely ferocious with discon-

tent. At the mention of the Tockahoopo Indians, I could really have supposed Egbert to be one of the most baleful members of that tribe, he gave me such a savage frown. The face of each child, as the amount of his contribution was mentioned, darkened in a peculiarly vindictive manner, but his was by far the worst. I must except, however, the little recruit into the Infant Bonds of Joy, who was stolid and evenly miserable.

"You have been visiting, I understand," said Mrs. Pardiggle, "at Mrs. Jellyby's?"

We said yes, we had passed one night there.

"Mrs. Jellyby," pursued the lady, always speaking in the same demonstrative, loud, hard tone, so that her voice impressed my fancy as if it had a sort of spectacles on too—and I may take the opportunity of remarking that her spectacles were made the less engaging by her eyes being what Ada called "choking eyes," meaning very prominent: "Mrs. Jellyby is a benefactor to society, and deserves a helping hand. My boys have contributed to the African project—Egbert, one-and-six, being the entire allowance of nine weeks; Oswald, one-and-a-penny-halfpenny, being the same; the rest, according to their little means. Nevertheless, I do not go with Mrs. Jellyby in all things. I do not go with Mrs. Jellyby in her treatment of her young family. It has been noticed. It has been observed that her young family are excluded from participation in the objects to which she is devoted. She may be right, she may be wrong; but, right or wrong, this is not my course with *my* young family. I take them everywhere."

I was afterward convinced (and so was Ada) that from the ill-conditioned eldest child, these words extorted a sharp yell. He turned it off into a yawn, but it began as a yell.

"They attend Matins with me (very prettily done), at half-past six in the morning all the year round, including of course the depth of winter," said Mrs. Pardiggle rapidly, "and they are with me during the revolving duties of the day. I am a School lady, I am a Visiting lady, I am a Reading lady, I am a Distributing lady; I am on the local Linen Box Committee, and many general Committees; and my canvassing alone is very extensive—perhaps no one's more so. But they are my companions everywhere; and by these means they acquire that knowledge of the poor, and that capacity of doing charitable business in general—in short, that taste for the sort of thing—which will render them in after life a service to their neighbours, and a satisfaction to themselves. My young family are not frivolous; they expend the entire amount of their allowance, in subscriptions, under my direction; and they have attended as many public meetings, and listened to as many lectures, orations, and discussions, as generally fall to the lot of few grown people. Alfred (five), who, as I mentioned, has of his own election joined the Infant Bonds of Joy, was one of the very few children who manifested consciousness on that occasion, after a fervid address of two hours from the chairman of the evening."

Alfred glowered at us as if he never could, or would, forgive the injury of that night.

"You may have observed, Miss Summerson," said Mrs. Pardiggle, "in some of the lists to which I have referred, in the possession of our esteemed friend Mr. Jarndyce, that the names of my young family are concluded with the name of O. A. Pardiggle, F.R.S., one pound. That is their father. We usually observe the same routine. I put down my mite first; then my young family enrol their contributions, according to their ages and their little means; and then Mr. Pardiggle brings up the rear. Mr. Pardiggle is happy to throw in his limited donation, under my direction; and thus things are made, not only pleasant to ourselves, but, we trust, improving to others."

Suppose Mr. Pardiggle were to dine with Mr. Jellyby, and suppose Mr. Jellyby were to relieve his mind after dinner to Mr. Pardiggle, would Mr. Pardiggle, in return, make any confidential communication to Mr. Jellyby? I was quite confused to find myself thinking this, but it came into my head.

"You are very pleasantly situated here!" said Mrs. Pardiggle.

We were glad to change the subject; and, going to the window, pointed out the beauties of the prospect, on which the spectacles appeared to me to rest with curious indifference.

"You know Mr. Gusher?" said our visitor.

We were obliged to say that we had not the pleasure of Mr. Gusher's acquaintance.

"The loss is yours, I assure you," said Mrs. Pardiggle, with her commanding deportment. "He is a very fervid impassioned speaker—full of fire! Stationed in a waggon on this lawn now, which, from the shape of the land, is naturally adapted to a public meeting, he would improve almost any occasion you could mention for hours and hours! By this time, young ladies," said Mrs. Pardiggle, moving back to her chair, and overturning, as if by invisible agency, a little round table at a considerable distance with my work-basket on it, "by this time you have found me out, I dare say?"

This was really such a confusing question that Ada looked at me in perfect dismay. As to the guilty nature of my own consciousness, after what I had been thinking, it must have been expressed in the color of my cheeks.

"Found out, I mean," said Mrs. Pardiggle, "the prominent point in my character. I am aware that it is so prominent as to be discoverable immediately. I lay myself open to detection, I know. Well! I freely admit, I am a woman of business. I love hard work; I enjoy hard work. The excitement does me good. I am so accustomed and inured to hard work, that I don't know what fatigue is."

We murmured that it was very astonishing and very gratifying; or something to that effect. I don't think we knew why it was either, but this was what our politeness expressed.

"I do not understand what it is to be tired; you cannot tire me if you try!" said Mrs. Pardiggle. "The quantity of exertion (which is no exertion to me), the amount of business (which I regard as nothing) that I go through, sometimes astonishes myself. I have seen my young family, and Mr. Pardiggle, quite worn out with witnessing it, when I may truly say I have been as fresh as a lark!"

If that dark-visaged eldest boy could look more malicious than he had already looked, this was the time when he did it. I observed that he doubled his right fist, and delivered a secret blow into the crown of his cap, which was under his left arm.

"This gives me a great advantage when I am making my rounds," said Mrs. Pardiggle. "If I find a person unwilling to hear what I have to say, I tell that person, directly, 'I am incapable of fatigue, my good friend, I am never tired, and I mean to go on until I have done.' It answers admirably! Miss Summerson, I hope I shall have your assistance in my visiting rounds immediately, and Miss Clare's very soon?"

At first I tried to excuse myself, for the present, on the general ground of having occupations to attend to, which I must not neglect, But as this was an ineffectual protest, I then said, more particularly, that I was not sure of my qualifications.

That I was inexperienced in the art of adapting my mind to minds very differently situated, and addressing them from suitable points of view. That I had not that delicate knowledge of the heart which must be essential to such a work. That I had much to learn, myself, before I could teach others, and that I could not confide in my good intentions alone. For these reasons, I thought it best to be useful as I could, and to render what kind services I could, to those immediately about me; and to try to let that circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself. All this I said, with anything but confidence; because Mrs. Pardiggle was much older than I, and had great experience, and was so very military in her manners.

"You are wrong, Miss Summerson," said she: "but perhaps you are not equal to hard work, or the excitement of it; and that makes a vast difference. If you would like to see how I go through my work, I am now about—with my young family—to visit a brickmaker in the neighbourhood (a very bad character), and shall be glad to take you with me. Miss Clare also, if she will do me the favor."

Ada and I interchanged looks, and, as we were going out in any case, accepted the offer. When we hastily returned from putting on our bonnets, we found the young family languishing in a corner, and Mrs. Pardiggle sweeping about the room, knocking down nearly all the light objects it contained. Mrs. Pardiggle took possession of Ada, and I followed with the family.

Ada told me afterwards that Mrs. Pardiggle talked in the same loud tone (that, indeed, I overheard), all the way to the brickmaker's about an exciting contest which she had for two or three years waged against another lady, relative to the bringing in of their rival candidates for a pension somewhere. There had been a quantity of printing, and promising, and proxying, and polling; and it appeared to have imparted great liveliness to all concerned, except the pensioners—who were not elected yet.

I am very fond of being confided in by children, and am happy in being usually favored in that respect, but on this occasion it gave me great uneasiness. As soon as we were out of doors, Egbert, with the manner of a little footpad, demanded a shilling of me, on the ground that his pocket-money was "boned" from him. On my pointing out the great impropriety of the word, especially in connexion with his parent (for he added sulkily "By her!"), he pinched me and said "O then! Now! Who are you! *You* wouldn't like it, I think? What does she make a sham for, and pretend to give me money, and take it away again? Why do you call it *my* allowance, and never let me spend it?" These exasperating questions so inflamed his mind, and the minds of Oswald and Francis, that they all pinched me at once, and in a dreadfully expert way; screwing up such little pieces of my arms that I could hardly forbear crying out. Felix, at the same time, stamped upon my toes. And the Bond of Joy, who on account of always having the whole of his little income anticipated, stood in fact pledged to abstain from cakes as well as tobacco, so swelled with grief and rage when we passed a pastry-cook's shop, that he terrified me by becoming purple. I never underwent so much, both in body and mind, in the course of a walk with young people, as from these unnaturally constrained children, when they paid me the compliment of being natural.

I was glad when we came to the brickmaker's house; though it was one of a cluster of wretched hovels in a brickfield, with pigsties close to the broken windows, and miserable little gardens before the doors, growing nothing but stagnant pools. Here and there, an old tub was put to catch the droppings of rain-water from a roof, or they were banked up with mud into a little pond like a large dirt-pie. At the doors and windows, some men and women lounged or prowled about, and took little notice of us, except to laugh to one another, or to say something as we passed, about gentlefolks minding their own business, and not troubling their heads and muddying their shoes with coming to look after other people's.

Mrs. Pardiggle, leading the way with a great show of moral determination, and talking with much volubility about the untidy habits of the people (though I doubted if the best of us could have been tidy in such a place), conducted us into a cottage at the farthest corner, the ground-floor room of which we nearly filled. Besides ourselves, there were in this damp offensive room—a woman with a black eye, nursing a poor little gasping baby by the fire; a man, all stained with clay and mud, and looking very dissipated, lying at full length on the ground, smoking a pipe; a powerful young man, fastening a collar on a dog; and a bold girl, doing some kind of washing in very dirty water. They all looked up at us as we came in, and the woman seemed to turn her face towards the fire, as if to hide her bruised eye; nobody gave us any welcome.

"Well, my friends," said Mrs. Pardiggle; but her voice had not a friendly sound, I thought; it was much too business-like and systematic. "How do you do, all of you? I am here again. I told you, you couldn't tire me, you know. I am fond of hard work, and am true to my word."

"There an't," growled the man on the floor, whose head rested on his hand as he stared at us, "any more on you to come in, is there?"

"No, my friend," said Mrs. Pardiggle, seating herself on one stool, and knocking down another. "We are all here."

"Because I thought there warn't enough of you, perhaps?" said the man, with his pipe between his lips, as he looked round upon us.

The young man and the girl both laughed. Two friends of the young man whom we had attracted to the doorway, and who stood there with their hands in their pockets, echoed the laugh noisily.

"You can't tire me, good people," said Mrs. Pardiggle to these latter. "I enjoy hard work; and the harder you make mine, the better I like it."

"Then make it easy for her!" growled the man upon the floor. "I wants it done, and over. I wants a end of these liberties took with my place. I wants a end of being drawed like a badger. Now you're a going to poll-pry and question according to custom—I know what you're a going to be up to. Well! You haven't got no occasion to be up to it. I'll save you the trouble. Is my daughter a washin? Yes, she *is* a washin. Look at the water. Smell it! That's wot we drinks. How do you like it, and what do you think of gin, instead! An't my place dirty? Yes, it is dirty—it's nat'rally dirty, and it's nat'rally onwholesome; and we've had five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much the better for them, and for us besides. Have I read the little book wot you left? No, I an't read the little book wot you left. There an't nobody here as knows how to read it; and if there wos, it wouldn't be suitable to me. It's a book fit for a babby, and I'm not a babby. If you was to leave me a doll, I shouldn't nuss it. How have I been conducting of myself? Why, I've been drunk for three days; and I'd a been drunk four, if I'd a had the money. Don't I never mean for to go

to church? No, I don't never mean for to go to church. I shouldn't be expected there, if I did; the beadle s too gen-teel for me. And how did my wife get that black eye? Why, I giv' it her; and if she says I didn't, she's a Lie!"

He had pulled his pipe out of his mouth to say all this, and he now turned over on his other side, and smoked again. Mrs. Pardiggle, who had been regarding him through her spectacles with a forcible composure, calculated, I could not help thinking, to increase his antagonism, pulled out a good book, as if it were a constable's staff, and took the whole family into custody. I mean into religious custody, of course; but she really did it, as if she were an inexorable moral Policeman carrying them all off to a station house.

Ada and I were very uncomfortable. We both felt intrusive and out of place; and we both thought that Mrs. Pardiggle would have got on infinitely better, if she had not had such a mechanical way of taking possession of people. The children sulked and stared; the family took no notice of us whatever, except when the young man made the dog bark: which he usually did, when Mrs. Pardiggle was most emphatic. We both felt painfully sensible that between us and these people there was an iron barrier, which could not be removed by our new friend. By whom, or how, it could be removed, we did not know; but we knew that. Even what she read and said, seemed to us to be ill chosen for such auditors, if it had been imparted ever so modestly and with ever so much tact. As to the little book to which the man on the floor had referred, we acquired a knowledge of it afterwards; and Mr. Jarndyce said he doubted if Robinson Crusoe could have read it, though he had had no other on his desolate island.

We were much relieved, under these circumstances, when Mrs. Pardiggle left off. The man on the floor then turning his head round again, said morosely,

"Well! You've done, have you?"

"For to-day, I have, my friend. But I am never fatigued. I shall come to you again, in your regular order," returned Mrs. Pardiggle with demonstrative cheerfulness.

"So long as you goes now," said he, folding his arms and shutting his eyes with an oath, "you may do wot you like!"

Mrs. Pardiggle accordingly rose, and made a little vortex in the confined room from which the pipe itself very narrowly escaped. Taking one of her young family in each hand, and telling the others to follow closely, and expressing her hope that the brickmaker and all his house would be improved when she saw them next, she then proceeded to another cottage. I hope it is not unkind in me to say that she certainly did make, in this, as in everything else, a show that was not conciliatory, of doing charity by wholesale, and of dealing in it to a large extent.

She supposed that we were following her; but as soon as the space was left clear, we approached the woman sitting by the fire, to ask if the baby were ill.

She only looked at it as it lay on her lap. We had observed before, that when she looked at it she covered her discolored eye with her hand, as though she wished to separate any association with noise and violence and ill-treatment, from the poor child.

Ada, whose gentle heart was moved by its appearance, bent down to touch its little face. As she did so I saw what happened and drew her back. The child died.

"O Esther!" cried Ada, sinking on her knees beside it. "Look here! O Esther, my love, the little thing! The suffering, quiet, pretty little thing! I am so sorry for it. I am so sorry for the mother. I never saw a sight so pitiful as this before! O baby, baby!"

Such compassion, such gentleness, as that with which she bent down, weeping, and put her hand upon the mother's, might have softened any mother's heart that ever beat. The woman at first gazed at her in astonishment, and then burst into tears.

Presently I took the light burden from her lap; did what I could to make the baby's rest the prettier and gentler; laid it on a shelf, and covered it with my own handkerchief. We tried to comfort the mother, and we whispered to her what Our Saviour said of children. She answered nothing, but sat weeping—weeping very much.

When I turned, I found that the young man had taken out the dog, and was standing at the door looking in upon us; with dry eyes, but quiet. The girl was quiet too, and sat in a corner looking on the ground. The man had risen. He still smoked his pipe with an air of defiance, but he was silent.

An ugly woman, very poorly clothed, hurried in while I was glancing at them, and coming straight up to the mother, said, "Jenny! Jenny!" The mother rose on being so addressed, and fell upon the woman's neck.

She also had upon her face and arms the marks of ill-usage. She had no kind of grace about her, but the grace of sympathy; but when she condoled with the woman, and her own tears fell, she wanted no beauty. I say condoled, but her only words were "Jenny! Jenny!" All the rest was in the tone in which she said them.

I thought it very touching to see these two women, coarse and shabby and beaten, so united; to see what they could be to one another; to see how they felt for one another; how the heart of each to each was softened by the hard trials of their lives. I think the best side of such people is almost hidden from us. What the poor are to the poor is little known, except to themselves and GOD.

We felt it better to withdraw and leave them uninterrupted. We stole out quietly, and without notice from any one except the man. He was leaning against the wall near the door; and finding that there was scarcely room for us to pass, went out before us. He seemed to want to hide that he did this on our account, but we perceived that he did, and thanked him. He made no answer.

Ada was so full of grief all the way home, and Richard, whom we found at home, was so distressed to see her in tears (though he said to me when she was not present, how beautiful it was too!) that we arranged to return at night with some little comforts, and repeat our visit at the brickmaker's house. We said as little as we could to Mr. Jarndyce, but the wind changed directly.

Richard accompanied us at night to the scene of our morning expedition. On our way there, we had to pass a noisy drinking-house, where a number of men were flocking about the door. Among them, and prominent in some dispute, was the father of the little child. At a short distance, we passed the young man and the dog, in congenial company. The sister was standing laughing and talking with some other young women, at the corner of the row of cottages; but she seemed ashamed, and turned away as we went by.

We left our escort within sight of the brickmaker's dwelling, and proceeded by ourselves. When we came to the door, we found the woman who had brought such consolation with her, standing there, looking anxiously out.

"It's you, young ladies, is it?" she said in a whisper. "I'm a watching for my master. My heart's in my mouth. If he was to catch me away from home, he'd pretty near murder me."

"Do you mean your husband?" said I.

"Yes, miss, my master. Jenny's asleep, quite worn out. She's scarcely had the child out of her lap, poor thing, these seven days and nights, except when I've been able to take it for a minute or two."

And she gave way for us, went softly in, and put what we had brought, near the miserable bed on which the mother slept. No effort had been made to clean the room—it seemed in its nature almost hopeless of being clean; but the small waxen form, from which so much solemnity diffused itself, had been composed afresh, and washed, and neatly dressed in some fragments of white linen; and on my handkerchief, which still covered the poor baby, a little bunch of sweet herbs had been laid by the same rough scarred hands, so lightly, so tenderly.

"May Heaven reward you!" we said to her. "You are a good woman."

"Me, young ladies?" she returned with surprise. "Hush! Jenny, Jenny!"

The mother had moaned in her sleep, and moved. The sound of the familiar voice seemed to calm her again. She was quiet once more.

How little I thought, when I raised my handkerchief to look upon the tiny sleeper underneath, and seemed to see a halo shine around the child through Ada's drooping hair as her pity bent her head—how little I thought in whose unquiet bosom that handkerchief would come to lie, after covering the motionless and peaceful breast! I only thought that perhaps the Angel of the child might not be all unconscious of the woman who replaced it with so compassionate a hand; not all unconscious of her presently, when we had taken leave, and left her at the door, by turns looking, and listening in terror for herself, and saying in her old soothing manner, "Jenny, Jenny!"

CHAPTER IX.

SIGNS AND TOKENS.

I DON'T know how it is, I seem to be always writing about myself. I mean all the time to write about other people, and I try to think about myself as little as possible, and I'm sure when I find myself coming into the story again, I am really vexed and say, "Dear, dear, you tiresome little creature, I wish you wouldn't!" but it is all of no use. I hope any one who may read what I write, will understand that if these pages contain a great deal about me, I can only suppose it must be because I have really something to do with them, and can't be kept out.

My darling and I read together, and worked, and practised; and found so much employment for our time, that the winter days flew by us like bright-winged birds. Generally in the afternoons, and always in the evenings, Richard gave us his company. Although he was one of the most restless creatures in the world, he certainly was very fond of our society.

He was very, very, very fond of Ada. I mean it, and I had better say it at once. I had never seen any young people falling in love before, but I found them out quite soon. I could not say so, of course, or show that I knew anything about it. On the contrary, I was so demure, and used to seem so unconscious, that sometimes I considered within myself while I was sitting at work, whether I was not growing quite deceitful.

But there was no help for it. All I had to do was to be quiet, and I was as quiet as a mouse. They were as quiet as mice, too, so far as any words were concerned; but the innocent manner in which they relied more and more upon me, as they took more and more to one another, was so charming, that I had great difficulty in not shewing how it interested me.

"Our dear little old woman is such a capital old woman," Richard would say, coming up to meet me in the garden early, with pleasant laugh and perhaps the least tinge of a blush, "that I can't get on without her. Before I begin my harum-scarum day —grinding away at these books and instruments, and then galloping up hill and down dale, all the country round, like a highwayman—it does me so much good to come and have a steady walk with our comfortable friend, that here I am again!"

"You know, Dame Durden, dear," Ada would say at night, with her head upon my shoulder, and the firelight shining in her thoughtful eyes, "I don't want to talk when we come up-stairs here. Only to sit a little while, thinking, with your dear face for company; and to hear the wind, and remember the poor sailors at sea——"

Ah! Perhaps Richard was going to be a sailor. We had talked it over very often, now, and there was some talk of gratifying the inclination of his childhood for the sea. Mr. Jarndyce had written to a relation of the family, a great Sir Leicester Dedlock, for his interest in Richard's favor, generally; and Sir Leicester had replied in a gracious manner, "that he would be happy to advance the prospects of the young gentleman if it should ever prove to be within his power, which was not at all probable—and that my Lady sent her compliments to the young gentleman (to whom she perfectly remembered that she was allied by remote consanguinity), and trusted that he would ever do his duty in any honorable profession to which he might devote himself."

"So I apprehend it's pretty clear," said Richard to me, "that I shall have to work my own way. Never mind! Plenty of people have had to do that before now, and have done it. I only wish I had the command of a clipping privateer, to begin with, and could carry off the Chancellor and keep him on short allowance until he gave judgment in our cause. He'd find himself growing thin, if he didn't look sharp!"

With a buoyancy and hopefulness and a gaiety that hardly ever flagged, Richard had a carelessness in his character that quite perplexed me—principally because he mistook it, in such a very odd way, for prudence. It entered into all his calculations about money, in a singular manner, which I don't think I can better explain than by reverting for a moment to our loan to Mr. Skimpole.

Mr. Jarndyce had ascertained the amount, either from Mr. Skimpole himself or from Coavinses, and had placed the money in my hands with instructions to me to retain my own part of it and hand the rest to Richard. The number of little acts of thoughtless expenditure which Richard justified by the recovery of his ten pounds, and the number of times he talked to me as if he had saved or realised that amount, would form a sum in simple addition.

"My prudent Mother Hubbard, why not?" he said to me, when he wanted, without the least consideration, to bestow five pounds on the brickmaker. "I made ten pounds, clear, out of Coavinses' business."

"How was that?" said I.

"Why, I got rid of ten pounds which I was quite content to get rid of, and never expected to see any more. You don't deny that?"

"No," said I.

"Very well! Then I came into possession of ten pounds—"

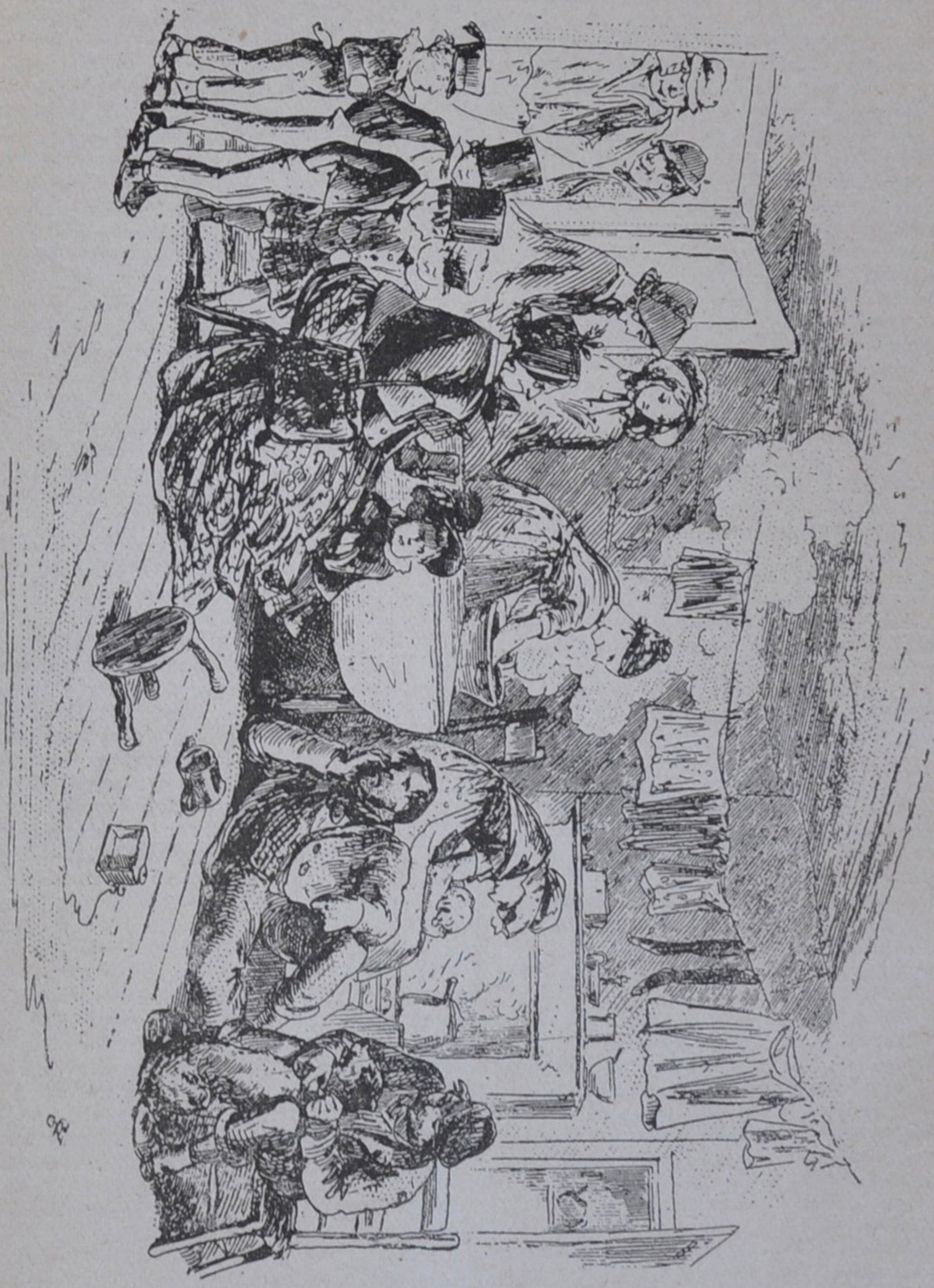
"The same ten pounds," I hinted.

"That has nothing to do with it!" returned Richard. "I have got ten pounds more than I expected to have, and consequently I can afford to spend it without being particular."

In exactly the same way, when he was persuaded out of the sacrifice of these five pounds by being convinced that it would do no good, he carried that sum to his credit and drew upon it.

"Let me see!" he would say. "I saved five pounds out of the brickmaker's affair; so, if I have a good rattle to London and back in a post-chaise, and put that down at four pounds, I shall have saved one. And it's a very good thing to save one, let me tell you: a penny saved, is a penny got!"

I believe Richard's was as frank and generous a nature as there possibly can be. He was ardent and brave, and, in the midst of all his wild restlessness, was so gentle, that I knew him like a brother in a few weeks. His gentleness was natural to him, and would have shown itself, abundantly, even without Ada's influence; but, with it, he became one of the most winning of companions, always so ready to be interested, and always so happy, sanguine, and light-hearted. I am sure that I, sitting with them, and walking with them, and talking with them, and noticing from day to day how they went on, falling deeper and deeper in love, and saying nothing about it, and each shyly thinking that this love was the greatest of secrets, perhaps not yet suspected even by the other—I am sure that I was scarcely less enchanted than they were, and scarcely less pleased with the pretty dream.



THE VISIT AT THE BRICKMAKER'S.

We were going on in this way, when one morning at breakfast Mr. Jarndyce received a letter, and looking at the superscription said, "From Boythorn? Aye, aye!" and opened and read it with evident pleasure, announcing to us in a parenthesis, when he was about half-way through, that Boythorn was "coming down" on a visit. Now, who was Boythorn? we all thought. And I dare say we all thought, too—I am sure I did, for one—would Boythorn at all interfere with what was going forward?

"I went to school with this fellow, Lawrence Boythorn," said Mr. Jarndyce, tapping the letter as he laid it on the table, "more than five-and-forty years ago. He was then the most impetuous boy in the world, and he is now the most impetuous man. He was then the loudest boy in the world, and he is now the loudest man. He was then the heartiest and sturdiest boy in the world, and he is now the heartiest and sturdiest man. He is a tremendous fellow."

"In stature, sir?" asked Richard.

"Pretty well, Rick, in that respect," said Mr. Jarndyce; "being some ten years older than I, and a couple of inches taller, with his head thrown back like an old soldier, his stalwart chest squared, his hands like a clean blacksmith's, and his lungs!—there's no simile for his lungs. Talking, laughing, or snoring, they make the beams of the house shake."

As Mr. Jarndyce sat enjoying the image of his friend Boythorn, we observed the favorable omen that there was not the least indication of any change in the wind.

"But it's the inside of the man, the warm heart of the man, the passion of the man, the fresh blood of the man, Rick—and Ada, and little Cobweb too, for you are all interested in a visitor!—that I speak of," he pursued. "His language is as sounding as his voice. He is always in extremes; perpetually in the superlative degree. In his condemnation he is all ferocity. You might suppose him to be an Ogre, from what he says; and I believe he has the reputation of one with some people. There! I tell you no more of him beforehand. You must not be surprised to see him take me under his protection; for he has never forgotten that I was a low boy at school, and that our friendship began in his knocking two of my head tyrant's teeth out (he says six) before breakfast. Boythorn and his man," to me, "will be here this afternoon, my dear."

I took care that the necessary preparations were made for Mr. Boythorn's reception, and we looked forward to his arrival with some curiosity. The afternoon wore away, however, and he did not appear. The dinner-hour arrived, and still he did not appear. The dinner was put back an hour, and we were sitting round the fire with no light but the blaze, when the hall-door suddenly burst open, and the hall resounded with these words, uttered with the greatest vehemence and in a stentorian tone:

"We have been misdirected, Jarndyce, by a most abandoned ruffian, who told us to take the turning to the right instead of to the left. He is the most intolerable scoundrel on the face of the earth. His father must have been a most consummate villain, ever to have had such a son. I would have that fellow shot without the least remorse!"

"Did he do it on purpose?" Mr. Jarndyce enquired.

"I have not the slightest doubt that the scoundrel has passed his whole existence in misdirecting travellers!" returned the other. "By my soul, I thought him the worst-looking dog I had ever beheld, when he was telling me to take the turning to the right. And yet I stood before that fellow face to face, and didn't knock his brains out!"

"Teeth, you mean?" said Mr. Jarndyce.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Lawrence Boythorn, really making the whole house vibrate. What, you have not forgotten it yet! Ha, ha, ha!—And that was another most consummate vagabond! By my soul, the countenance of that fellow, when he was a boy, was the blackest image of perfidy, cowardice, and cruelty ever set up as a scarecrow in a field of scoundrels. If I were to meet that most unparalleled despot in the streets to-morrow, I would fell him like a rotten tree!"

"I have no doubt of it," said Mr. Jarndyce. "Now, will you come up-stairs?"

"By my soul, Jarndyce," returned his guest, who seemed to refer to his watch, "if you had been married, I would have turned back at the garden gate, and gone away to the remotest summits of the Himalaya Mountains, sooner than I would have presented myself at this unseasonable hour."

"Not quite so far, I hope?" said Mr. Jarndyce.

"By my life and honor, yes!" cried the visitor. "I wouldn't be guilty of the audacious insolence of keeping a lady of the house waiting all this time, for any earthly consideration I would infinitely rather destroy myself—infinitely rather!"

Talking thus, they went up-stairs; and presently we heard him in his bedroom thundering "Ha, ha, ha!" and again "Ha, ha, ha!" until the flattest echo in the neighbourhood seemed to catch the contagion, and to laugh as enjoyingly as he did, or as we did when we heard him laugh.

We all conceived a prepossession in his favor; for there was a sterling quality in this laugh, and in his vigorous healthy voice, and in the roundness and fulness with which he uttered every word he spoke, and in the very fury of his superlatives, which seemed to go off like blank cannons and hurt nothing. But we were hardly prepared to have it so confirmed by his appearance, when Mr. Jarndyce presented him. He was not only a very handsome old gentleman—upright and stalwart as he had been described to us—with a massive grey head, a fine composure of face when silent, a figure that might have become corpulent but for his being so continually in earnest that he gave it no rest, and a chin that might have subsided into a double chin but for the vehement emphasis in which it was constantly required to assist; but he was such a true gentleman in his manner, so chivalrously polite, his face was lighted by a smile of so much sweetness and tenderness, and it seemed so plain that he had nothing to hide, but showed himself exactly as he was—incapable (as Richard said) of anything on a limited scale, and firing away with those blank great guns, because he carried no small arms whatever—that really I could not help looking at him with equal pleasure as he sat at dinner, whether he smilingly conversed with Ada and me, or was led by Mr. Jarndyce into some great volley of superlatives, or threw up his head like a bloodhound, and gave out that tremendous Ha, ha, ha!

"You have brought your bird with you, I suppose?" said Mr. Jarndyce.

"By Heaven, he is the most astonishing bird in Europe!" replied the other. "He *is* the most wonderful creature! I wouldn't take ten thousand guineas for that bird. I have left an annuity for his sole support, in case he should outlive me. He is, in sense and attachment, a phenomenon. And his father before him was one of the most astonishing birds that ever lived."

The subject of this laudation was a very little canary, who was so tame that he was brought down by Mr.

Boythorn's man, on his forefinger, and, after taking a gentle flight round the room, alighted on his master's head. To hear Mr. Boythorn presently expressing the most implacable and passionate sentiments, with this fragile mite of a creature quietly perched on his forehead, was to have a good illustration of his character, I thought.

"By my soul, Jarndyce," he said, very gently holding up a bit of bread to the canary to peck at, "if I were in your place, I would seize every Master in Chancery by the throat to-morrow morning, and shake him until his money rolled out of his pockets, and his bones rattled in his skin. I would have a settlement out of somebody, by fair means or by foul. If you would empower me to do it, I would do it for you with the greatest satisfaction!" (All this time, the very small canary was eating out of his hand.)

"I thank you, Lawrence, but the suit is hardly at such a point at present," returned Mr. Jarndyce, laughing, "that it would be greatly advanced even by the legal process of shaking the Bench and the whole Bar."

"There never was such an infernal cauldron as that Chancery, on the face of the earth?" said Mr. Boythorn. "Nothing but a mine below it on a busy day in term time, with all its records, rules, and precedents collected in it, and every functionary belonging to it also, high and low, upward and downward, from its son the Accountant-General to its father the Devil, and the whole blown to atoms with ten thousand hundredweight of gunpowder, would reform it in the least!"

It was impossible not to laugh at the energetic gravity with which he recommended this strong measure of reform. When we laughed, he threw up his head and shook his broad chest, and again the whole country seemed to echo to his Ha, ha, ha! It had not the least effect in disturbing the bird, whose sense of security was complete; and who hopped about the table with its quick head now on this side and now on that, turning its bright sudden eye on its master, as if he were no more than another bird.

"But how do you and your neighbour get on about the disputed right of way?" said Mr. Jarndyce. "You are not free from the toils of the law yourself."

"The fellow has brought actions against *me* for trespass, and I have brought actions against *him* for trespass," returned Mr. Boythorn. "By Heaven, he is the proudest fellow breathing. It is morally impossible that his name can be Sir Leicester. It must be Sir Lucifer."

"Complimentary to our distant relation!" said my Guardian laughingly, to Ada and Richard.

"I would beg Miss Clare's pardon and Mr. Carstone's pardon," resumed our visitor, "if I were not reassured by seeing in the fair face of the lady, and the smile of the gentleman, that it is quite unnecessary, and that they keep their distant relation at a comfortable distance."

"Or he keeps us," suggested Richard.

"By my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Boythorn, suddenly firing another volley, "that fellow is, and his father was, and his grandfather was, the most stiff-necked, arrogant, imbecile, pig-headed numskull, ever, by some inexplicable mistake of Nature, born in any station of life but a walking-stick's! The whole of that family are the most solemnly conceited and consummate blockheads!—But it's no matter; he should not shut up my path, if he were fifty baronets melted into one, and living in a hundred Chesney Wolds, one within another, like the ivory balls in a Chinese carving. The fellow, by his agent, or secretary, or somebody, writes to me, 'Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, presents his compliments to Mr. Lawrence Boythorn, and has to call his attention to the fact that the green pathway by the old parsonage-house, now the property of Mr. Lawrence Boythorn, is Sir Leicester's right of way, being in fact a portion of the park of Chesney Wold; and that Sir Leicester finds it convenient to close up the same.' I write to the fellow, 'Mr. Lawrence Boythorn presents his compliments to Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, and has to call *his* attention to the fact that he totally denies the whole of Sir Leicester Dedlock's positions on every possible subject, and has to add, in reference to closing up the pathway, that he will be glad to see the man who may undertake to do it.' The fellow sends a most abandoned villain with one eye, to construct a gateway. I play upon that execrable scoundrel with a fire-engine, until the breath is nearly driven out of his body. The fellow erects a gate in the night. I chop it down and burn it in the morning. He sends his myrmidons to come over the fence, and pass and repass. I catch them in humane man-traps, fire split peas at their legs, play upon them with the engine—resolve to free mankind from the insupportable burden of the existence of those lurking ruffians. He brings actions for trespass; I bring actions for trespass. He brings actions for assault and battery; I defend them, and continue to assault and batter. Ha, ha, ha!"

To hear him say all this with unimaginable energy, one might have thought him the angriest of mankind. To see him, at the very same time, looking at the bird now perched upon his thumb, and softly smoothing its feathers with his forefinger, one might have thought him the gentlest. To hear him laugh, and see the broad good-nature of his face then, one might have supposed that he had not a care in the world, or a dispute, or a dislike, but that his whole existence was a summer joke.

"No, no," he said, "no closing up of my paths, by any Dedlock! Though I willingly confess," here he softened in a moment, "that Lady Dedlock is the most accomplished lady in the world, to whom I would do any homage that a plain gentleman, and no baronet with a head seven hundred years thick, may. A man who joined his regiment at twenty, and, within a week, challenged the most imperious and presumptuous coxcomb of a commanding officer that ever drew the breath of life through a tight waist—and got broke for it—is not the man to be walked over, by all the Sir Lucifers, dead or alive, locked or unlocked. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nor the man to allow his junior to be walked over, either?" said my Guardian.

"Most assuredly not!" said Mr. Boythorn, clapping him on the shoulder with an air of protection, that had something serious in it, though he laughed. "He will stand by the low boy, always. Jarndyce, you may rely upon him! But, speaking of this trespass—with apologies to Miss Clare and Miss Summerson for the length at which I have pursued so dry a subject—is there nothing for me from your men, Kenge and Carboy?"

"I think not, Esther?" said Mr. Jarndyce.

"Nothing, Guardian."

"Much obliged!" said Mr. Boythorn. "Had no need to ask, after even my slight experience of Miss Summerson's forethought for every one about her." (They all encouraged me; they were determined to do it.) "I enquired because, coming from Lincolnshire, I of course have not yet been in town, and I thought some letters might have been sent down here. I dare say they will report progress to-morrow morning."

I saw him so often, in the course of the evening,

which passed very pleasantly, contemplate Richard and Ada with an interest and a satisfaction that made his fine face remarkably agreeable as he sat at a little distance from the piano listening to the music—and he had small occasion to tell us that he was passionately fond of music, for his face showed it—that I asked my Guardian, as we sat at the backgammon board, whether Mr. Boythorn had ever been married.

"No," said he. "No."

"But he meant to be?" said I.

"How did you find out that?" he returned, with a smile.

"Why, Guardian," I explained, not without reddening a little at hazarding what was in my thoughts, "there is something so tender in his manner, after all, and he is so very courtly and gentle to us, and——"

Mr. Jarndyce directed his eyes to where he was sitting, as I have just described him.

I said no more.

"You are right, little woman," he answered. "He was all but married, once. Long ago. And once."

"Did the lady die?"

"No—but she died to him. That time has had its influence on all his later life. Would you suppose him to have a head and a heart full of romance yet?"

"I think, Guardian, I might have supposed so. But it is easy to say that, when you have told me so."

"He has never since been what he might have been," said Mr. Jarndyce, "and now you see him in his age with no one near him but his servant, and his little yellow friend.—It's your throw, my dear!"

I felt, from my Guardian's manner, that beyond this point I could not pursue the subject without changing the wind. I therefore forbore to ask any further questions. I was interested, but not curious. I thought a little while about this old love story in the night, when I was awakened by Mr. Boythorn's lusty snoring; and I tried to do that very difficult thing—imagine old people young again, and invested with the graces of youth. But I fell asleep before I had succeeded, and dreamed of the days when I lived in my godmother's house. I am not sufficiently acquainted with such subjects, to know whether it is at all remarkable that I almost always dreamed of that period of my life.

With the morning, there came a letter from Messrs. Kenge and Carboy to Mr. Boythorn, informing him that one of their clerks would wait upon him at noon. As it was the day of the week on which I paid the bills, and added up my books, and made all the household affairs as compact as possible, I remained at home while Mr. Jarndyce, Ada, and Richard, took advantage of a very fine day to make a little excursion. Mr. Boythorn was to wait for Kenge and Carboy's clerk, and then was to go on foot to meet them on their return.

Well! I was full of business, examining tradesmen's books, adding up columns, paying money, filing receipts, and I dare say making a great bustle about it, when Mr. Guppy was announced and shown in. I had had some idea that the clerk who was to be sent down, might be the young gentleman who had met me at the coach-office; and I was glad to see him, because he was associated with my present happiness.

I scarcely knew him again, he was so uncommonly smart. He had an entirely new suit of glossy clothes on, a shining hat, lilac-kid gloves, a neckerchief of a variety of colours, a large hot-house flower in his button-hole, and a thick gold ring on his little finger. Besides which, he quite scented the dining-room with bear's-grease, and other perfumery. He looked at me with an attention that quite confused me, when I begged him to take a seat until the servant should return; and as he sat there, crossing and uncrossing his legs in a corner, and I asked him if he had had a pleasant ride, and hoped that Mr. Kenge was well, I never looked at him, but I found him looking at me, in the same scrutinizing and curious way.

When the request was brought to him that he would go up-stairs to Mr. Boythorn's room, I mentioned that he would find lunch prepared for him when he came down, of which Mr. Jarndyce hoped he would partake. He said with some embarrassment, holding the handle of the door, "Shall I have the honour of finding you here, Miss?" I replied yes, I should be there; and he went out with a bow and another look.

I thought him only awkward and shy, for he was evidently much embarrassed; and I fancied that the best thing I could do, would be to wait until I saw that he had everything he wanted, and then to leave him to himself. The lunch was soon brought, but it remained for some time on the table. The interview with Mr. Boythorn was a long one—and a stormy one too, I should think; for, although his room was at some distance, I heard his loud voice rising every now and then like a high wind, and evidently blowing perfect broadsides of denunciation.

At last Mr. Guppy came back, looking something the worse for the conference. "My eye, miss," he said in a low voice, "he's a Tartar!"

"Pray take some refreshment, sir," said I.

Mr. Guppy sat down at the table, and began nervously sharpening the carving-knife on the carving-fork; still looking at me (as I felt quite sure without looking at him), in the same unusual manner. The sharpening lasted so long, that at last I felt a kind of obligation on me to raise my eyes, in order that I might break the spell under which he seemed to labour, of not being able to leave off.

He immediately looked at the dish, and began to carve.

"What will you take yourself, miss? You'll take a morsel of something?"

"No, thank you," said I.

"Shan't I give you a piece of anything at all, miss?" said Mr. Guppy, hurriedly drinking off a glass of wine.

"Nothing, thank you," said I. "I have only waited to see that you have everything you want. Is there anything I can order for you?"

"No, I am much obliged to you, miss, I'm sure. I've everything I can require to make me comfortable—as least I—not comfortable—I'm never that;" he drank off two more glasses of wine, one after another.

I thought I had better go.

"I beg your pardon, miss?" said Mr. Guppy, rising, when he saw me rise. "But would you allow me the favour of a minute's private conversation?"

Not knowing what to say, I sat down again.

"What follows is without prejudice, miss?" said Mr. Guppy, anxiously bringing a chair towards my table.

"I don't understand what you mean," said I, wondering.

"It's one of our law terms, miss. You won't make any use of it to my detriment, at Kenge and Carboy's, or elsewhere. If our conversation shouldn't lead to anything, I am to be as I was, and

am not to be prejudiced in my situation or worldly prospects. In short, it's in total confidence."

"I am at a loss, sir," said I, "to imagine what you can have to communicate in total confidence to me, whom you have never seen but once; but I should be very sorry to do you any injury."

"Thank you, miss. I'm sure of it—that's quite sufficient." All this time Mr. Guppy was either planing his forehead with his handkerchief, or tightly rubbing the palm of his left hand with the palm of his right. "If you would excuse my taking another glass of wine, miss, I think it might assist me in getting on, without a continual choke that cannot fail to be mutually unpleasant."

He did so, and came back again. I took the opportunity of moving well behind my table.

"You wouldn't allow me to offer you one, would you, miss?" said Mr. Guppy, apparently refreshed.

"Not any," said I.

"Not half a glass?" said Mr. Guppy; "quarter? No! Then, to proceed. My present salary, Miss Summerson, at Kenge and Carboy's, is two pound a week. When I first had the happiness of looking upon you, it was one-fifteen, and had stood at that figure for a lengthened period. A rise of five has since taken place, and a further rise of five is guaranteed at the expiration of a term not exceeding twelve months from the present date. My mother has a little property, which takes the form of a small life annuity; upon which she lives in an independent though unassuming manner, in the Old Street Road. She is eminently calculated for a mother-in-law. She never interferes, is all for peace, and her disposition easy. She has her failings—as who has not?—but I never knew her do it when company was present; at which time you may freely trust her with wines, spirits, or malt liquors. My own abode is lodgings at Penton Place, Pentonville. It is lowly, but airy, open at the back, and considered one of the 'ealthiest outlets. Miss Summerson! In the mildest language, I adore you. Would you be so kind as to allow me (as I may say) to file a declaration—to make an offer!"

Mr. Guppy went down on his knees. I was well behind my table, and not much frightened. I said, "Get up from that ridiculous position immediately, sir, or you will oblige me to break my implied promise and ring the bell!"

"Hear me out, miss!" said Mr. Guppy, folding his hands.

"I cannot consent to hear another word, sir," I returned, "unless you get up from the carpet directly, and go and sit down at the table, as you ought to do if you have any sense at all."

He looked piteously, but slowly rose and did so.

"Yet what a mockery it is, miss," he said, with his hand upon his heart, and shaking his head at me in a melancholy manner over the tray, "to be stationed behind food at such a moment. The soul recoils from food at such a moment, miss."

"I beg you to conclude," said I; "you have asked me to hear you out, and I beg you to conclude."

"I will, miss," said Mr. Guppy. "As I love and honour, so likewise I obey. Would that I could make Thee the subject of that vow, before the shrine!"

"That is quite impossible," said I, "and entirely out of the question."

"I am aware," said Mr. Guppy, leaning forward over the tray, and regarding me, as I again strangely felt, though my eyes were not directed to him, with his late intent look, "I am aware that in a worldly point of view, according to all appearances my offer is a poor one. But, Miss Summerson! Angel!—No, don't ring!—I have been brought up in a sharp school, and am accustomed to a variety of general practice. Though a young man, I have ferreted out evidence, got up cases, and seen lots of life. Blessed with your hand, what means might I not find of advancing your interests, and pushing your fortunes! What might I not get to know, nearly concerning you? I know nothing now, certainly; but what *might* I not, if I had your confidence, and you set me on?"

I told him that he addressed my interest, or what he supposed to be my interest, quite as unsuccessfully as he addressed my inclination; and he would now understand that I requested him, if he pleased, to go away immediately.

"Cruel Miss," said Mr. Guppy, "hear but another word! I think you must have seen that I was struck with those charms, on the day when I waited at the Whytorseller. I think you must have remarked that I could not forbear a tribute to those charms when I put up the steps of the 'ackney-coach. It was a feeble tribute to Thee, but it was well-meant. Thy image has ever since been fixed in my breast. I have walked up and down, of an evening, opposite Jellyby's house, only to look upon the bricks that once contained Thee. This out of to-day, quite an unnecessary out so far as the attendance, which was its pretended object, went, was planned by me alone for Thee alone. If I speak of interest, it is only to recommend myself and my respectful wretchedness. Love was before it, and is before it."

"I should be pained, Mr. Guppy," said I, rising and putting my hand upon the bell-rope, "to do you, or any one who was sincere, the injustice of slighting any honest feeling, however disagreeably expressed. If you have really meant to give me a proof of your good opinion, though ill-timed and misplaced, I feel that I ought to thank you. I have very little reason to be proud, and I am not proud. I hope," I think I added, without very well knowing what I said, "that you will now go away as if you had never been so exceedingly foolish, and attend to Messrs. Kenge and Carboy's business."

"Half a minute, miss!" cried Mr. Guppy, checking me as I was about to ring. "This has been without prejudice?"

"I will never mention it," said I, "unless you should give me future occasion to do so."

"A quarter of a minute, miss! In case you should think better—at any time, however distant, *that's* no consequence, for my feelings can never alter—of anything I have said, particularly what might I not do—Mr. William Guppy, eighty-seven, Penton Place, or, if removed, or dead (of blighted hopes or anything of that sort), care of Mrs. Guppy, three hundred and two, Old Street Road, will be sufficient."

I rang the bell, the servant came, and Mr. Guppy, laying his written card upon the table, and making a dejected bow, departed. Raising my eyes as he went out, I once more saw him looking at me after he had passed the door.

I sat there for another hour or more, finishing my books and payments, and getting through plenty of business. Then, I arranged my desk, and put everything away, and was so composed and cheerful that I thought I had quite dismissed this unexpected incident. But, when I went up-stairs to my own room, I surprised myself by beginning to laugh about it, and then surprised myself still more by beginning to cry about it. In short, I was in a flutter for a little while; and felt as if an old chord had been more coarsely touched than it ever had been since the days of the dear old doll, long buried in the garden.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAW-WRITER.

On the eastern borders of Chancery Lane, that is to say, more particularly, in Cook's Court, Cursitor Street, Mr. Snagsby, Law Stationer, pursues his lawful calling. In the shade of Cook's Court, at most times a shady place, Mr. Snagsby has dealt in all sorts of blank forms of legal process; in skins and rolls of parchment; in paper—foolscap, brief, draft, brown, white, whitey-brown, and blotting; in stamps; in office-quills, pens, ink, India-rubber, pounce, pins, pencils, sealing-wax, and wafers; in red tape, and green ferret; in pocket-books, almanacks, diaries, and law lists; in string boxes, rulers, inkstands—glass and leaden, penknives, scissors, bodkins, and other small office-cutlery; in short, in articles too numerous to mention; ever since he was out of his time, and went into partnership with Peffer. On that occasion, Cook's Court was in a manner revolutionised by the new inscription in fresh paint, Peffer and Snagsby, displacing the time-honoured and not easily to be deciphered legend, Peffer, only. For smoke, which is the London ivy, had so wreathed itself round Peffer's name, and clung to his dwelling-place, that the affectionate parasite quite overpowered the parent tree.

Peffer is never seen in Cook's Court now. He is not expected there, for he has been recumbent this quarter of a century in the churchyard of St. Andrew's, Holborn, with the waggons and hackney-coaches roaring past him, all the day and half the night, like one great dragon. If he ever steal forth when the dragon is at rest, to air himself again in Cook's Court, until admonished to return by the crowing of the sanguine cock in the cellar at the little dairy in Cursitor Street, whose ideas of daylight it would be curious to ascertain, since he knows from his personal observation next to nothing about it—if Peffer ever do revisit the pale glimpses of Cook's Court, which no law-stationer in the trade can positively deny, he comes invisibly, and no one is the worse or wiser.

In his lifetime, and likewise in the period of Snagsby's "time" of seven long years, there dwelt with Peffer, in the same law-stationering premises, a niece—a short, shrewd niece, something too violently compressed about the waist, and with a sharp nose like a sharp autumn evening, inclining to be frosty towards the end. The Cook's-Courtiers had a rumour flying among them, that the mother of this niece did, in her daughter's childhood, moved by too jealous a solicitude that her figure should approach perfection, lace her up every morning with her maternal foot against the bed-post for a stronger hold and purchase; and further, that she exhibited internally pints of vinegar and lemon-juice: which acids, they held, had mounted to the nose and temper of the patient. With whichsoever of the many tongues of Rumour this frothy report originated, it either never reached, or never influenced, the ears of young Snagsby; who, having wooed and won its fair subject on his arrival at man's estate, entered into two partnerships at once. So now, in Cook's Court, Cursitor Street, Mr. Snagsby and the niece are one; and the niece still cherishes her figure—which, however tastes may differ, is unquestionably so far precious, that there is mighty little of it.

Mr. and Mrs. Snagsby are not only one bone and one flesh, but, to the neighbours' thinking, one voice too. That voice, appearing to proceed from Mrs. Snagsby alone, is heard in Cook's Court very often. Mr. Snagsby, otherwise than as he finds expression through these dulcet tones, is rarely heard. He is a mild, bald, timid man, with a shining head, and a scrubby clump of black hair sticking out at the back. He tends to meekness and obesity. As he stands at his door in Cook's Court, in his grey shop-coat and black calico sleeves, looking up at the clouds; or stands behind a desk in his dark shop, with a heavy flat ruler, snipping and slicing at sheepskin, in company with his two 'Prentices; he is emphatically a retiring and unassuming man. From beneath his feet, at such times, as from a shrill ghost unquiet in its grave, there frequently arise complainings and lamentations in the voice already mentioned; and, haply on some occasions, when these reach a sharper pitch than usual, Mr. Snagsby mentions to the 'Prentices, "I think my little woman is a-giving it to Guster!"

This proper name, so used by Mr. Snagsby, has before now sharpened the wit of the Cook's-Courtiers to remark that it ought to be the name of Mrs. Snagsby; seeing that she might with great force and expression be termed a Guster, in compliment to her stormy character. It is, however, the possession, and the only possession, except fifty shillings per annum and a very small box indifferently filled with clothing, of a lean young woman from a workhouse (by some supposed to have been christened Augusta); who, although she was farmed or contracted for, during her growing time, by an amiable benefactor of his species resident at Tooting, and cannot fail to have been developed under the most favorable circumstances, "has fits"—which the parish can't account for.

Guster, really aged three or four and twenty, but looking a round ten years older, goes cheap with this unaccountable drawback of fits; and is so apprehensive of being returned on the hands of her patron Saint, that except when she is found with her head in the pail, or the sink, or the copper, or the dinner, or anything else that happens to be near her at the time of her seizure, she is always at work. She is a satisfaction to the parents and guardians of the 'Prentices, who feel that there is little danger of her inspiring tender emotions in the breast of youth; she is a satisfaction to Mrs. Snagsby, who can always find fault with her; she is a satisfaction to Mr. Snagsby, who thinks it a charity to keep her. The Law-stationer's establishment is, in Guster's eyes, a Temple of plenty and splendor. She believes the little drawing-room up-stairs, always kept, as one may say, with its hair in papers and its pinafore on, to be the most elegant apartment in Christendom. The view it commands of Cook's Court at one end (not to mention a squint into Cursitor Street), and of Coavins's the sheriff's officer's backyard at the other, she regards as a prospect of unequalled beauty. The portraits it displays in oil—and plenty of it too—of Mr. Snagsby looking at Mrs. Snagsby, and of Mrs. Snagsby looking at Mr. Snagsby, are in her eyes as achievements of Raphael or Titian. Guster has some recompenses for her many privations.

Mr. Snagsby refers everything not in the practical mysteries of the business, to Mrs. Snagsby. She manages the money, reproaches the Tax-gatherers, appoints the times and places of devotion on Sundays, licenses Mr. Snagsby's entertainments, and acknowledges no responsibility as to what she thinks fit to provide for dinner; insomuch that she is the high standard of comparison among the neighbouring wives, a long way down Chancery Lane on both sides, and even out in Holborn, who, in any domestic passages of arms, habitually call upon their husbands to look at the difference between their (the wives') position and Mrs. Snagsby's, and their (the husbands') behaviour

and Mr. Snagsby's. Rumour, always flying, bat-like, about Cook's Court, and skimming in and out at everybody's windows, does say that Mrs. Snagsby is jealous and inquisitive; and that Mr. Snagsby is sometimes worried out of house and home, and that if he had the spirit of a mouse he wouldn't stand it. It is even observed, that the wives who quote him to their self-willed husbands as a shining example, in reality look down upon him; and that nobody does so with greater superciliousness than one particular lady, whose lord is more than suspected of laying his umbrella on her as an instrument of correction. But these vague whisperings may arise from Mr. Snagsby's being, in his way, rather a meditative and poetical man; loving to walk in Staple Inn in the summer time, and to observe how countrified the sparrows and the leaves are; also to lounge about the Rolls Yard of a Sunday afternoon, and to remark (if in good spirits) that there were old times once, and that you'd find a stone coffin or two, now, under that chapel, he'll be bound, if you was to dig for it. He solaces his imagination, too, by thinking of the many Chancellors and Vices, and Masters of the Rolls, who are deceased; and he gets such a flavor of the country out of telling the two 'Prentices how he *has* heard say that a brook "as clear as crystial" once ran right down the middle of Holborn, when Turnstile really was a turnstile leading slap away into the meadows—gets such a flavor of the country out of this, that he never wants to go there.

The day is closing in and the gas is lighted, but is not yet fully effective, for it is not quite dark. Mr. Snagsby standing at his shop-door looking up at the clouds, sees a crow, who is out late, skim westward over the leaden slice of sky belonging to Cook's Court. The crow flies straight across Chancery Lane and Lincoln's Inn Garden, into Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Here, in a large house, formerly a house of state, lives Mr. Tulkinghorn. It is let off in sets of chambers now; and in those shrunken fragments of its greatness, lawyers lie like maggots in nuts. But its roomy staircases, passages, and antechambers, still remain; and even its painted ceilings, where Allegory, in Roman helmet and celestial linen, sprawls among balustrades and pillars, flowers, clouds, and big-legged boys, and makes the head ache—as would seem to be Allegory's object always, more or less. Here, among his many boxes labelled with transcendant names, lives Mr. Tulkinghorn, when not speechlessly at home in country-houses where the great ones of the earth are bored to death. Here he is to-day, quiet at his table. An Oyster of the old school, whom nobody can open.

Like as he is to look at, so is his apartment in the dusk of the present afternoon. Rusty, out of date, withdrawing from attention, able to afford it. Heavy broad-backed old-fashioned mahogany and horse-hair chairs, not easily lifted, obsolete tables with spindle-legs and dusty baize covers, presentation prints of the holders of great titles in the last generation, or the last but one, environ him. A thick and dingy Turkey-carpet muffles the floor where he sits, attended by two candles in old-fashioned silver candlesticks, that give a very insufficient light to his large room. The titles on the backs of his books have retired into the binding; everything that can have a lock has got one; no key is visible. Very few loose papers are about. He has some manuscript near him, but is not referring to it. With the round top of an inkstand, and two broken bits of sealing-wax, he is silently and slowly working out whatever train of indecision is in his mind. Now, the inkstand top is in the middle: now, the red bit of sealing-wax, now the black bit. That's not it. Mr. Tulkinghorn must gather them all up, and begin again.

Here, beneath the painted ceiling, with foreshortened Allegory staring down at his intrusion as if it meant to swoop upon him, and he cutting it dead, Mr. Tulkinghorn has at once his house and office. He keeps no staff; only one middle-aged man, usually a little out at elbows, who sits in a high Pew in the hall, and is rarely overburdened with business. Mr. Tulkinghorn is not in a common way. He wants no clerks. He is a great reservoir of confidences, not to be so tapped. His clients want *him*; he is all in all. Drafts that he requires to be drawn, are drawn by special-pleaders in the Temple on mysterious instructions; fair copies that he requires to be made, are made at the stationer's, expense being no consideration. The middle-aged man in the Pew, knows scarcely more of the affairs of the Peerage, than any crossing-sweeper in Holborn.

The red bit, the black bit, the inkstand top, the other inkstand top, the little sand-box. So! You to the middle, you to the right, you to the left. This train of indecision must surely be worked out now or never.—Now! Mr. Tulkinghorn gets up, adjusts his spectacles, puts on his hat, puts the manuscript in his pocket, goes out, tells the middle-aged man out at elbows, "I shall be back presently." Very rarely tells him anything more explicit.

Mr. Tulkinghorn goes, as the crow came—not quite so straight, but nearly—to Cook's Court, Cursitor Street. To Snagsby's, Law Stationer's, Deeds engrossed and copied, Law-Writing executed in all its branches, &c., &c., &c.

It is somewhere about five or six o'clock in the afternoon, and a balmy fragrance of warm tea hovers in Cook's Court. It hovers about Snagsby's door. The hours are early there; dinner at half-past one, and supper at half-past nine. Mr. Snagsby was about to descend into the subterranean regions to take tea, when he looked out of his door just now, and saw the crow who was out late.

"Master at home?"

Guster is minding the shop, for the 'Prentices take tea in the kitchen, with Mr. and Mrs. Snagsby; consequently, the robe-maker's two daughters, combing their curls at the two glasses in the two second-floor windows of the opposite house, are not driving the two 'Prentices to distraction, as they fondly suppose, but are merely awakening the unprofitable admiration of Guster, whose hair won't grow, and never would, and, it is confidently thought, never will.

"Master at home?" says Mr. Tulkinghorn.

Master is at home, and Guster will fetch him. Guster disappears, glad to get out of the shop, which she regards with mingled dread and veneration, as a storehouse of awful implements of the great torture of the law: a place not to be entered after the gas is turned off.

Mr. Snagsby appears: greasy, warm, herbaceous, and chewing. Bolts a bit of bread and butter. Says, "Bless my soul, sir! Mr. Tulkinghorn!"

"I want half a word with you, Snagsby."

"Certainly, sir! Dear me, sir, why didn't you send your young man round for me? Pray walk into the back shop, sir." Snagsby has brightened in a moment.

The confined room, strong of parchment-grease, is warehouse, counting-house, and copying-office. Mr. Tulkinghorn sits, facing round, on a stool at the desk.

"Jarndyce and Jarndyce, Snagsby."

"Yes, sir." Mr. Snagsby turns up the gas, and coughs behind his hand, modestly anticipating profit. Mr. Snagsby, as a timid man, is accustomed to cough with a variety of expressions, and so to save words.

"You copied some affidavits in that cause for me lately."

"Yes, sir, we did."

"There was one of them," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, carelessly feeling—tight, unopenable Oyster of the old school!—in the wrong coat-pocket, "the handwriting of which is peculiar, and I rather like. As I happened to be passing, and thought I had it about me, I looked in to ask you—but I haven't got it. No matter, any other time will do—Ah! here it is!—I looked in to ask you who copied this?"

"Who copied this, sir?" says Mr. Snagsby, taking it, laying it flat on the desk, and separating all the sheets at once with a twirl and a twist of the left hand peculiar to law-stationers. "We gave this out, sir. We were giving out rather a large quantity of work just at that time. I can tell you in a moment who copied it, sir, by referring to my Book."

Mr. Snagsby takes his Book down from the safe, makes another bolt of the bit of bread and butter which seems to have stopped short, eyes the affidavit aside, and brings his right forefinger travelling down a page of the Book. "Jewby—Packer—Jarndyce."

"Jarndyce! Here we are, sir," says Mr. Snagsby. "To be sure! I might have remembered it. This was given out, sir, to a Writer who lodges just over on the opposite side of the lane."

Mr. Tulkinghorn has seen the entry, found it before the Law-stationer, read it while the forefinger was coming down the hill.

"*What* do you call him? Nemo?" says Mr. Tulkinghorn.

"Nemo, sir. Here it is. Forty-two folio. Given out on the Wednesday night, at eight o'clock; brought in on the Thursday morning, at half after nine."

"Nemo!" repeats Mr. Tulkinghorn. "Nemo is Latin for no one."

"It must be English for some one, sir, I think," Mr. Snagsby submits, with his deferential cough. "It is a person's name. Here it is, you see, sir! Forty-two folio. Given out, Wednesday night, eight o'clock; brought in, Thursday morning, half after nine."

The tail of Mr. Snagsby's eye becomes conscious of the head of Mrs. Snagsby looking in at the shop-door to know what he means by deserting his tea. Mr. Snagsby addresses an explanatory cough to Mrs. Snagsby, as who should say, "My dear, a customer!"

"Half after nine, sir," repeats Mr. Snagsby. "Our law-writers, who live by job-work, are a queer lot; and this may not be his name, but it's the name he goes by. I remember now, sir, that he gives it in a written advertisement he sticks up down at the Rule Office, and the King's Bench Office, and the Judges' Chambers, and so forth. You know the kind of document, sir—wanting employ?"

Mr. Tulkinghorn glances through the little window at the back of Coavins's, the sheriff's officer's, where lights shine in Coavins's windows. Coavins's coffee-room is at the back, and the shadows of several gentlemen under a cloud loom cloudily upon the blinds. Mr. Snagsby takes the opportunity of slightly turning his head, to glance over his shoulder at his little woman, and to make apologetic motions with his mouth to this effect: "Tul-king-horn—rich—in-flu-en-tial!"

"Have you given this man work before?" asks Mr. Tulkinghorn.

"O dear, yes, sir! Work of yours."

"Thinking of more important matters, I forget where you said he lived!"

"Across the lane, sir. In fact, he lodges at a—" Mr. Snagsby makes another bolt, as if the bit of bread and butter were insurmountable—"at a Rag and Bottle shop."

"Can you show me the place as I go back?"

"With the greatest pleasure, sir!"

Mr. Snagsby pulls off his sleeves and his grey coat, pulls on his black coat, takes his hat from its peg. "Oh! here is my little woman!" he says aloud. "My dear, will you be so kind as to tell one of the lads to look after the shop, while I step across the lane with Mr. Tulkinghorn? Mrs. Snagsby, sir—I shan't be two minutes, my love!"

Mrs. Snagsby bends to the lawyer, retires behind the counter, peeps at them through the window-blind, goes softly into the back office, refers to the entries in the book still lying open. Is evidently curious.

"You will find that the place is rough, sir," says Mr. Snagsby, walking deferentially in the road, and leaving the narrow pavement to the lawyer; "and the party is very rough. But they're a wild lot in general, sir. The advantage of this particular man is, that he never wants sleep. He'll go at it right on end, if you want him to, as long as ever you like."

It is quite dark now, and the gas-lamps have acquired their full effect. Jostling against clerks going to post the day's letters, and against counsel and attornies going home to dinner, and against plaintiffs and defendants, and suitors of all sorts, and against the general crowd, in whose way the forensic wisdom of ages has interposed a a million of obstacles to the transaction of the commonest business of life—diving through law and equity, and through that kindred mystery, the street mud, which is made of nobody knows what, and collects about us nobody knows whence or how: we only knowing in general that when there is too much of it, we find it necessary to shovel it away—the lawyer and the law-stationer come to a Rag and Bottle shop, and general emporium of much disregarded merchandise, lying and being in the shadow of the wall of Lincoln's Inn, and kept, as is announced in paint, to all whom it may concern, by one Krook.

"This is where he lives, sir," says the law-stationer.

"This is where he lives, is it?" says the lawyer unconcernedly. "Thank you."

"Are you not going in, sir?"

"No, thank you, no; I am going on to the Fields at present. Good evening. Thank you!" Mr. Snagsby lifts his hat, and returns to his little woman and his tea.

But, Mr. Tulkinghorn does not go on to the Fields at present. He goes a short way, turns back, comes again to the shop of Mr. Krook, and enters it straight. It is dim enough, with a blot-headed candle or so in the windows, and an old man and a cat sitting in the back part by a fire. The old man rises and comes forward, with another blot-headed candle in his hand.

"Pray, is your lodger within?"

"Male or female, sir?" says Mr. Krook.

"Male. The person who does copying."

Mr. Krook has eyed his man narrowly. Knows him by sight. Has an indistinct impression of his aristocratic repute.

"Did you wish to see him, sir?"

"Yes."

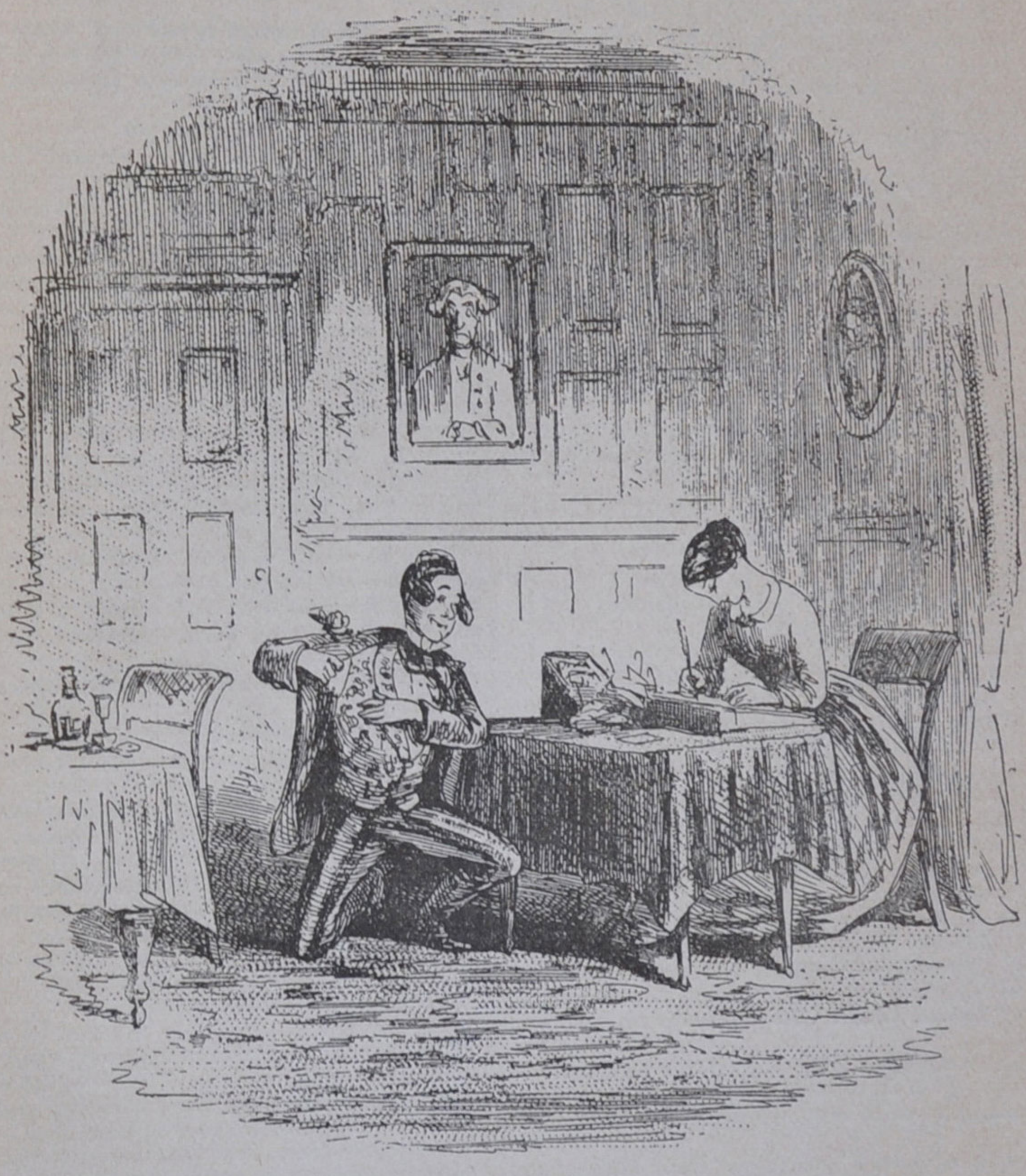
"It's what I seldom do myself," says Mr. Krook with a grin. "Shall I call him down? But it's a weak chance if he'd come, sir!"

"I'll go up to him, then," says Mr. Tulkinghorn.

"Second floor, sir. Take the candle. Up there!" Mr. Krook, with his cat beside him, stands at the bottom of the staircase, looking after Mr. Tulkinghorn. "Hi—hi!" he says, when Mr. Tulkinghorn has nearly disappeared. The lawyer looks down over the hand-rail. The cat expands her wicked mouth, and snarls at him.

He comes to the dark door on the second floor. He knocks, receives no answer, opens it, and accidentally extinguishes his candle in doing so.

The air of the room is almost bad enough to have extinguished it, if he had not. It is a small room, nearly black with soot, and grease, and dirt. In the rusty skeleton of a grate, pinched at the middle as if Poverty had gripped it, a red coke fire burns low. In the corner by the chimney, stand a deal table and a broken desk: a wilderness marked with a rain of ink. In another corner, a ragged old portmanteau on one of the two chairs, serves for cabinet



IN RE GUPPY—EXTRAORDINARY PROCEEDINGS.

"Order, Lady Jane! Behave yourself to visitors, my lady! You know what they say of my lodger?" whispers Krook, going up a step or two.

"What do they say of him?"

"They say he has sold himself to the Enemy; but you and I know better—he don't buy. I'll tell you what, though; my lodger is so black-humoured and gloomy, that I believe he'd as soon make that bargain as any other. Don't put him out, sir. That's my advice!"

Mr. Tulkinghorn with a nod goes on his way.

or wardrobe; no larger one is needed, for it collapses like the cheeks of a starved man. The floor is bare; except that one old mat, trodden to shreds of rope-yarn, lies perishing upon the hearth. No curtain veils the darkness of the night, but the discolored shutters are drawn together; and through the two gaunt holes pierced in them, famine might be staring in—the Banshee of the man upon the bed.

For, on a low bed opposite the fire, a confusion of dirty patchwork, lean-ribbed ticking, and coarse sack-

ing, the lawyer, hesitating just within the doorway, sees a man. He lies there, dressed in shirt and trousers, with bare feet. He has a yellow look, in the spectral darkness of a candle that has guttered down, until the whole length of its wick (still burning) has doubled over, and left a tower of winding-sheet above it. His hair is ragged mingling with his whiskers and his beard—the latter, ragged too, and grown, like the scum and mist around him, in neglect. Foul and filthy as the room is, foul and filthy as the air, it is not easy to perceive what fumes those are which most oppress the senses in it; but through the general sickliness and faintness, and the odor of stale tobacco, there comes into the lawyer's mouth the bitter, vapid taste of opium.

"Hallo, my friend!" he cries, and strikes his iron candlestick against the door.

He thinks he has awakened his friend. He lies a little turned away, but his eyes are surely open.

"Hallo, my friend!" he cries again. "Hallo! Hallo!"

As he rattles on the door, the candle which has drooped so long, goes out and leaves him in the dark; with the gaunt eyes in the shutters staring down upon the bed.

CHAPTER XI.

OUR DEAR BROTHER.

A TOUCH on the lawyer's wrinkled hand, as he stands in the dark room, irresolute, makes him start and say "What's that?"

"It's me," returns the old man of the house, whose breath is in his ear. "Can't you wake him?"

"No."

"What have you done with your candle?"

"It's gone out. Here it is."

Krook takes it, goes to the fire, stoops over the red embers, and tries to get a light. The dying ashes have no light to spare, and his endeavours are in vain. Muttering, after an ineffectual call to his lodger, that he will go down stairs and bring a lighted candle from the shop, the old man departs. Mr. Tulkinghorn, for some new reason that he has, does not await his return in the room, but on the stairs outside.

The welcome light soon shines upon the wall, as Krook comes slowly up, with his green-eyed cat following at his heels. "Does the man generally sleep like this?" inquires the lawyer, in a low voice. "Hi! I dont know," says Krook, shaking his head and lifting his eyebrows. "I know next to nothing of his habits, except that he keeps himself very close."

Thus whispering, they both go in together. As the light goes in, the great eyes in the shutters, darkening, seem to close. Not so the eyes upon the bed.

"God save us!" exclaims Mr. Tulkinghorn. "He is dead!"

Krook drops the heavy hand he has taken up, so suddenly that the arm swings over the bedside.

They look at one another for a moment.

"Send for some doctor! Call for Miss Flite up the stairs, sir. Here's poison by the bed! Call out for Flite, will you?" says Krook with his lean hands spread out above the body like a vampire's wings.

Mr. Tulkinghorn hurries to the landing, and calls "Miss Flite! Flite! Make haste, here, whoever you are! Flite!" Krook follows him with his eyes, and while he is calling, finds opportunity to steal to the old portmanteau, and steal back again.

"Run, Flite, run; The nearest doctor! Run!" So Mr. Krook addresses a crazy woman. who is his female lodger: who appears and vanishes in a breath: who soon returns, accompanied by a testy medical man, brought from his dinner—with a broad snuffy upper lip, and a broad Scotch tongue.

"Ey! Bless the hearts o' ye," says the medical man, looking up at them after a moment's examination. "He's just as dead as Phairy!"

Mr. Tulkinghorn (standing by the old portmanteau) inquires if he has been dead any time?

"Any time, sir!" said the medical gentleman "It's probable he wull have been dead aboot three hours."

"About that time, I should say," observes a dark young man on the other side of the bed.

"Air you in the maydickle profession yourself, sir?" inquires the first.

The dark young man says yes.

"Then I'll just tak' my depairture," replies the other; "for I'm nae gude here!" With which remark, he finishes his brief attendance, and returns to finish his dinner.

The dark young surgeon passes the candle across and across the face, and carefully examines the law-writer, who has established his pretensions to his name by becoming indeed No one.

"I knew this person by sight, very well," says he. "He has purchased opium of me, for the last year and a half. Was anybody present related to him?" glancing round upon the three bystanders.

"I was his landlord," grimly answers Krook, taking the candle from the surgeon's outstretched hand. "He told me once, I was the nearest relation he had."

"He has died," says the surgeon, "of an overdose of opium, there is no doubt. The room is strongly flavored with it. There is enough here now," taking an old teapot from Mr. Krook, "to kill a dozen people."

"Do you think he did it on purpose?" asks Krook.

"Took the over-dose?"

"Yes!" Krook almost smacks his lips with the unction of a horrible interest.

"I can't say. I should think it unlikely, as he has been in the habit of taking so much. But nobody can tell. He was very poor, I suppose?"

"I suppose he was. His room—don't look rich," says Krook; who might have changed eyes with his cat, as he casts his sharp glance around. "But I have never been in it since he had it, and he was too close to name his circumstarnces to me."

"Did he owe you any rent?"

"Six weeks."

"He will never pay it!" says the young man, resuming his examination. "It is beyond a doubt that he is indeed as dead as Pharaoh; and to judge from his appearance and condition, I should think it a happy release. Yet he must have been a good figure when a youth, and I dare say good-looking." He says this, not unfeelingly, while sitting on the bedstead's edge, with his face towards that other face, and his hand upon the region of the heart. "I recollect once thinking there was something in his manner, uncouth as it was, that denoted a fall in life. Was that so?" he continues, looking round.

Krook replies, "You might as well ask me to describe the ladies whose heads of hair I have got in sacks down stairs. Than that he was my lodger for a year and a half, and lived—or didn't live—by law-writing, I know no more of him."

During this dialogue, Mr. Tulkinghorn has stood aloof by the old portmanteau, with his hands behind him, equally removed, to all appearance, from

all three kinds of interest exhibited near the bed—from the young surgeon's professional interest in death, noticeable as being quite apart from his remarks on the deceased as an individual; from the old man's unction; and the little crazy woman's awe. His imperturbable face has been as inexpressive as his rusty clothes. One could not even say he has been thinking all this while. He has shown neither patience nor impatience, nor attention nor abstraction. He has shown nothing but his shell. As easily might the tone of a delicate musical instrument be inferred from its case, as the tone of Mr. Tulkinghorn from *his* case.

He now interposes; addressing the young surgeon, in his unmoved, professional way.

"I looked in here," he observes, "just before you, with the intention of giving this deceased man, whom I never saw alive, some employment at his trade of copying. I had heard of him from my stationer—Snagsby of Cook's Court. Since no one here knows anything about him, it might be as well to send for Snagsby. Ah!" to the little crazy woman, who has often seen him in Court, and whom he has often seen, and who proposes, in frightened dumb-show, to go for the law stationer. "Suppose you do!"

While she is gone, the surgeon abandons his hopeless investigation, and covers its subject with the patchwork counterpane. Mr. Krook and he interchange a word or two. Mr. Tulkinghorn says nothing; but stands, ever, near the old portmanteau.

Mr. Snagsby arrives hastily, in his grey coat and his black sleeves. "Dear me, dear me," he says; "and it has come to this, has it! Bless my soul!"

"Can you give the person of the house any information about this unfortunate creature, Snagsby?" inquires Mr. Tulkinghorn. "He was in arrears with his rent, it seems. And he must be buried, you know."

"Well, sir," says Mr. Snagsby, coughing his apologetic cough behind his hand; "I really don't know what advice I could offer, except sending for the beadle."

"I don't speak of advice," returns Mr. Tulkinghorn. "*I* could advise——"

("No one better, sir, I am sure," says Mr. Snagsby, with his deferential cough.)

"I speak of affording some clue to his connexions, or to where he came from, or to anything concerning him."

"I assure you, sir," says Mr. Snagsby, after prefacing his reply with his cough of general propitiation, "that I no more know where he came from, than I know——"

"Where he has gone to, perhaps," suggests the surgeon, to help him out.

A pause. Mr. Tulkinghorn looking at the law-stationer. Mr. Krook, with his mouth open, looking for somebody to speak next.

"As to his connexions, sir," says Mr. Snagsby, "if a person was to say to me, 'Snagsby, here's twenty thousand pound down, ready for you in the Bank of England, if you'll only name one of 'em, I couldn't do it, sir! About a year and a half ago—to the best of my belief at the time when he first came to lodge at the present Rag and Bottle Shop—"

"That was the time!" says Krook, with a nod.

"About a year and a half ago," says Mr. Snagsby, strengthened, "he came into our place one morning after breakfast, and, finding my little woman (which I name Mrs. Snagsby when I use that appellation) in our shop, produced a specimen of his handwriting, and gave her to understand that he was in wants of copying work to do, and was—not to put too fine a point upon it—" a favourite apology for plain-speaking with Mr. Snagsby, which he always offers with a sort of argumentative frankness, "hard up! My little woman is not in general partial to strangers, particular—not to put too fine a point upon it—when they want anything. But she was rather took by something about this person; whether by his being unshaved, or by his hair being in want of attention, or by what other ladies' reasons, I leave you to judge; and she accepted of the specimen, and likewise of the address. My little woman hasn't a good ear for names," proceeds Mr. Snagsby, after consulting his cough of consideration behind his hand, "and she considered Nemo equally the same as Nimrod. In consequence of which, she got into a habit of saying to me at meals, 'Mr. Snagsby, you haven't found Nimrod any work yet!' or, 'Mr. Snagsby, why didn't you give that eight-and-thirty Chancery folio in Jarndyce, to Nimrod?' or such like. And that is the way he gradually fell into job-work at our place; and that is the most I know of him, except that he was a quick hand, and a hand not sparing of night-work; and that if you gave him out, say five-and-forty folio on the Wednesday night, you would have it brought in on the Thursday morning. All of which—" Mr. Snagsby concludes by politely motioning with his hat towards the bed, as much as to add, "I have no doubt my honorable friend would confirm, if he were in a condition to do it."

"Hadn't you better see," says Mr. Tulkinghorn to Krook, "whether he had any papers that may enlighten you? There will be an Inquest, and you will be asked the question. You can read?"

"No, I can't," returns the old man, with a sudden grin.

"Snagsby," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, "look over the room for him. He will get into some trouble or difficulty, otherwise. Being here, I'll wait, if you make haste; and then I can testify on his behalf, if it should ever be necessary, that all was fair and right. If you will hold the candle for Mr. Snagsby, my friend, he'll soon see whether there is anything to help you."

"In the first place, here's an old portmanteau, sir," says Snagsby.

Ah, to be sure, so there is! Mr. Tulkinghorn does not appear to have seen it before, though he is standing so close to it, and though there is very little else, Heaven knows.

The marine-store merchant holds the light, and the law-stationer conducts the search. The surgeon leans against a corner of the chimney-piece; Miss Flite peeps and trembles just within the door. The apt old scholar of the old school, with his dull black breeches tied with ribbons at the knees, his large black waistcoat, his long-sleeved black coat, and his wisp of limp white neck-kerchief tied in a bow the Peerage knows so well, stands in exactly the same place and attitude.

There are some worthless articles of clothing in the old portmanteau; there is a bundle of pawnbrokers' duplicates, those turnpike tickets on the road of Poverty; there is a crumpled paper, smelling of opium, on which are scrawled rough memoranda—as, took, such a day, so many grains; took, such another day, so many more—begun some time ago, as if with the intention of being regularly continued, but soon left off. There are a few dirty scraps of newspapers, all referring to Coroners' Inquests; there is nothing else. They search the cupboard, and the drawer of the ink-splashed table. There is not a morsel of an old letter, or of any other writing, in either. The young surgeon examines the dress on the law-writer. A knife and some odd

halfpence are all he finds. Mr. Snagsby's suggestion is the practical suggestion after all, and the beadle must be called in.

So the little crazy lodger goes for the beadle, and the rest come out of the room. "Don't leave the cat there!" says the surgeon: "that won't do!" Mr. Krook therefore drives her out before him; and she goes furtively down stairs, winding her lithe tail and licking her lips.

"Good night!" says Mr. Tulkinghorn; and goes home to Allegory and meditation.

By this time the news has got into the court. Groups of its inhabitants assemble to discuss the thing; and the outposts of the army of observation (principally boys) are pushed forward to Mr. Krook's window, which they closely invest. A policeman has already walked up to the room, and walked down again to the door, where he stands like a tower, only condescending to see the boys at his base occasionally; but whenever he does see them, they quail and fall back. Mrs. Perkins, who has not been for some weeks on speaking terms with Mrs. Piper, in consequence of an unpleasantness originating in young Perkins having "fetched" young Piper "a crack," renews her friendly intercourse on this auspicious occasion. The potboy at the corner, who is a privileged amateur, as possessing official knowledge of life, and having to deal with drunken men occasionally, exchanges confidential communications with the policeman, and has the appearance of an impregnable youth, unassailable by truncheons and unconfinable in station-houses. People talk across the court out of window, and bare-headed scouts come hurrying in from Chancery Lane to know what's the matter. The general feeling seems to be that it's a blessing Mr. Krook warn't made away with first, mingled with a little natural disappointment that he was not. In the midst of this sensation, the beadle arrives.

The beadle, though generally understood in the neighbourhood to be a ridiculous institution, is not without a certain popularity for the moment, if it were only as a man who is going to see the body. The policeman considers him an imbecile civilian, a remnant of the barbarous watchmen-times; but gives him admission, as something that must be borne with until Government shall abolish him. The sensation is heightened, as the tidings spread from mouth to mouth that the beadle is on the ground, and has gone in.

By-and-by the beadle comes out, once more intensifying the sensation, which has rather languished in the interval. He is understood to be in want of witnesses, for the Inquest to-morrow, who can tell the Coroner and Jury anything whatever respecting the deceased. Is immediately referred to innumerable people who can tell nothing whatever. Is made more imbecile by being constantly informed that Mrs. Green's son "was a law-writer his-self, and knowed him better than anybody"—which son of Mrs. Green's appears, on inquiry, to be at the present time aboard a vessel bound for China, three months out, but considered accessible by telegraph, on application to the Lords of the Admiralty. Beadle goes into various shops and parlors, examining the inhabitants; always shutting the door first, and by exclusion, delay, and general idiotcy, exasperating the public. Policeman seen to smile to potboy. Public loses interest, and undergoes reaction. Taunts the beadle, in shrill youthful voices, with having boiled a boy; choruses fragments of a popular song to that effect, and importing that the boy was made into soup for the workhouse. Policeman at last finds it necessary to support the law, and seize a vocalist; who is released upon the flight of the rest, on condition of his getting out of this then, come! and cutting it—a condition he immediately observes. So the sensation dies off for the time; and the unmoved policeman (to whom a little opium, more or less, is nothing), with his shining hat, stiff stock, inflexible great-coat, stout belt and bracelet, and all things fitting, pursues his lounging way with a heavy tread: beating the palms of his white gloves one against the other, and stopping now and then, at a street-corner, to look casually about for anything between a lost child and a murder.

Under cover of the night, the feeble-minded beadle comes flitting about Chancery Lane with his summonses, in which every Juror's name is wrongly spelt, and nothing is rightly spelt but the beadle's own name, which nobody can read or wants to know. The summonses served, and his witnesses forewarned, the beadle goes to Mr. Krook's, to keep a small appointment he has made with certain paupers; who, presently arriving, are conducted up-stairs; where they leave the great eyes in the shutter something new to stare at, in that last shape which earthly lodgings take for No one—and for Every one.

And, all that night, the coffin stands ready by the old portmanteau; and the lonely figure on the bed, whose path in life has lain through five-and-forty years, lies there, with no more track behind him, that any one can trace, than a deserted infant.

Next day the court is all alive—is like a fair, as Mrs. Perkins, more than reconciled to Mrs. Piper, says, in amicable conversation with that excellent woman. The coroner is to sit in the first-floor room at the Sol's Arms, where the Harmonic Meetings take place twice a-week, and where the chair is filled by a gentleman of professional celebrity, faced by little Swills, the comic vocalist, who hopes (according to the bill in the window) that his friends will rally round him and support first-rate talent. The Sol's Arms does a brisk stroke of business all the morning. Even children so require sustaining, under the general excitement, that a pieman, who has established himself for the occasion at the corner of the court, says his brandy-balls go off like smoke. What time the beadle, hovering between the door of Mr. Krook's establishment and the door of the Sol's Arms, shews the curiosity in his keeping to a few discreet spirits, and accepts the compliment of a glass of ale or so in return.

At the appointed hour arrives the Coroner, for whom the Jurymen are waiting, and who is received with a salute of skittles from the good dry skittle-ground attached to the Sol's Arms. The Coroner frequents more public-houses than any man alive. The smell of sawdust, beer, tobacco-smoke, and spirits, is inseparable in his vocation from death in its most awful shapes. He is conducted by the beadle and the landlord to the Harmonic Meeting Room, where he puts his hat on the piano, and takes a Windsor-chair at the head of a long table, formed of several short tables put together, and ornamented with glutinous rings in endless involutions, made by pots and glasses. As many of the Jury as can crowd together at the table sit there. The rest get among the spittoons and pipes, or lean against the piano. Over the Coroner's head is a small iron garland, the pendant handle of a bell, which rather gives the Majesty of the Court the appearance of going to be hanged presently.

Call over and swear the Jury! While the ceremony is in progress, sensation is created by the entrance of a chubby little man in a large shirt-collar, with a moist eye, and an inflamed nose, who modestly takes a position near the door as one of

the general public, but seems familiar with the room too. A whisper circulates that this is little Swills. It is considered not unlikely that he will get up an imitation of the Coroner, and make it the principal feature of the Harmonic Meeting in the evening.

"Well, gentlemen—" the Coroner begins.

"Silence there, will you!" says the beadle. Not to the Coroner, though it might appear so.

"Well, gentlemen!" resumes the Coroner. "You are impanelled here, to inquire into the death of a certain man. Evidence will be given before you, as to the circumstances attending that death, and you will give your verdict according to the—skittles; they must be stopped, you know, beadle!—evidence, and not according to anything else. The first thing to be done, is to view the body."

"Make way there!" cries the beadle.

So they go out in a loose procession, something after the manner of a straggling funeral, and make their inspection in Mr. Krook's back second floor, from which a few of the Jurymen retire pale and precipitately. The beadle is very careful that two gentlemen not very neat about the cuffs and buttons (for whose accommodation he has provided a special little table near the Coroner, in the Harmonic Meeting Room), should see all that is to be seen. For they are the public chroniclers of such inquiries, by the line; and he is not superior to the universal human infirmity, but hopes to read in print what "Mooney, the active and intelligent beadle of the district," said and did; and even aspires to see the name of Mooney as familiarly and patronisingly mentioned as the name of the Hangman is, according to the latest examples.

Little Swills is waiting for the Coroner and Jury on their return. Mr. Tulkinghorn, also. Mr. Tulkinghorn is received with distinction, and seated near the Coroner; between that high judicial officer, a bagatelle board, and the coal-box. The inquiry proceeds. The Jury learn how the subject of their inquiry died, and learn no more about him. "A very eminent solicitor is in attendance, gentlemen," says the Coroner, "who, I am informed, was accidentally present, when discovery of the death was made; but he could only repeat the evidence you have already heard from the surgeon, the landlord, the lodger, and the law-stationer; and it is not necessary to trouble him. Is anybody in attendance who knows anything more?"

Mrs. Piper pushed forward by Mrs. Perkins. Mrs. Piper sworn.

Anastasia Piper, gentlemen. Married woman. Now, Mrs. Piper—what have you got to say about this?

Why, Mrs. Piper has a good deal to say, chiefly in parenthesis and without punctuation, but not much to tell. Mrs. Piper lives in the court (which her husband is a cabinet-maker) and it has long been well beknown among the neighbours (counting from the day next but one before the half-baptising of Alexander James Piper aged eighteen months and four days old on accounts of not being expected to live such was the sufferings gentlemen of that child in his gums) as the Plaintive—so Mrs. Piper insists on calling the deceased—was reported to have sold himself. Thinks it was the Plaintive's air in which that report originatinin. See the Plaintive often, and considered as his air was feariocious, and not to be allowed to go about some children being timid (and if doubted hoping Mrs. Perkins may be brought forard for she is here and will do credit to her husband and herself and family). Has seen the Plaintive wexed and worrited by the children (for children they will ever be and you cannot expect them specially if of playful dispositions to be Methoozellers which you was not yourself). On accounts of this and his dark looks has often dreamed as she see him take a pickaxe from his pocket and split Johnny's head (which the child knows not fear and has repeatually called after him close at his eels). Never however see the Plaintive take a pickaxe or any other wepping far from it. Has seen him hurry away when run and called after as if not partial to children and never see him speak to neither child nor grown person at any time (excepting the boy that sweeps the crossing down the lane over the way round the corner which if he was here would tell you that he has been seen a speaking to him frequent).

Says the Coroner, is that boy here? Says the beadle, no, sir, he is not here. Says the Coroner, go and fetch him then. In the absence of the active and intelligent, the Coroner converses with Mr. Tulkinghorn.

O! Here's the boy, gentlemen!

Here he is, very muddy, very hoarse, very ragged. Now, boy!—But stop a minute. Caution. This boy must be put through a few preliminary paces.

Name, Jo. Nothing else that he knows on. Don't know that everybody has two names. Never heerd of sich a think. Don't know that Jo is short for a longer name. Thinks it long enough for *him*. *He* don't find no fault with it. Spell it? No. *He* can't spell it. No father, no mother, no friends. Never been to school. What's home? Knows a broom's a broom, and knows it's wicked to tell a lie. Don't recollect who told him about the broom, or about the lie, but knows both. Can't exactly say what'll be done to him arter he's dead if he tells a lie to the gentlemen here, but believes it'll be something wery bad to pur.sh him, and serve him right—and so he'll tell the truth.

"This won't do, gentlemen!" says the Coroner, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"Don't you think you can receive his evidence, sir?" asks an attentive Juryman.

"Out of the question," says the Coroner. "You have heard the boy. 'Can't exactly say' won't do, you know. We can't take *that*, in a Court of Justice, gentlemen. It's a terrible depravity. Put the boy aside."

Boy put aside; to the great edification of the audience;—especially of Little Swills, the Comic Vocalist.

Now. Is there any other witness? No other witness.

Very well, gentlemen! Here's a man unknown, proved to have been in the habit of taking opium in large quantities for a year and a half, found dead of too much opium. If you think you have any evidence to lead you to the conclusion that he committed suicide, you will come to that conclusion. If you think it is a case of accidental death you will find a Verdict accordingly.

Verdict accordingly. Accidental death. No doubt. Gentlemen, you are discharged. Good afternoon.

While the Coroner buttons his great coat, Mr. Tulkinghorn and he give private audience to the rejected witness in a corner.

That graceless creature only knows that the dead man (whom he recognised just now by his yellow face and black hair) was sometimes hooted and pursued about the streets. That one cold winter night, when he, the boy, was shivering in a doorway near his crossing, the man turned to look at him, and came back, and, having questioned him and found that he had not a friend in the world, said,

"Neither have I. Not one!" and gave him the price of a supper and a night's lodging. That the man had often spoken to him since; and asked him whether he slept sound at night, and how he bore cold and hunger, and whether he ever wished to die; and similar strange questions. That when the man had no money, he would say in passing, "I am as poor as you to-day, Jo;" but that when he had any, he had always (as the boy most heartily believes) been glad to give him some.

"He was wery good to me," says the boy, wiping his eyes with his wretched sleeve. "Wen I see him a layin' so stritched out just now, I wished he could have heerd me tell him so. He wos very good to me, he wos!"

As he shuffles down stairs, Mr. Snagsby, lying in wait for him, puts a half-crown in his hand. "If ever you see me coming past your crossing with my little woman—I mean a lady—" says Mr. Snagsby, with his finger on his nose, "don't allude to it!"

For some little time the Jurymen hang about the "Sol's Arms" colloquially. In the sequel, half a dozen are caught up in a cloud of pipe-smoke that pervades the parlour of the "Sol's Arms;" two stroll to Hampstead; and four engage to go half-price to the play at night, and top up with oysters. Little Swills is treated on several hands. Being asked what he thinks of the proceedings, characterises them (his strength lying in a slangular direction) as "a rummy start." The landlord of the "Sol's Arms," finding Little Swills so popular, commends him highly to the Jurymen and public; observing that, for a song in character, he don't know his equal, and that that man's character-wardrobe would fill a cart.

Thus, gradually the "Sol's Arms" melts into the shadowy night, and then flares out of it strong in gas. The Harmonic Meeting hour arriving, the gentleman of professional celebrity takes the chair; is faced (red-faced) by Little Swills; their friends rally round them, and support first-rate talent. In the zenith of the evening, Little Swills says, Gentlemen, if you'll permit me, I'll attempt a short description of a scene of real life that came off here to-day. Is much applauded and encouraged; goes out of the room as Swills; comes in as the Coroner (not the least in the world like him); describes the Inquest, with recreative intervals of pianoforte accompaniment to the refrain — With his (the Coroner's) tippy tol li doll, tippy tol lo doll, tippy tol li doll, Dee!

The jingling piano at last is silent, and the Harmonic friends rally round their pillows. Then there is rest around the lonely figure, now laid in its last earthly habitation; and it is watched by the gaunt eyes in the shutters through some quiet hours of night. If this forlorn man could have been prophetically seen lying here, by the mother at whose breast he nestled, a little child, with eyes upraised to her loving face, and soft hand scarcely knowing how to close upon the neck to which it crept, what an impossibility the vision would have seemed! O, if, in brighter days, the now-extinguished fire within him ever burned for one woman who held him in her heart, where is she, while these ashes are above the ground!

It is anything but a night of rest at Mr. Snagsby's, in Cook's Court; where Guster murders sleep, by going, as Mr. Snagsby himself allows—not to put too fine a point upon it—out of one fit into twenty. The occasion of this seizure is, that Guster has a tender heart, and a susceptible something that possibly might have been imagination, but for Tooting and her patron saint. Be it what it may, now, it was so direfully impressed at tea-time by Mr. Snagsby's account of the enquiry at which he had assisted, that at supper-time she projected herself into the kitchen, preceded by a flying Dutch-cheese, and fell into a fit of unusual duration; which she only came out of to go into another, and another, and so on through a chain of fits, with short intervals between, of which she has pathetically availed herself by consuming them in entreaties to Mrs. Snagsby not to give her warning "when she quite comes to;" and also in appeals to the whole establishment to lay her down on the stones, and go to bed. Hence, Mr. Snagsby at last hearing the cock at the little dairy in Cursitor Street go into that disinterested ecstasy of his on the subject of daylight, says, drawing a long breath, though the most patient of men, "I thought you was dead, I am sure!"

What question this enthusiastic fowl supposes he settles when he strains himself to such an extent, or why he should thus crow (so men crow on various triumphant public occasions, however) about what cannot be of any moment to him, is his affair. It is enough that daylight comes, morning comes, noon comes.

Then the active and intelligent, who has got into the morning papers as such, comes with his pauper company to Mr. Krook's, and bears off the body of our dear brother here departed, to a hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene, whence malignant diseases are communicated to the bodies of our dear brothers and sisters who have not departed; while our dear brothers and sisters who hang about official backstairs—would to Heaven they *had* departed!—are very complacent and agreeable. Into a beastly scrap of ground which a Turk would reject as a savage abomination, and a Caffre would shudder at, they bring our dear brother here departed to receive Christian burial.

With houses looking on, on every side, save where a reeking little tunnel of a court gives access to the iron gate—with every villainy of life in action close on death, and every poisonous element of death in action close on life—here, they lower our dear brother down a foot or two; here, sow him in corruption, to be raised in corruption; an avenging ghost at many a sick-bedside: a shameful testimony to future ages, how civilisation and barbarism walked this boastful island together.

Come night, come darkness, for you cannot come too soon, or stay too long, by such a place as this! Come, straggling lights into the windows of the ugly house; and you who do iniquity therein, do it at least with this dread scene shut out! Come, flame of gas, burning so sullenly above the iron gate, on which the poisoned air deposits its witch-ointment slimy to the touch! It is well that you should call to every passer-by, "Look here!"

With the night, comes a slouching figure through the tunnel-court, to the outside of the iron gate. It holds the gate with its hands, and looks in between the bars; stands looking in, for a little while.

It then, with an old broom it carries, softly sweeps the step, and makes the archway clean. It does so, very busily and trimly; looks in again, a little while; and so departs.

Jo, is it thou? Well, well! Though a rejected witness, who "can't exactly say" what will be done to him in greater hands than men's, thou art not quite in outer darkness. There is something like a distant ray of light in thy muttered reason for this:

"He wos wery good to me, he wos!"

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CHAPTER XII.

ON THE WATCH.

It has left off raining down in Lincolnshire, at last, and Chesney Wold has taken heart. Mrs. Rouncewell is full of hospitable cares, for Sir Leicester and my Lady are coming home from Paris. The fashionable intelligence has found it out, and communicates the glad tidings to benighted England. It has also found out, that they will entertain a brilliant and distinguished circle of the *élite* of the *beau monde* (the fashionable intelligence is weak in English, but a giant-refreshed in French), at the ancient and hospitable family seat in Lincolnshire.

For the greater honor of the brilliant and distinguished circle, and of Chesney Wold into the bargain, the broken arch of the bridge in the park is mended; and the water, now retired within its proper limits and again spanned gracefully, makes a figure in the prospect from the house. The clear cold sunshine glances into the brittle woods, and approvingly beholds the sharp wind scattering the leaves and drying the moss. It glides over the park after the moving shadows of the clouds, and chases them, and never catches them, all day. It looks in at the windows, and touches the ancestral portraits with bars and patches of brightness, never contemplated by the painters. Athwart the picture of my Lady, over the great chimney-piece, it throws a broad bend-sinister of light that strikes down crookedly into the hearth, and seems to rend it.

Through the same cold sunshine, and the same sharp wind, my Lady and Sir Leicester, in their travelling chariot, (my Lady's woman, and Sir Leicester's man affectionate in the rumble,) start for home. With a considerable amount of jingling and whip-cracking, and many plunging demonstrations on the part of two bare-backed horses, and two Centaurs with glazed hats, jack-boots, and flowing manes and tails, they rattle out of the yard of the Hôtel Bristol in the Place Vendôme, and canter between the sun-and-shadow-chequered colonnade of the Rue de Rivoli and the garden of the ill-fated palace of a headless king and queen, off by the Place of Concord, and the Elysian Fields, and the Gate of the Star, out of Paris.

Sooth to say, they cannot go away too fast; for, even here, my Lady Dedlock has been bored to death. Concert, assembly, opera, theatre, drive, nothing is new to my Lady, under the worn-out heavens. Only last Sunday, when poor wretches were gay—within the walls, playing with children among the clipped trees and the statues in the Palace Garden; walking, a score abreast, in the Elysian Fields, made more Elysian by performing dogs and wooden horses; between whiles filtering (a few) through the gloomy Cathedral of Our Lady, to say a word or two at the base of a pillar, within flare of a rusty little gridiron-full of gusty little tapers—without the walls, encompassing Paris with dancing, love-making, wine-drinking, tobacco-smoking, tomb-visiting, billiard, card, and domino playing, quack-doctoring, and much murderous refuse, animate and inanimate—only last Sunday, my Lady, in the desolation of Boredom and the clutch of Giant Despair, almost hated her own maid for being in spirits.

She cannot, therefore, go too fast from Paris. Weariness of soul lies before her, as it lies behind—her Ariel has put a girdle of it round the whole earth, and it cannot be unclasped—but the imperfect remedy is always to fly, from the last place where it has been experienced. Fling Paris back into the distance, then, exchanging it for endless avenues and cross-avenues of wintry trees! And, when next beheld, let it be some leagues away, with the Gate of the Star a white speck glittering in the sun, and the city a mere mound in a plain: two dark square towers rising out of it, and light and shadow descending on it aslant, like the angels in Jacob's dream!

Sir Leicester is generally in a complacent state, and rarely bored. When he has nothing else to do, he can always contemplate his own greatness. It is a considerable advantage to a man, to have so inexhaustible a subject. After reading his letters, he leans back in his corner of the carriage, and generally reviews his importance to society.

"You have an unusual amount of correspondence this morning?" says my Lady, after a long time. She is fatigued with reading. Has almost read a page in twenty miles.

"Nothing in it, though. Nothing whatever."

"I saw one of Mr. Tulkinghorn's long effusions, I think?"

"You see everything," says Sir Leicester, with admiration.

"Ha!" sighs my Lady. "He is the most tiresome of men!"

"He sends—I really beg your pardon—he sends," says Sir Leicester, selecting the letter, and unfolding it, "a message to you. Our stopping to change horses, as I came to his postscript, drove it out of my memory. I beg you'll excuse me. He says—" Sir Leicester is so long in taking out his eye-glass and adjusting it, that my Lady looks a little irritated. "He says 'In the matter of the right of way—' I beg your pardon, that's not the place. He says—yes! Here I have it! He says, 'I beg my respectful compliments to my Lady, who, I hope, has benefited by the change. Will you do me the favor to mention (as it may interest her), that I have something to tell her on her return, in reference to the person who copied the affidavit in the Chancery suit, which so powerfully stimulated her curiosity. I have seen him.'"

My Lady, leaning forward, looks out of her window.

"That's the message," observes Sir Leicester.

"I should like to walk a little," says my Lady, still looking out of her window.

"Walk?" repeats Sir Leicester, in a tone of surprise.

"I should like to walk a little," says my Lady, with unmistakeable distinctness. "Please to stop the carriage."

The carriage is stopped, the affectionate man alights from the rumble, opens the door, and lets down the steps, obedient to an impatient motion of my Lady's hand. My Lady alights so quickly, and walks away so quickly, that Sir Leicester, for all his scrupulous politeness, is unable to assist her, and is left behind. A space of a minute or two has elapsed before he comes up with her. She smiles, looks very handsome, takes his arm, lounges with him for a quarter of a mile, is very much bored, and resumes her seat in the carriage.

The rattle and clatter continue through the greater part of three days, with more or less of bell-jingling and whip-cracking, and more or less plunging of Centaurs and bare-backed horses. Their courtly politeness to each other, at the Hotels where they tarry, is the theme of general admiration. Though my Lord *is* a little aged for my Lady, says Madame, the hostess of the Golden Ape, and though he might be her amiable father, one can see at a glance that they love each other. One observes my Lord with his white hair, standing, hat in hand, to help my Lady to and from the carriage. One observes my Lady, how recognisant of my Lord's politeness, with an inclination of her gracious head,

and the concession of her so-genteel fingers! It is ravishing!

The sea has no appreciation of great men, but knocks them about like the small fry. It is habitually hard upon Sir Leicester, whose countenance it greenly mottles in the manner of sage-cheese, and in whose aristocratic system it effects a dismal revolution. It is the Radical of Nature to him. Nevertheless, his dignity gets over it, after stopping to refit; and he goes on with my Lady for Chesney Wold, lying only one night in London on the way to Lincolnshire.

Through the same cold sunlight—colder as the day declines,—and through the same sharp wind—sharper as the separate shadows of bare trees gloom together in the woods, and as the Ghost's Walk, touched at the western corner by a pile of fire in the sky, resigns itself to coming night,—they drive into the park. The Rooks, swinging in their lofty houses in the elm-tree avenue, seem to discuss the question of the occupancy of the carriage as it passes underneath; some agreeing that Sir Leicester and my Lady are come down; some arguing with malcontents who won't admit it; now, all consenting to consider the question disposed of; now, all breaking out again in violent debate, incited by one obstinate and drowsy bird, who will persist in putting in a last contradictory croak. Leaving them to swing and caw, the travelling chariot rolls on to the house; where fires gleam warmly through some of the windows, though not through so many as to give an inhabited expression to the darkening mass of front. But the brilliant and distinguished circle will soon do that. Mrs. Rouncewell is in attendance, and receives Sir Leicester's customary shake of the hand with a profound curtsey.

"How do you do, Mrs. Rouncewell? I am glad to see you."

"I hope I have the honor of welcoming you in good health, Sir Leicester?"

"In excellent health, Mrs. Rouncewell."

"My Lady is looking charmingly well," says Mrs. Rouncewell, with another curtsey.

My Lady signifies, without profuse expenditure of words, that she is as wearily well as she can hope to be.

But Rosa is in the distance, behind the housekeeper; and my Lady, who has not subdued the quickness of her observation, whatever else she may have conquered, asks:

"Who is that girl?"

"A young scholar of mine, my Lady. Rosa."

"Come here, Rosa!" Lady Dedlock beckons her, with even an appearance of interest. "Why, do you know how pretty you are, child?" she says, touching her shoulder with her two forefingers.

Rosa, very much abashed, says, "No, if you please, my Lady!" and glances up, and glances down, and don't know where to look, but looks all the prettier.

"How old are you?"

"Nineteen, my Lady."

"Nineteen," repeats my Lady, thoughtfully. "Take care they don't spoil you by flattery."

"Yes, my Lady."

My Lady taps her dimpled cheek with the same delicate gloved fingers, and goes on to the foot of the oak staircase, where Sir Leicester pauses for her as her knightly escort. A staring old Dedlock in a panel, as large as life and as dull, looks as if he didn't know what to make of it—which was probably his general state of mind in the days of Queen Elizabeth.

That evening, in the housekeeper's room, Rosa can do nothing but murmur Lady Dedlock's praises. She is so affable, so graceful, so beautiful, so elegant; has such a sweet voice, and such a thrilling touch, that Rosa can feel it yet! Mrs. Rouncewell confirms all this, not without personal pride, reserving only the one point of affability. Mrs. Rouncewell is not quite sure as to that. Heaven forbid that she should say a syllable in dispraise of any member of that excellent family; above all, of my Lady, whom the whole world admires; but if my Lady would only be "a little more free," not quite so cold and distant, Mrs. Rouncewell thinks she would be more affable.

"'Tis almost a pity," Mrs. Rouncewell adds—"almost," because it borders on impiety to suppose that anything could be better than it is, in such an express dispensation as the Dedlock affairs; "that my Lady has no family. If she had had a daughter now, a grown young lady, to interest her, I think she would have had the only kind of excellence she wants."

"Might not that have made her still more proud, grandmother?" says Watt; who has been home and come back again, he is such a good grandson.

"More and most, my dear," returns the housekeeper with dignity, "are words it's not my place to use—nor so much as to hear—applied to any drawback on my Lady."

"I beg your pardon, grandmother. But she *is* proud, is she not?"

"If she is, she has reason to be. The Dedlock family have always reason to be."

"Well!" says Watt, "it's to be hoped they line out of their Prayer-Books a certain passage for the common people about pride and vain-glory. Forgive me, grandmother! Only a joke!"

"Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock, my dear, are not fit subjects for joking."

"Sir Leicester is no joke by any means," says Watt; "and I humbly ask his pardon. I suppose, grandmother, that, even with the family and their guests down here, there is no objection to my prolonging my stay at the 'Dedlock Arms' for a day or two, as any other traveller might?"

"Surely, none in the world, child."

"I am glad of that," says Watt, "because I—because I have an inexpressible desire to extend my knowledge of this beautiful neighbourhood."

He happens to glance at Rosa, who looks down, and is very shy, indeed. But, according to the old superstition, it should be Rosa's ears that burn, and not her fresh bright cheeks; for my Lady's maid is holding forth about her at this moment, with surpassing energy.

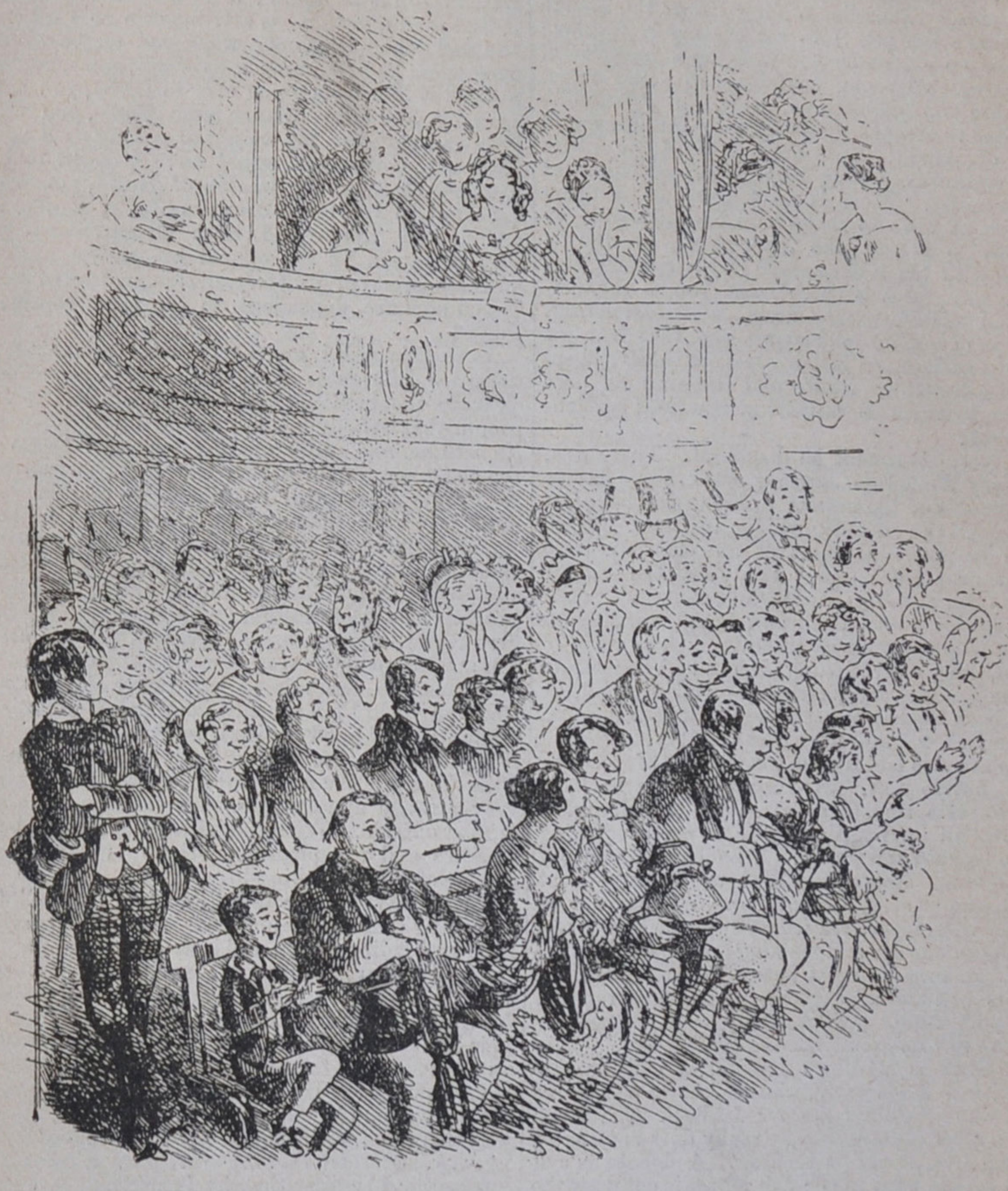
My Lady's maid is a Frenchwoman of two-and-thirty, from somewhere in the Southern country about Avignon and Marseilles—a large-eyed brown woman with black hair; who would be handsome, but for a certain feline mouth, and general uncomfortable tightness of face, rendering the jaws too eager, and the skull too prominent. There is something indefinably keen and wan about her anatomy; and she has a watchful way of looking out of the corners of her eyes without turning her head, which could be pleasantly dispensed with—especially when she is in an ill-humour and near knives. Through all the good taste of her dress and little adornments, these objections so express themselves, that she seems to go about like a very neat She-Wolf imperfectly tamed. Besides being accomplished in all the knowledge appertaining to her post, she is almost an Englishwoman in her acquaintance with the language—consequently, she is in no want of words to shower upon Rosa for having attracted my Lady's attention; and she pours them out with such grim ridicule as she sits at dinner, that her companion,

the affectionate man, is rather relieved when she arrives at the spoon stage of that performance.

Ha, ha, ha! She, Hortense, been in my Lady's service since five years, and always kept at the distance, and this doll, this puppet, caressed—absolutely caressed—by my Lady on the moment of her arriving at the house! Ha, ha, ha! "And do you know how pretty you are, child?"—"No, my Lady."—"You are right there! "And how old are you, child? And take care they do not spoil you by flattery, child!" O how droll! It is the *best* thing altogether."

In short, it is such an admirable thing, that Mademoiselle Hortense can't forget it; but at meals for days afterwards, even among her countrywomen and others attached in like capacity to the troop of visitors, relapses into silent enjoyment of the joke—an enjoyment expressed in her own convivial manner, by an additional tightness of face, thin elongation of compressed lips, and sidewise look: which intense appreciation of humor is frequently reflected in my Lady's mirrors, when my Lady is not among them.

All the mirrors in the house are brought into action now: many of them after a long blank. They reflect handsome faces, simpering faces, youthful faces, faces of threescore-and-ten that will not submit to be old; the entire collection of faces that have come to pass a January week or two



at Chesney Wold, and which the fashionable intelligence, a mighty hunter before the Lord, hunts with a keen scent, from their breaking cover at the Court of Saint James's to their being run down to Death. The place in Lincolnshire is all alive. By day, guns and voices are heard ringing in the woods, horsemen and carriages enliven the park-roads, servants and hangers-on pervade the Village and the "Dedlock Arms." Seen by night, from distant openings in the trees, the row of windows in the long drawing-room, where my Lady's picture hangs

over the great chimney-piece, is like a row of jewels set in a black frame. On Sunday, the chill little church is almost warmed by so much gallant company, and the general flavor of the Dedlock dust is quenched in delicate perfumes.

The brilliant and distinguished circle comprehends within it, no contracted amount of education, sense, courage, honor, beauty, and virtue. Yet there is something a little wrong about it, in despite of its immense advantages. What can it be?

Dandyism? There is no King George the Fourth now (more's the pity!) to set the dandy fashion; there are no clear-starched jack-towel neckcloths, no short-waisted coats, no false calves, no stays. There are no caricatures, now, of effeminate Exquisites so arrayed, swooning in opera boxes with excess of delight, and being revived by other dainty creatures, poking long-necked scent-bottles at their noses. There is no beau whom it takes four men at once to shake into his buckskins, or who goes to see all the Executions, or who is troubled with the self-reproach of having once consumed a pea. But is there Dandyism in the brilliant and distinguished circle notwithstanding, Dandyism of a more michievous sort, that has got below the surface and is doing less harmless things than jack-towelling itself, and stopping its own digestion, to which no rational person need particularly object?

Why, yes. It cannot be disguised. There *are*, at Chesney Wold this January week, some ladies and gentlemen of the newest fashion, who have set up a Dandyism—in Religion, for instance. Who, in mere lackadaisical want of an emotion, have agreed upon a little dandy talk about the Vulgar wanting faith in things in general; meaning, in the things that have been tried and found wanting, as though a fellow should unaccountably lose faith in a bad shilling after finding it out! Who would make the Vulgar very picturesque and faithful, by putting back the hands upon the Clock of Time, and cancelling a few hundred years of history.

There are also ladies and gentlemen of another fashion, not so new, but very elegant, who have agreed to put a smooth glaze on the world, and to keep down all its realities. For whom everything must be languid and pretty. Who have found out the perpetual stoppage. Who are to rejoice at nothing, and be sorry for nothing. Who are not to be disturbed by ideas. On whom even the Fine Arts, attending in powder and walking backward like the Lord Chamberlain, must array themselves in the milliners' and tailors' patterns of past generations, and be particularly careful not to be in earnest, or to receive any impress from the moving age.

Then there is my Lord Boodle, of considerable reputation with his party, who has known what office is, and who tells Sir Leicester Dedlock with much gravity, after dinner, that he really does not see to what the present age is tending. A debate is not what a debate used to be; the House is not what the House used to be; even a Cabinet is not what it formerly was. He perceives with astonishment, that supposing the present Government to be overthrown, the limited choice of the Crown, in the formation of a new Ministry, would lie between Lord Coodle and Sir Thomas Doodle—supposing it to be impossible for the Duke of Foodle to act with Goodle, which may be assumed to be the case in consequence of the breach arising out of that affair with Hoodle. Then, giving the Home Department and the Leadership of the House of Commons to Joodle, the Exchequer to Koodle, the Colonies to Loodle, and the Foreign Office to Moodle, what are you to do with Noodle? You can't offer him the Presidency of the Council; that is reserved for Poodle. You can't put him in the Woods and Forests; that is hardly good enough for Quoodle. What follows? That the country is shipwrecked, lost, and gone to pieces (as is made manifest to the patriotism of Sir Leicester Dedlock), because you can't provide for Noodle!

On the other hand, the Right Honorable William Buffy, M.P., contends across the table with some one else, that the shipwreck of the country—about which there is no doubt; it is only the manner of it that is in question—is attributable to Cuffy. If you had done with Cuffy what you ought to have done when he first came into Parliament, and had prevented him from going over to Duffy, you would have got him into alliance with Fuffy, you would have had with you the weight attaching as a smart debater to Guffy, you would have brought to bear upon the elections the wealth of Huffy, you would have got in for three counties Juffy, Kuffy, and Luffy; and you would have strengthened your administration by the official knowledge and the business habits of Muffy. All this, instead of being, as you now are, dependent on the mere caprice of Puffy!

As to this point, and as to some minor topics, there are differences of opinion; but it is perfectly clear to the brilliant and distinguished circle, all round, that nobody is in question but Boodle and his retinue, and Buffy and *his* retinue. These are the great actors for whom the stage is reserved. A People there are, no doubt—a certain large number of supernumeraries, who are to be occasionally addressed, and relied upon for shouts and choruses, as on the theatrical stage; but Boodle and Buffy, their followers and families, their heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, are the born first-actors, managers, and leaders, and no others can appear upon the scene for ever and ever.

In this, too, there is perhaps more dandyism at Chesney Wold than the brilliant and distinguished circle will find good for itself in the long run. For it is, even with the stillest and politest circles, as with the circle the necromancer draws around him—very strange appearances may be seen in active motion outside. With this difference; that, being realities and not phantoms, there is the greater danger of their breaking in.

Chesney Wold is quite full, anyhow; so full, that a burning sense of injury arises in the breasts of ill-lodged ladies' maids, and is not to be extinguished. Only one room is empty. It is a turret chamber of the third order of merit, plainly but comfortably furnished, and having an old-fashioned business air. It is Mr. Tulkinghorn's room, and is never bestowed on anybody else, for he may come at any time. He is not come yet. It is his quiet habit to walk across the park from the village, in fine weather; to drop into this room, as if he had never been out of it since he was last seen there; to request a servant to inform Sir Leicester that he is arrived, in case he should be wanted; and to appear ten minutes before dinner, in the shadow of the library door. He sleeps in his turret, with a complaining flag-staff over his head; and has some leads outside, on which, any fine morning when he is down here, his black figure may be seen walking before breakfast like a larger species of rook.

Every day before dinner, my Lady looks for him in the dusk of the library, but he is not there. Every day at dinner, my Lady glances down the table for the vacant place, that would be waiting to receive him if he had just arrived; but there is no vacant place. Every night, my Lady casually asks her maid:

"Is Mr. Tulkinghorn come?"

Every night the answer is, "No, my Lady, not yet."

One night, while having her hair undressed, my Lady loses herself in deep thought after this reply, until she sees her own brooding face in the opposite glass, and a pair of black eyes curiously observing her.

"Be so good as to attend," says my Lady then, addressing the reflection of Hortense, "to your business. You can contemplate your beauty at another time."

"Pardon! It was your Ladyship's beauty."

"That," says my Lady, "you needn't contemplate at all."

At length, one afternoon a little before sunset, when the bright groups of figures, which have for the last hour or two enlivened the Ghost's Walk, are all dispersed, and only Sir Leicester and my Lady remain upon the terrace, Mr. Tulkinghorn appears. He comes towards them at his usual methodical pace, which is never quickened, never slackened. He wears his usual expressionless mask—if it be a mask—and carries family secrets in every limb of his body, and every crease of his dress. Whether his whole soul is devoted to the great, or whether he yields them nothing beyond the services he sells, is his personal secret. He keeps it, as he keeps the secrets of his clients; he is his own client in that matter, and will never betray himself.

"How do you do, Mr. Tulkinghorn?" says Sir Leicester, giving him his hand.

Mr. Tulkinghorn is quite well. Sir Leicester is quite well. My Lady is quite well. All highly satisfactory. The lawyer, with his hands behind him, walks, at Sir Leicester's side, along the terrace. My Lady walks upon the other side.

"We expected you before," says Sir Leicester. A gracious observation. As much as to say, "Mr. Tulkinghorn, we remember your existence when you are not here to remind us of it by your presence. We bestow a fragment of our minds upon you, sir, you see!"

Mr. Tulkinghorn, comprehending it, inclines his head, and says he is much obliged.

"I should have come down sooner," he explains, "but that I have been much engaged with those matters in the several suits between yourself and Boythorn."

"A man of a very ill-regulated mind," observes Sir Leicester, with severity. "An extremely dangerous person in any community. A man of a very low character of mind."

"He is obstinate," says Mr. Tulkinghorn.

"It is natural to such a man to be so," says Sir Leicester, looking most profoundly obstinate himself. "I am not at all surprised to hear it."

"The only question is," pursues the lawyer, "whether you will give up anything."

"No, sir," replies Sir Leicester. "Nothing. *I* give up?"

"I don't mean anything of importance. That, of course, I know you would not abandon. I mean any minor point."

"Mr. Tulkinghorn," returns Sir Leicester, "there can be no minor point between myself and Mr. Boythorn. If I go farther, and observe that I cannot readily conceive how *any* right of mine can be a minor point, I speak not so much in reference to myself as an individual, as in reference to the family position I have it in charge to maintain."

Mr. Tulkinghorn inclines his head again. "I have now my instructions," he says. "Mr. Boythorn will give us a good deal of trouble——"

"It is the character of such a mind, Mr. Tulkinghorn," Sir Leicester interrupts him, "*to* give trouble. An exceedingly ill-conditioned, levelling person. A person who, fifty years ago, would probably have been tried at the Old Bailey for some demagogue proceeding, and severely punished—if not," adds Sir Leicester, after a moment's pause, "if not hanged, drawn, and quartered."

Sir Leicester appears to discharge his stately breast of a burden, in passing this capital sentence; as if it were the next satisfactory thing to having the sentence executed.

"But night is coming on," says he, "and my Lady will take cold. My dear, let us go in."

As they turn towards the hall-door, Lady Dedlock addresses Mr. Tulkinghorn for the first time.

"You sent me a message respecting the person whose writing I happened to inquire about. It was like you to remember the circumstance; I had quite forgotten it. Your message reminded me of it again. I can't imagine what association I had, with a hand like that; but I surely had some."

"You had some?" Mr. Tulkinghorn repeats.

"O yes!" returns my Lady, carelessly. "I think I must have had some. And did you really take the trouble to find out the writer of that actual thing—what is it!—Affidavit!"

"Yes."

"How very odd!"

They pass into a sombre breakfast-room on the ground-floor, lighted in the day by two deep windows. It is now twilight. The fire glows brightly on the panelled wall, and palely on the window-glass, where, through the cold reflection of the blaze, the colder landscape shudders in the wind, and a grey mist creeps along: the only traveller besides the waste of clouds.

My Lady lounges in a great chair in the chimney-corner, and Sir Leicester takes another great chair opposite. The lawyer stands before the fire, with his hand out at arm's length, shading his face. He looks across his arm at my Lady.

"Yes," he says, "I inquired about the man, and found him. And, what is very strange, I found him—"

"Not to be any out-of-the-way person, I am afraid!" Lady Dedlock languidly anticipates.

"I found him dead."

"O dear me!" remonstrated Sir Leicester. Not so much shocked by the fact, as by the fact of the fact being mentioned.

"I was directed to his lodging—a miserable, poverty-stricken place—and I found him dead."

"You will excuse me, Mr. Tulkinghorn," observes Sir Leicester. "I think the less said—"

"Pray, Sir Leicester, let me hear the story out:" (it is my Lady speaking). "It is quite a story for twilight. How very shocking! Dead?"

Mr. Tulkinghorn re-asserts it by another inclination of his head. "Whether by his own hand—"

"Upon my honor!" cries Sir Leicester. "Really!"

"Do let me hear the story!" says my Lady.

"Whatever you desire, my dear. But, I must say—"

"No, you mustn't say! Go on, Mr. Tulkinghorn."

Sir Leicester's gallantry concedes the point; though he still feels that to bring this sort of squalor among the upper classes is really—really—

"I was about to say," resumes the lawyer, with undisturbed calmness, "that whether he had died by his own hand or not, it was beyond my power to tell you. I should amend that phrase, however, by saying that he had unquestionably died of his own

act; though whether by his own deliberate intention, or by mischance, can never certainly be known. The coroner's jury found that he took the poison accidentally."

"And what kind of man," my Lady asks, "was this deplorable creature?"

"Very difficult to say," returns the lawyer, shaking his head. "He had lived so wretchedly, and was so neglected, with his gipsy color, and his wild black hair and beard, that I should have considered him the commonest of the common. The surgeon had a notion that he had once been something better, both in appearance and condition."

"What did they call the wretched being?"

"They called him what he had called himself, but no one knew his name."

"Not even any one who had attended on him?"

"No one had attended on him. He was found dead. In fact, I found him."

"Without any clue to anything more?"

"Without any; there was," says the lawyer, meditatively, "an old portmanteau; but—No, there were no papers."

During the utterance of every word of this short dialogue, Lady Dedlock and Mr. Tulkinghorn, without any other alteration in their customary deportment, have looked very steadily at one another—as was natural, perhaps, in the discussion of so unusual a subject. Sir Leicester has looked at the fire, with the general expression of the Dedlock on the staircase. The story being told, he renews his stately protest, saying, that as it is quite clear that no association in my Lady's mind can possibly be traceable to this poor wretch (unless he was a begging-letter writer), he trusts to hear no more about a subject so far removed from my Lady's station.

"Certainly, a collection of horrors," says my Lady, gathering up her mantles and furs; "but they interest one for the moment! Have the kindness, Mr. Tulkinghorn, to open the door for me."

Mr. Tulkinghorn does so with deference, and holds it open while she passes out. She passes close to him, with her usual fatigued manner, and insolent grace. They meet again at dinner—again, next day—again, for many days in succession. Lady Dedlock is always the same exhausted deity, surrounded by worshippers, and terribly liable to be bored to death, even while presiding at her own shrine. Mr. Tulkinghorn is always the same speechless repository of noble confidences: so oddly out of place, and yet so perfectly at home. They appear to take as little note of one another, as any two people, enclosed within the same walls, could. But, whether each evermore watches and suspects the other, evermore mistrustful of some great reservation; whether each is evermore prepared at all points for the other, and never to be taken unawares; what each would give to know how much the other knows—all this is hidden, for the time, in their own hearts.

CHAPTER XIII.

ESTHER'S NARRATIVE.

We held many consultations about what Richard was to be: first, without Mr. Jarndyce, as he had requested, and afterwards with him; but it was a long time before we seemed to make progress. Richard said he was ready for anything. When Mr. Jarndyce doubted whether he might not already be too old to enter the Navy, Richard said he had thought of that, and perhaps he was. When Mr. Jarndyce asked him what he thought of the Army, Richard said he had thought of that, too, and it wasn't a bad idea. When Mr. Jarndyce advised him to try and decide within himself, whether his old preference for the sea was an ordinary boyish inclination, or a strong impulse, Richard answered, Well, he really *had* tried very often, and he couldn't make out.

"How much of this indecision of character," Mr. Jarndyce said to me, "is chargeable on that incomprehensible heap of uncertainty and procrastination on which he has been thrown from his birth, I don't pretend to say; but that Chancery, among its other sins, is responsible for some of it, I can plainly see. It has engendered or confirmed in him a habit of putting off—and trusting to this, that, and the other chance, without knowing what chance—and dismissing everything as unsettled, uncertain, and confused. The character of much older and steadier people may be even changed by the circumstances surrounding them. It would be too much to expect that a boy's, in its formation, should be the subject of such influences, and escape them."

I felt this to be true; though, if I may venture to mention what I thought besides, I thought it much to be regretted that Richard'. education had not counteracted those influences, or directed his character. He had been eight years at a public school, and had learnt, I understood, to make Latin Verses of several sorts, in the most admirable manner. But I never heard that it had been anybody's business to find out what his natural bent was, or where his failings lay, or to adapt any kind of knowledge to *him*. *He* had been adapted to the Verses, and had learnt the art of making them to such perfection, that if he had remained at school until he was of age, I suppose he could only have gone on making them over and over again, unless he had enlarged his education by forgetting how to do it. Still, although I had no doubt that they were very beautiful, and very improving, and very sufficient for a great many purposes of life, and always remembered all through life, I did doubt whether Richard would not have profited by some one studying him a little, instead of his studying them quite so much.

To be sure, I knew nothing of the subject, and do not even now know whether the young gentlemen of classic Rome or Greece made verses to the same extent—or whether the young gentlemen of any country ever did.

"I haven't the least idea," said Richard, musing, "what I had better be. Except that I am quite sure I don't want to go into the Church, it's a toss-up."

"You have no inclination in Mr. Kenge's way?" suggested Mr. Jarndyce.

"I don't know that, sir!" replied Richard. "I am fond of boating. Articled clerks go a good deal on the water. It's a capital profession!"

"Surgeon—" suggested Mr. Jarndyce.

"That's the thing, sir!" cried Richard.

I doubt if he had ever once thought of it before.

"That's the thing, sir!" repeated Richard, with the greatest enthusiasm. "We have got it at last. M.R.C.S.!"

He was not to be laughed out of it, though he laughed at it heartily. He said he had chosen his profession, and the more he thought of it, the more he felt that his destiny was clear; the art of healing was the art of all others for him. Mistrusting that he only came to this conclusion, because, having never had much chance of finding out for himself what he was fitted for, and having never been guided to the discovery, he was taken by the newest idea, and was glad to get rid of the trouble of consideration, I wondered whether the Latin Verses often

ended in this, or whether Richard's was a solitary case.

Mr. Jarndyce took great pains to talk with him seriously, and to put it to his good sense not to deceive himself in so important a matter. Richard was a little grave after these interviews; but invariably told Ada and me "that it was all right," and then began to talk about something else.

"By Heaven!" cried Mr. Boythorn, who interested himself strongly in the subject—though I need not say that, for he could do nothing weakly; "I rejoice to find a young gentleman of spirit and gallantry devoting himself to that noble profession! The more spirit there is in it, the better for mankind, and the worse for those mercenary taskmasters and low tricksters who delight in putting that illustrious art at a disadvantage in the world. By all that is base and despicable," cried Mr. Boythorn, "the treatment of Surgeons aboard ship is such, that I would submit the legs—both legs—of every member of the Admiralty Board to a compound fracture, and render it a transportable offence in any qualified practitioner to set them, if the system were not wholly changed in eight-and-forty hours!"

"Wouldn't you give them a week?" asked Mr. Jarndyce.

"No!" cried Mr. Boythorn, firmly. "Not on any consideration! Eight-and-forty hours! As to Corporations, Parishes, Vestry-Boards, and similar gatherings of jolter-headed clods, who assemble to exchange such speeches that, by Heaven! they ought to be worked in quicksilver mines for the short remainder of their miserable existence, if it were only to prevent their detestable English from contaminating a language spoken in the presence of the Sun—as to those fellows, who meanly take advantage of the ardor of gentlemen in the pursuit of knowledge, to recompense the inestimable services of the best years of their lives, their long study, and their expensive education, with pittances too small for the acceptance of clerks, I would have the necks of every one of them wrung, and their skulls arranged in Surgeons' Hall for the contemplation of the whole profession—in order that its younger members might understand from actual measurement, in early life, *how* thick skulls may become!"

He wound up this vehement declaration by looking round upon us with a most agreeable smile, and suddenly thundering, Ha, ha, ha! over and over again, until anybody else might have been expected to be quite subdued by the exertion.

As Richard still continued to say that he was fixed in his choice, after repeated periods for consideration had been recommended by Mr. Jarndyce, and had expired; and as he still continued to assure Ada and me, in the same final manner, that it was "all right;" it became advisable to take Mr. Kenge into council. Mr. Kenge, therefore, came down to dinner one day, and leaned back in his chair, and turned his eye-glasses over and over, and spoke in a sonorous voice, and did exactly what I remembered to have seen him do when I was a little girl.

"Ah!" said Mr. Kenge. "Yes. Well! A very good profession, Mr. Jarndyce; a very good profession."

"The course of study and preparation requires to be diligently pursued," observed my Guardian, with a glance at Richard.

"O, no doubt," said Mr. Kenge, "Diligently."

"But that being the case, more or less, with all pursuits that are worth much," said Mr. Jarndyce, "it is not a special consideration which another choice would be likely to escape."

"Truly," said Mr. Kenge. "And Mr. Richard Carstone, who has so meritoriously acquitted himself in the—shall I say the classic shades?—in which his youth had been passed, will, no doubt, apply the habits, if not the principles and practice, of versification in that tongue in which a poet was said (unless I mistake) to be born, not made, to the more eminently practical field of action on which he enters."

"You may rely upon it," said Richard, in his off-hand manner, "that I shall go at it, and do my best."

"Very well, Mr. Jarndyce!" said Mr. Kenge, gently nodding his head. "Really, when we are assured by Mr. Richard that he means to go at it, and to do his best," nodding feelingly and smoothly over those expressions; "I would submit to you, that we have only to inquire into the best mode of carrying out the object of his ambition. Now, with reference to placing Mr. Richard with some sufficiently eminent practitioner. Is there any one in view at present?"

"No one, Rick, I think?" said my Guardian.

"No one, sir," said Richard.

"Quite so!" observed Mr. Kenge. "As to situation, now. Is there any particular feeling on that head?"

"N—no," said Richard.

"Quite so!" observed Mr. Kenge again.

"I should like a little variety," said Richard; "—I mean a good range of experience."

"Very requisite, no doubt," returned Mr. Kenge. "I think this may be easily arranged, Mr. Jarndyce? We have only, in the first place, to discover a sufficiently eligible practitioner; and, as soon as we make our want—and, shall I add, our ability to pay a premium?—known, our only difficulty will be in the selection of one from a large number. We have only, in the second place, to observe those little formalities which are rendered necessary by our time of life, and our being under the guardianship of the Court. We shall soon be—shall I say, in Mr. Richard's own light-hearted manner, 'going at it'—to our heart's content. It is a coincidence," said Mr. Kenge, with a tinge of melancholy in his smile, "one of those coincidences which may or may not require an explanation beyond our present limited faculties, that I have a cousin in the medical profession. He might be deemed eligible by you, and might be disposed to respond to this proposal. I can answer for him as little as for you; but he *might!*"

As this was an opening in the prospect, it was arranged that Mr. Kenge should see his cousin. And as Mr. Jarndyce had before proposed to take us to London for a few weeks, it was settled next day that we should make our visit at once, and combine Richard's business with it.

Mr. Boythorn leaving us within a week, we took up our abode at a cheerful lodging near Oxford Street, over an upholsterer's shop. London was a great wonder to us, and we were out for hours and hours at a time, seeing the sights; which appeared to be less capable of exhaustion than we were. We made the round of the principal theatres, too, with great delight, and saw all the plays that were worth seeing. I mention this, because it was at the theatre that I began to be made uncomfortable again, by Mr. Guppy.

I was sitting in front of the box one night with Ada; and Richard was in the place he liked best, behind Ada's chair; when, happening to look down into the pit, I saw Mr. Guppy, with his hair flattened down upon his head, and woe depicted in his face, looking up at me. I felt, all through the performance, that he never looked at the

actors, but constantly looked at me, and always with a carefully prepared expression of the deepest misery and the profoundest dejection.

It quite spoiled my pleasure for that night, because it was so very embarrassing and so very ridiculous. But, from that time forth, we never went to the play, without my seeing Mr. Guppy in the pit—always with his hair straight and flat, his shirt-collar turned down, and a general feebleness about him. If he were not there when we went in, and I began to hope he would not come, and yielded myself for a little while to the interest of the scene, I was certain to encounter his languishing eyes when I least expected it, and, from that time, to be quite sure that they were fixed upon me all the evening.

I really cannot express how uneasy this made me. If he would only have brushed up his hair, or turned up his collar, it would have been bad enough; but to know that that absurd figure was always gazing at me, and always in that demonstrative state of despondency, put such a constraint upon me that I did not like to laugh at the play, or to cry at it, or to move, or to speak. I seemed able to do nothing naturally. As to escaping Mr. Guppy by going to the back of the box, I could not bear to do that; because I knew Richard and Ada relied on having me next them, and that they could never have talked together so happily if anybody else had been in my place. So there I sat, not knowing where to look—for wherever I looked, I knew Mr. Guppy's eyes were following me—and thinking of the dreadful expense to which this young man was putting himself, on my account.

Sometimes I thought of telling Mr. Jarndyce. Then I feared that the young man would lose his situation, and that I might ruin him. Sometimes, I thought of confiding in Richard; but was deterred by the possibility of his fighting Mr. Guppy, and giving him black eyes. Sometimes, I thought, should I frown at him, or shake my head. Then I felt I could not do it. Sometimes, I considered whether I should write to his mother, but that ended in my being convinced that to open a correspondence would be to make the matter worse. I always came to the conclusion, finally, that I could do nothing. Mr. Guppy's perseverance, all this time, not only produced him regularly at any theatre to which we went, but caused him to appear in the crowd as we were coming out, and even to get up behind our fly—where I am sure I saw him, two or three times, struggling among the most dreadful spikes. After we got home, he haunted a post opposite our house. The upholsterer's where we lodged, being at the corner of two streets, and my bedroom window being opposite the post, I was afraid to go near the window when I went upstairs, lest I should see him (as I did one moonlight night) leaning against the post, and evidently catching cold. If Mr. Guppy had not been, fortunately for me, engaged in the day-time, I really should have had no rest from him.

While we were making this round of gaieties in which Mr. Guppy so extraordinarly participated, the business which had helped to bring us to town was not neglected. Mr. Kenge's cousin was a Mr. Bayham Badger, who had a good practice at Chelsea, and attended a large public Institution besides. He was quite willing to receive Richard into his house, and to superintend his studies; and as it seemed that those could be pursued advantageously under Mr. Badger's roof, and as Mr. Badger liked Richard, and as Richard said he liked Mr. Badger "well enough," an agreement was made, the Lord Chancellor's consent was obtained, and it was all settled.

On the day when matters were concluded between Richard and Mr. Badger, we were all under engagement to dine at Mr. Badger's house. We were to be "merely a family party," Mrs. Badger's note said; and we found no lady there but Mrs. Badger herself. She was surrounded in the drawing-room by various objects, indicative of her painting a little, playing the piano a little, playing the guitar a little, playing the harp a little, singing a little, working a little, reading a little, writing poetry a little, and botanizing a little. She was a lady of about fifty, I should think, youthfully dressed, and of a very fine complexion. If I add, to the little list of her accomplishments, that she rouged a little, I do not mean that there was any harm in it.

Mr. Bayham Badger himself was a pink, fresh-faced, crisp-looking gentleman, with a weak voice, white teeth, light hair, and surprised eyes: some years younger, I should say, than Mrs. Bayham Badger. He admired her exceedingly, but principally, and to begin with, on the curious ground (as it seemed to us) of her having had three husbands. We had barely taken our seats, when he said to Mr. Jarndyce quite triumphantly,

"You would hardly suppose that I am Mrs. Bayham Badger's third!"

"Indeed?" said Mr. Jarndyce.

"Her third!" said Mr. Badger. "Mrs. Bayham Badger has not the appearance, Miss Summerson, of a lady who had two former husbands?"

I said "Not at all!"

"And most remarkable men!" said Mr. Badger, in a tone of confidence. "Captain Swosser of the Royal Navy, who was Mrs. Badger's first husband, was a very distinguished officer indeed. The name of Professor Dingo, my immediate predecessor, is one of European reputation."

Mrs. Badger overheard him, and smiled.

"Yes, my dear!" Mr. Badger replied to the smile, "I was observing to Mr. Jarndyce and Miss Summerson, that you had had two former husbands—both very distinguished men. And they found it, as people generally do, difficult to believe."

"I was barely twenty," said Mrs. Badger, "when I married Captain Swosser of the Royal Navy. I was in the Mediterranean with him; I am quite a Sailor. On the twelfth anniversary of my wedding-day, I became the wife of Professor Dingo."

("Of European reputation," added Mr. Badger in an under tone.)

"And when Mr. Badger and myself were married," pursued Mrs. Badger, "we were married on the same day of the year. I had become attached to the day."

"So that Mrs. Badger has been married to three husbands—two of them highly distinguished men," said Mr. Badger, summing up the facts; "and, each time, upon the twenty-first of March at Eleven in the forenoon!"

We all expressed our admiration.

"But for Mr. Badger's modesty," said Mr. Jarndyce, "I would take leave to correct him, and say three distinguished men."

"Thank you, Mr. Jarndyce! What I always tell him!" observed Mrs. Badger.

"And, my dear," said Mr. Badger, "what do *I* always tell you? That without any affectation of disparaging such professional distinction as I may have attained (which our friend Mr. Carstone will have many opportunities of estimating), I am not so weak—no, really," said Mr. Badger to us generally, "so unreasonable—as to put my reputation on the same footing with such first-rate men as Captain Swosser and Professor Dingo. Perhaps

you may be interested, Mr. Jarndyce," continued Mr. Bayham Badger, leading the way into the next drawing-room, "in this portrait of Captain Swosser. It was taken on his return home from the African Station, where he had suffered from the fever of the country. Mrs. Badger considers it too yellow. But it's a very fine head. A very fine head!"

We all echoed "A very fine head!"

"I feel when I look at it," said Mr. Badger, "'that's a man I should like to have seen!' It strikingly bespeaks the first-class man that Captain Swosser pre-eminently was. On the other side, Professor Dingo. I knew him well—attended him in his last illness—a speaking likeness! Over the piano, Mrs. Bayham Badger when Mrs. Swosser. Over the sofa, Mrs. Bayham Badger when Mrs. Dingo. Of Mrs. Bayham Badger *in esse*, I possess the original, and have no copy."

Dinner was now announced, and we went down stairs. It was a very genteel entertainment, very handsomely served. But the Captain and the Professor still ran in Mr. Badger's head, and, as Ada and I had the honour of being under his particular care, we had the full benefit of them.

"Water, Miss Summerson? Allow me! Not in that tumbler, pray. Bring me the Professor's goblet, James!"

Ada very much admired some artificial flowers, under a glass.

"Astonishing how they keep!" said Mr. Badger. "They were presented to Mrs. Bayham Badger when she was in the Mediterranean."

He invited Mr. Jarndyce to take a glass of claret.

"Not that claret!" he said. "This is an occasion, and *on* an occasion I produce some very special claret I happen to have. (James, Captain Swosser's wine!) Mr. Jarndyce, this is a wine that was imported by the Captain, we will not say how many years ago. You will find it very curious. My dear, I shall be happy to take some of this wine with you. (Captain Swosser's claret to your mistress, James!) My love, your health!"

After dinner, when we ladies retired, we took Mrs. Badger's first and second husband with us. Mrs. Badger gave us, in the drawing-room, a Biographical sketch of the life and services of Captain Swosser before his marriage, and a more minute account of him dating from the time when he fell in love with her, at a ball on board the Crippler, given to the officers of that ship when she lay in Plymouth Harbor.

"The dear old Crippler!" said Mrs. Badger, shaking her head. "She was a noble vessel. Trim, ship-shape, all a taunto, as Captain Swosser used to say. You must excuse me if I occasionally introduce a nautical expression; I was quite a sailor once. Captain Swosser loved that craft for my sake. When she was no longer in commission, he frequently said that if he were rich enough to buy her old hulk, he would have an inscription let into the timbers of the quarter-deck where we stood as partners in the dance, to mark the spot where he fell—raked fore and aft (Captain Swosser used to say) by the fire from my tops. It was his naval way of mentioning my eyes."

Mrs. Badger shook her head, sighed, and looked in the glass.

"It was a great change from Captain Swosser to Professor Dingo," she resumed, with a plaintive smile. "I felt it a good deal at first. Such an entire revolution in my mode of life! But custom, combined with science—particularly science—inured me to it. Being the Professor's sole companion in his botanical excursions, I almost forgot that I had ever been afloat, and became quite learned. It is singular that the Professor was the Antipodes of Captain Swosser, and that Mr. Badger is not in the least like either!"

We then passed into a narrative of the deaths of Captain Swosser and Professor Dingo, both of whom seemed to have had very bad complaints. In the course of it, Mrs. Badger signified to us that she had never madly loved but once; and that the object of that wild affection, never to be recalled in its fresh enthusiasm, was Captain Swosser. The Professor was yet dying by inches in the most dismal manner, and Mrs. Badger was giving us imitations of his way of saying, with great difficulty, "Where is Laura? Let Laura give me my toast and water!" when the entrance of the gentlemen consigned him to the tomb.

Now, I observed that evening, as I had observed for some days past, that Ada and Richard were more than ever attached to each other's society; which was but natural, seeing that they were going to be separated so soon. I was therefore not very much surprised when we got home, and Ada and I retired upstairs, to find Ada more silent than usual; though I was not quite prepared for her coming into my arms, and beginning to speak to me, with her face hidden.

"My darling Esther!" murmured Ada. "I have a great secret to tell you!"

A mighty secret, my pretty one, no doubt!

"What is it, Ada?"

"O Esther, you would never guess!"

"Shall I try to guess?" said I.

"O no! Don't! Pray, don't!" cried Ada, very much startled by the idea of my doing so.

"Now, I wonder who it can be about?" said I, pretending to consider.

"It's about," said Ada, in a whisper. "It's about—my cousin Richard!"

"Well, my own!" said I, kissing her bright hair, which was all I could see. "And what about him?"

"O, Esther, you would never guess!"

It was so pretty to have her clinging to me in that way, hiding her face; and to know that she was not crying in sorrow, but in a little glow of joy, and pride, and hope; that I would not help her just yet.

"He says—I know it's very foolish, we are both so young—but he says," with a burst of tears, "that he loves me dearly, Esther."

"Does he indeed?" said I. "I never heard of such a thing! Why, my pet of pets, I could have told you that, weeks and weeks ago!"

To see Ada lift up her flushed face in joyful surprise, and hold me round the neck, and laugh, and cry, and blush, and laugh, was so pleasant!

"Why, my darling!" said I, "what a goose you must take me for! Your cousin Richard has been loving you as plainly as he could, for I don't know how long!"

"And yet you never said a word about it!" cried Ada, kissing me.

"No, my love," said I. "I waited to be told."

"But now I have told you, you don't think it wrong of me; do you?" returned Ada. She might have coaxed me to say No, if I had been the hardest-hearted Duenna in the world. Not being that yet, I said No very freely.

"And now," said I, "I know the worst of it."

"O, that's not quite the worst of it, Esther dear!" cried Ada, holding me tighter, and laying down her face again upon my breast.

"No," said I. "Not even that?"

"No, not even that!" said Ada, shaking her head.

"Why, you never mean to say—!" I was beginning in joke.

But Ada, looking up, and smiling through her tears, cried, "Yes, I do! You know, you know I do!" and then sobbed out, "With all my heart I do! With all my whole heart, Esther!"

I told her, laughing, why I had known that, too, just as well as I had known the other! And we sat just as well as I had known the other! And we sat before the fire, and I had all the talking to myself for a little while (though there was not much of it); and Ada was soon quiet and happy.

"Do you think my cousin John knows, dear Dame Durden?" she asked.

"Unless my cousin John is blind, my pet," said I, "I should think my cousin John knows pretty well as much as we know."

"We want to speak to him before Richard goes," said Ada, timidly, "and we wanted you to advise us, and to tell him so. Perhaps you wouldn't mind Richard's coming in, Dame Durden?"

"O! Richard is outside, is he, my dear?" said I.

"I am not quite certain," returned Ada, with a bashful simplicity that would have won my heart, if she had not won it long before; "but I think he's waiting at the door."

There he was, of course. They brought a chair on either side of me, and put me between them, and really seemed to have fallen in love with me, instead of one another; they were so confiding, and so trustful, and so fond of me. They went on in their own wild way for a little while—*I* never stopped them; I enjoyed it too much myself—and then we gradually fell to considering how young they were, and how there must be a lapse of several years before this early love could come to anything, and how it could come to happiness only if it were real and lasting, and inspired them with a steady resolution to do their duty to each other, with constancy, fortitude, and perseverance: each always for the other's sake. Well! Richard said that he would work his fingers to the bone for Ada, and Ada said that she would work her fingers to the bone for Richard, and they called me all sorts of endearing and sensible names, and we sat there, advising and talking, half the night. Finally, before we parted, I gave them my promise to speak to their cousin John to-morrow.

So, when to-morrow came, I went to my Guardian after breakfast, in the room that was our town-substitute for the Growlery, and told him that I had it in trust to tell him something.

"Well, little woman," said he, shutting up his book, "if you have accepted the trust, there can be no harm in it."

"I hope not, Guardian," said I. "I can guarantee that there is no secresy in it. For it only happened yesterday."

"Aye? And what is it, Esther?"

"Guardian," said I, "you remember the happy night when we first came down to Bleak House? When Ada was singing in the dark room?"

I wished to recall to his remembrance the look he had given me then. Unless I am much mistaken, I saw that I did so.

"Because," said I, with a little hesitation.

"Yes, my dear!" said he. "Don't hurry."

"Because," said I, "Ada and Richard have fallen in love. And have told each other so."

"Already?" cried my Guardian, quite astonished.

"Yes!" said I, "and to tell you the truth, Guardian, I rather expected it."

"The deuce you did!" said he.

He sat considering for a minute or two; with his smile, at once so handsome and so kind, upon his changing face; and then requested me to let them know that he wished to see them. When they came, he encircled Ada with one arm, in his fatherly way, and addressed himself to Richard with a cheerful gravity.

"Rick," said Mr. Jarndyce, "I am glad to have won your confidence. I hope to preserve it. When I contemplated these relations between us four which have so brightened my life, and so invested it with new interests and pleasures, I certainly did contemplate, afar off, the possibility of you and your pretty cousin here (don't be shy, Ada, don't be shy, my dear!) being in a mind to go through life together. I saw, and do see, many reasons to make it desirable. But that was afar off, Rick, afar off!"

"We look afar off, sir," returned Richard.

"Well!" said Mr. Jarndyce. "That's rational. Now, hear me, my dears! I might tell you that you don't know your own minds yet; that a thousand things may happen to divert you from one another; that it is well this chain of flowers you have taken up is very easily broken, or it might become a chain of lead. But I will not do that. Such wisdom will come soon enough, I dare say, if it is to come at all. I will assume that, a few years hence, you will be in your hearts to one another, what you are to-day. All I say before speaking to you according to that assumption is, if you *do* change—if you *do* come to find that you are more commonplace cousins to each other as man and woman, than you were as boy and girl (your manhood will excuse me, Rick!)—don't be ashamed still to confide in me, for there will be nothing monstrous or uncommon in it. I am only your friend and distant kinsman. I have no power over you whatever. But I wish and hope to retain your confidence, if I do nothing to forfeit it."

"I am very sure, sir," returned Richard, "that I speak for Ada, too, when I say that you have the strongest power over us both—rooted in respect, gratitude, and affection—strengthening every day."

"Dear cousin John," said Ada, on his shoulder, "my father's place can never be empty again. All the love and duty I could ever have rendered to him, is transferred to you."

"Come!" said Mr. Jarndyce. "Now for our assumption. Now we lift our eyes up, and look hopefully at the distance! Rick, the world is before you; and it is most probable that as you enter it, so it will receive you. Trust in nothing but in Providence and your own efforts. Never separate the two, like the heathen waggoner. Constancy in love is a good thing; but it means nothing, and is nothing, without constancy in every kind of effort. If you had the abilities of all the great men, past and present, you could do nothing well, without sincerely meaning it, and setting about it. If you entertain the supposition that any real success, in great things or in small, ever was or could be, ever will or can be, wrested from Fortune by fits and starts, leave that wrong idea here, or leave your cousin Ada here."

"I will leave *it* here, sir," replied Richard, smiling, "if I brought it here just now (but I hope I did not), and will work my way on to my cousin Ada in the hopeful distance."

"Right!" said Mr. Jarndyce. "If you are not to make her happy, why should you pursue her?"

"I wouldn't make her unhappy—no, not even for her love," retorted Richard, proudly.

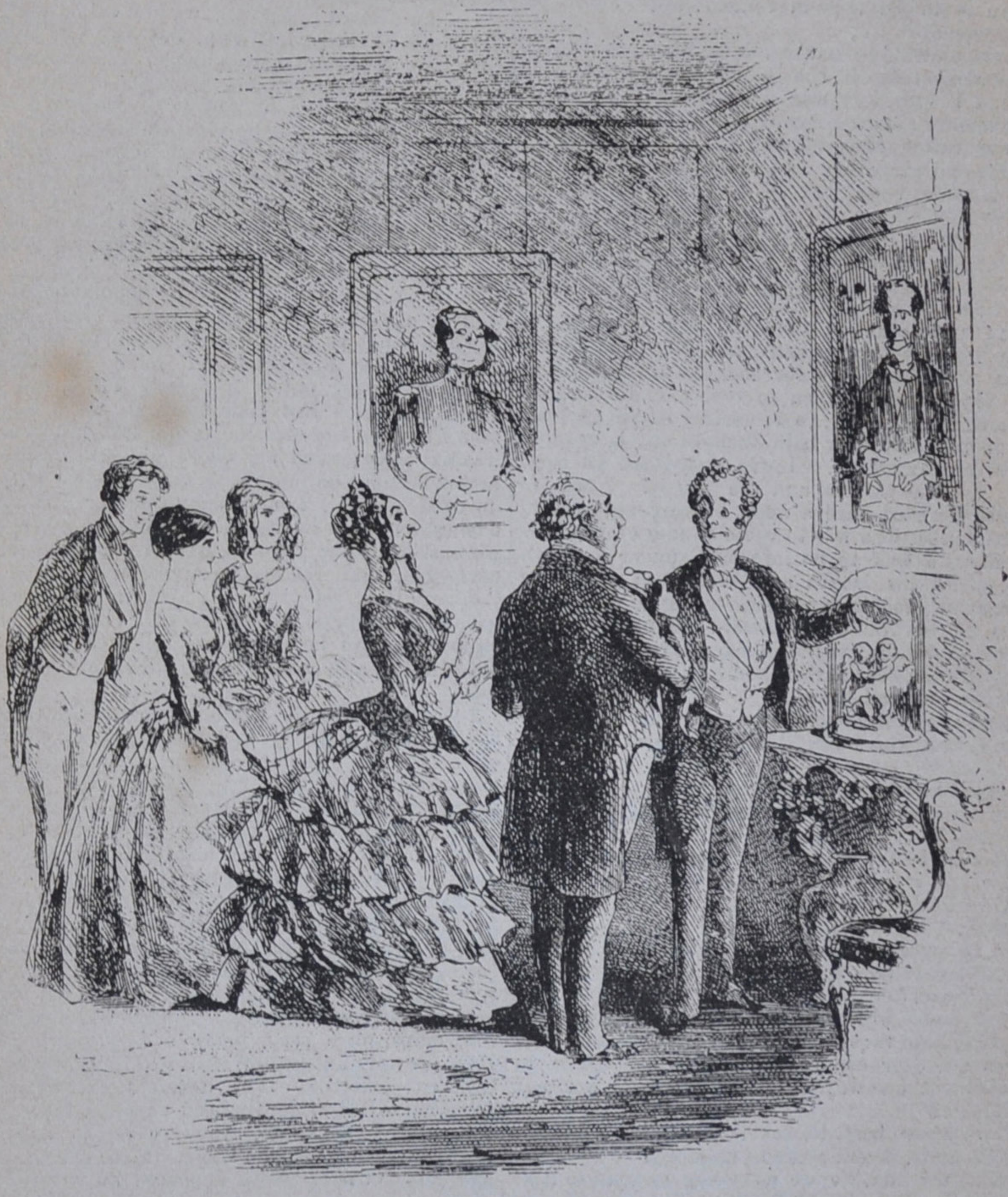
"Well said!" cried Mr. Jarndyce; "that's well said! She remains here, in her home with me. Love her, Rick, in your active life, no less than in her home when you revisit it, and all will go well.

Otherwise, all will go ill. That's the end of my preaching. I think you and Ada had better take a walk."

Ada tenderly embraced him, and Richard heartily shook hands with him, and then the cousins went out of the room—looking back again directly, though, to say that they would wait for me.

The door stood open, and we both followed them with our eyes, as they passed down the adjoining room on which the sun was shining, and out at its farther end. Richard with his head bent, and her hand drawn through his arm, was talking to her very earnestly; and she looked up in his face, listening, and seemed to see nothing else. So young, so beautiful, so full of hope and promise, they went on lightly through the sunlight, as their own happy thoughts might then be traversing the years to come, and making them all years of brightness. So they passed away into the shadow, and were gone. It was only a burst of light that had been so radiant. The room darkened as they went out, and the sun was clouded over.

"Am I right, Esther?" said my Guardian, when they were gone.



THE FAMILY PORTRAITS AT MR. BAYHAM BADGER'S.

He who was so good and wise, to ask *me* whether he was right!

"Rick may gain, out of this, the quality he wants. Wants, at the core of so much that is good!" said Mr. Jarndyce, shaking his head. "I have said nothing to Ada, Esther. She has her friend and counsellor always near." And he laid his hand lovingly upon my head.

I could not help shewing that I was a little moved, though I did all I could to conceal it.

"Tut tut!" said he. "But we must take care, too, that our little woman's life is not all consumed in care for others."

"Care? My dear Guardian, I believe I am the happiest creature in the world!"

"I believe so too," said he. "But some one may find out, what Esther never will—that the little woman is to be held in remembrance above all other people!"

I have omitted to mention in its place, that there was some one else at the family dinner party. It was not a lady. It was a gentleman. It was a gentleman of a dark complexion—a young surgeon. He was rather reserved, but I thought him very sensible and agreeable. At least, Ada asked me if I did not, and I said yes.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEPORTMENT.

RICHARD left us on the very next evening, to begin his new career, and committed Ada to my charge with great love for her, and great trust in me. It touched me then to reflect, and it touches me now, more nearly, to remember (having what I have to tell) how they both thought of me, even at that engrossing time. I was a part of all their plans, for the present and the future. I was to write to Richard once a week, making my faithful report of Ada, who was to write to him every alternate day. I was to be informed, under his own hand, of all his labors and successes; I was to observe how resolute and persevering he would be; I was to be Ada's bridesmaid when they were married; I was to live with them afterwards; I was to keep all the keys of their house; I was to be made happy for ever and a day.

"And if the suit *should* make us rich, Esther—which it may, you know!" said Richard, to crown all.

A shade crossed Ada's face.

"My dearest Ada," asked Richard, pausing, "why not?"

"It had better declare us poor at once," said Ada.

"O! I don't know about that," returned Richard; "but, at all events, it won't declare anything at once. It hasn't declared anything in Heaven knows how many years."

"Too true," said Ada.

"Yes, but," urged Richard, answering what her look suggested rather than her words, "the longer it goes on, dear cousin, the nearer it must be to a settlement one way or other. Now, is not that reasonable?"

"You know best, Richard. But I am afraid if we trust to it, it will make us unhappy."

"But, my Ada, we are not going to trust to it!" cried Richard, gaily. "We know it better than to trust to it. We only say that if it *should* make us rich, we have no constitutional objection to being rich. The Court is, by solemn settlement of law, our grim old guardian, and we are to suppose that what it gives us (when it gives us anything) is our right. It is not necessary to quarrel with our right."

"No," said Ada, "but it may be better to forget all about it."

"Well, well!" cried Richard, "then we will forget all about it! We consign the whole thing to oblivion. Dame Durden puts on her approving face, and it's done!"

"Dame Durden's approving face," said I, looking out of the box in which I was packing his books, "was not very visible when you called it by that name; but it does approve, and she thinks you can't do better."

So, Richard said there was an end of it,—and immediately began, on no other foundation, to build as many castles in the air as would man the great wall of China. He went away in high spirits. Ada and I, prepared to miss him very much, commenced our quieter career.

On our arrival in London, we had called with Mr. Jarndyce at Mrs. Jellyby's, but had not been so fortunate as to find her at home. It appeared that she had gone somewhere, to a tea-drinking, and had taken Miss Jellyby with her. Besides the tea-drinking, there was to be some considerable speech-making and letter-writing on the general merits of the cultivation of coffee, conjointly with natives, at the Settlement of Borrioboola Gha. All this involved, no doubt, sufficient active exercise of pen and ink, to make her daughter's part in the proceedings, anything but a holiday.

It being, now, beyond the time appointed for Mrs. Jellyby's return, we called again. She was in town, but not at home, having gone to Mile End, directly after breakfast, on some Borrioboolan business, arising out of a Society called the East London Branch Aid Ramification. As I had not seen Peepy on the occasion of our last call (when he was not to be found anywhere, and when the cook rather thought he must have strolled away with the dustman's cart), I now enquired for him again. The oyster shells he had been building a house with, were still in the passage, but he was nowhere discoverable, and the cook supposed that he had "gone after the sheep." When we repeated, with some surprise, "The sheep?" she said, O yes, on market days he sometimes followed them quite out of town, and came back in such a state as never was!

I was sitting at the window with my Guardian, on the following morning, and Ada was busy writing—of course to Richard—when Miss Jellyby was announced, and entered, leading the identical Peepy, whom she had made some endeavours to render presentable, by wiping the dirt into corners of his face and hands, and making his hair very wet and then violently frizzling it with her fingers. Everything the dear child wore, was either too large for him or too small. Among his other contradictory decorations he had the hat of a Bishop, and the little gloves of a baby. His boots were, on a small scale, the boots of a ploughman; while his legs, so crossed and recrossed with scratches that they looked like maps, were bare, below a very short pair of plaid drawers finished off with two frills of perfectly different patterns. The deficient buttons on his plaid frock had evidently been supplied from one of Mr. Jellyby's coats, they were so extremely brazen and so much too large. Most extraordinary specimens of needlework appeared on several parts of his dress, where it had been hastily mended; and I recognised the same hand on Miss Jellyby's. She was, however, unaccountably improved in her appearance, and looked very pretty. She was conscious of poor little Peepy being but a failure after all her trouble, and she showed it as she came in, by the way in which she glanced, first at him and then at us.

"O dear me!" said my Guardian. "Due East!"

Ada and I gave her a cordial welcome, and presented to her Mr. Jarndyce; to whom she said, as she sat down:

"Ma's compliments, and she hopes you'll excuse

her, because she's correcting proofs of the plan. She's going to put out five thousand new circulars, and she knows you'll be interested to hear that. I have brought one of them with me. Ma's compliments." With which she presented it sulkily enough.

"Thank you," said my Guardian. "I am much obliged to Mrs. Jellyby. O dear me! This is a very trying wind!"

We were busy with Peepy; taking off his clerical hat; asking him if he remembered us; and so on. Peepy retired behind his elbow at first, but relented at the sight of sponge-cake, and allowed me to take him on my lap, where he sat munching quietly. Mr. Jarndyce then withdrawing into the temporary Growlery, Miss Jellyby opened a conversation with her usual abruptness.

"We are going on just as bad as ever in Thavies Inn," said she. "I have no peace of my life. Talk of Africa! I couldn't be worse off if I was a what's-his-name—man and a brother!"

I tried to say something soothing.

"O, it's of no use, Miss Summerson," exclaimed Miss Jellyby, "though I thank you for the kind intention all the same. I know how I am used, and I am not to be talked over. *You* wouldn't be talked over, if you were used so. Peepy, go and play at Wild Beasts under the piano!"

"I shan't!" said Peepy.

"Very well, you ungrateful, naughty, hard-hearted boy!" returned Miss Jellyby, with tears in her eyes. "I'll never take pains to dress you any more."

"Yes, I will go, Caddy!" cried Peepy, who was really a good child, and who was so moved by his sister's vexation that he went at once.

"It seems a little thing to cry about," said poor Miss Jellyby, apologetically, "but I am quite worn out. I was directing the new circulars till two this morning. I detest the whole thing so, that that alone makes my head ache till I can't see out of my eyes. And look at that poor unfortunate child. Was there ever such a fright as he is!"

Peepy, happily unconscious of the defects in his appearance, sat on the carpet behind one of the legs of the piano, looking calmly out of his den at us, while he ate his cake.

"I have sent him to the other end of the room," observed Miss Jellyby, drawing her chair nearer ours, "because I don't want him to hear the conversation. Those little things are so sharp! I was going to say, we really are going on worse than ever. Pa will be a bankrupt before long, and then I hope Ma will be satisfied. There'll be nobody but Ma to thank for it."

We said we hoped Mr. Jellyby's affairs were not in so bad a state as that.

"It's of no use hoping, though it's very kind of you!" returned Miss Jellyby, shaking her head. "Pa told me, only yesterday morning, (and dreadfully unhappy he is) that he couldn't weather the storm. I should be surprised if he could. When all our tradesmen send into our house any stuff they like, and the servants do what they like with it, and I have no time to improve things if I knew how, and Ma don't care about anything, I should like to make out how Pa *is* to weather the storm. I declare if I was Pa, I'd run away!"

"My dear!" said I, smiling. "Your papa, no doubt, considers his family."

"O yes, his family is all very fine, Miss Summerson," replied Miss Jellyby; "but what comfort is his family to him? His family is nothing but bills, dirt, waste, noise, tumbles down stairs, confusion, and wretchedness. His scrambling home, from week's-end to week's-end, is like one great washing-day—only nothing's washed!"

Miss Jellyby tapped her foot upon the floor, and wiped her eyes.

"I am sure I pity Pa to that degree," she said, "and am so angry with Ma, that I can't find words to express myself! However, I am not going to bear it, I am determined. I won't be a slave all my life, and I won't submit to be proposed to by Mr. Quale. A pretty thing, indeed, to marry a Philanthropist. As if I hadn't had enough of *that!*" said poor Miss Jellyby.

I must confess that I could not help feeling rather angry with Mrs. Jellyby, myself; seeing and hearing this neglected girl, and knowing how much of bitterly satirical truth there was in what she said.

"If it wasn't that we had been intimate when you stopped at our house," pursued Miss Jellyby, "I should have been ashamed to come here to-day, for I know what a figure I must seem to you two. But, as it is, I made up my mind to call; especially as I am not likely to see you again, the next time you come to town."

She said this with such great significance that Ada and I glanced at one another, foreseeing something more.

"No!" said Miss Jellyby, shaking her head. "Not at all likely! I know I may trust you two. I am sure you won't betray me. I am engaged."

"Without their knowledge at home?" said I.

"Why, good gracious me, Miss Summerson," she returned, justifying herself in a fretful but not angry manner, "how can it be otherwise? You know what Ma is—and I needn't make poor Pa more miserable by telling *him*."

"But would it not be adding to his unhappiness, to marry without his knowledge or consent, my dear?" said I.

"No," said Miss Jellyby, softening. "I hope not. I should try to make him happy and comfortable when he came to see me; and Peepy and the others should take it in turns to come and stay with me; and they should have some care taken of them, then."

There was a good deal of affection in poor Caddy. She softened more and more while saying this, and cried so much over the unwonted little home-picture she had raised in her mind, that Peepy, in his cave under the piano, was touched, and turned himself over on his back with loud lamentations. It was not until I had brought him to kiss his sister, and had restored him to his place in my lap, and had shewn him that Caddy was laughing (she laughed expressly for the purpose), that we could recal his peace of mind; even then, it was for some time conditional on his taking us in turns by the chin, and smoothing our faces all over with his hand. At last, as his spirits were not yet equal to the piano, we put him on a chair to look out of window; and Miss Jellyby, holding him by one leg, resumed her confidence.

"It began in your coming to our house," she said. We naturally asked how?

"I felt I was so awkward," she replied, "that I made up my mind to be improved in that respect, at all events, and to learn to dance. I told Ma I was ashamed of myself, and I must be taught to dance. Ma looked at me in that provoking way of hers as if I wasn't in sight; but, I was quite determined to be taught to dance, and so I went to Mr. Mr. Turveydrop's Academy in Newman Street."

"And was it there, my dear——" I began.

"Yes, it was there," said Caddy, "and I am

engaged to Mr. Turveydrop. There are two Mr. Turveydrops, father and son. My Mr. Turveydrop is the son, of course. I only wish I had been better brought up, and was likely to make him a better wife; for I am very fond of him."

"I am sorry to hear this," said I, "I must confess."

"I don't know why you should be sorry," she retorted a little anxiously, "but I am engaged to Mr. Turveydrop, whether or no, and he is very fond of me. It's a secret as yet, even on his side, because old Mr. Turveydrop has a share in the connexion, and it might break his heart, or give him some other shock, if he was told of it abruptly. Old Mr. Turveydrop is a very gentlemanly man indeed—very gentlemanly."

"Does his wife know of it?" asked Ada.

"Old Mr. Turveydrop's wife, Miss Clare?" returned Mrs. Jellyby, opening her eyes. "There's no such person. He is a widower."

We were here interrupted by Peepy, whose leg had undergone so much on account of his sister's unconsciously jerking it like a bell-rope whenever she was emphatic, that the inflicted child now bemoaned his sufferings with a very low-spirited noise. As he appealed to me for compassion, and as I was only a listener, I undertook to hold him. Miss Jellyby proceeded, after begging Peepy's pardon with a kiss, and assuring him that she hadn't meant to do it.

"That's the state of the case," said Caddy. "If I ever blame myself, I still think it's Ma's fault. We are to be married whenever we can, and then I shall go to Pa at the office and write to Ma. It won't much agitate Ma: I am only pen and ink to *her*. One great comfort is," said Caddy, with a sob, "that I shall never hear of Africa after I am married. Young Mr. Turveydrop hates it for my sake; and if old Mr. Turveydrop knows there is such a place, it's as much as he does."

"It was he who was very gentlemanly, I think?" said I.

"Very gentlemanly, indeed," said Caddy. "He is celebrated, almost everywhere, for his Deportment."

"Does he teach?" asked Ada.

"No, he don't teach anything in particular," replied Caddy. "But his Deportment is beautiful."

Caddy went on to say, with considerable hesitation and reluctance, that there was one thing more she wished us to know, and felt we ought to know, and which she hoped would not offend us. It was, that she had improved her acquaintance with Miss Flite, the little crazy old lady; and that she frequently went there early in the morning, and met her lover for a few minutes before breakfast—only for a few minutes. "*I* go there, at other times," said Caddy, "but Prince does not come then. Young Mr. Turveydrop's name is Prince; I wish it wasn't, because it sounds like a dog, but of course he didn't christen himself. Old Mr. Turveydrop had him christened Prince, in remembrance of the Prince Regent. Old Mr. Turveydrop adored the Prince Regent on account of his Deportment. I hope you won't think the worse of me for having made these little appointments at Miss Flite's, where I first went with you; because I like the poor thing for her own sake and I believe she likes me. If you could see young Mr. Turveydrop, I am sure you would think well of him—at least, I am sure you couldn't possibly think any ill of him. I am going there now, for my lesson. I couldn't ask you to go with me, Miss Summerson; but if you would," said Caddy, who had said all this, earnestly and trembling, "I should be very glad—very glad."

It happened that we had arranged with my Guardian to go to Miss Flite's that day. We had told him of our former visit, and our account had interested him; but something had always happened to prevent our going there again. As I trusted that I might have sufficient influence with Miss Jellyby to prevent her taking any very rash step, if I fully accepted the confidence she was so willing to place in me, poor girl, I proposed that she and I and Peepy should go to the Academy, and afterwards meet my guardian and Ada at Miss Flite's—whose name I now learnt for the first time. This was on condition that Miss Jellyby and Peepy should come back with us to dinner. The last article of the agreement being joyfully acceded to by both, we smartened Peepy up a little, with the assistance of a few pins, some soap and water, and a hair-brush; and went out: bending our steps towards Newman Street, which was very near.

I found the academy established in a sufficiently dingy house at the corner of an archway, with busts in all the staircase windows. In the same house there were also established, as I gathered from the plates on the door, a drawing-master, a coal-merchant (there was, certainly, no room for his coals), and a lithographic artist. On the plate which, in size and situation, took precedence of all the rest, I read MR. TURVEYDROP. The door was open, and the hall was blocked up by a grand piano, a harp, and several other musical instruments in cases, all in progress of removal, and all looking rakish in the daylight. Miss Jellyby informed me that the academy had been lent, last night, for a concert.

We went up-stairs—it had been quite a fine house once, when it was anybody's business to keep it clean and fresh, and nobody's business to smoke in it all day—and into Mr. Turveydrop's great room, which was built out into a mews at the back, and was lighted by a skylight. It was a bare, resounding room, smelling of stables; with cane forms along the walls; and the walls ornamented at regular intervals with painted lyres, and little cut-glass branches for candles, which seemed to be shedding their old-fashioned drops as other branches might shed autumn leaves. Several young lady pupils, ranging from thirteen or fourteen years of age to two or three and twenty, were assembled; and I was looking among them for their instructor, when Caddy, pinching my arm, repeated the ceremony of introduction. "Miss Summerson, Mr. Prince Turveydrop!"

I curtseyed to a little blue-eyed fair man of youthful appearance, with flaxen hair parted in the middle, and curling at the ends all round his head. He had a little fiddle, which we used to call at school a kit, under his left arm, and its little bow in the same hand. His little dancing shoes were particularly diminutive, and he had a little innocent, feminine manner, which not only appealed to me in an amiable way, but made this singular effect upon me: that I received the impression that he was like his mother, and that his mother had not been much considered or well used.

"I am very happy to see Miss Jellyby's friend," he said, bowing low to me. "I began to fear," with timid tenderness, "as it was past the usual time, that Miss Jellyby was not coming."

"I beg you will have the goodness to attribute that to me, who have detained her, and to receive my excuses, sir," said I.

"O dear!" said he.

"And pray," I entreated, "do not allow me to be the cause of any more delay."

With that apology I withdrew to a seat between

Peepy (who, being well used to it, had already climbed into a corner place) and an old lady of a censorious countenance, whose two nieces were in the class, and who was very indignant with Peepy's boots. Prince Turveydrop then tinkled the strings of his kit with his fingers, and the young ladies stood up to dance. Just then, there appeared from a side-door, old Mr. Turveydrop, in the full lustre of his Deportment.

He was a fat old gentleman with a false complexion, false teeth, false whiskers, and a wig. He had a fur collar, and he had a padded breast to his coat, which only wanted a star or a broad blue ribbon to be complete. He was pinched in, and swelled out, and got up, and strapped down, as much as he could possibly bear. He had such a neckcloth on (puffing his very eyes out of their natural shape), and his chin and even his ears so sunk into it, that it seemed as though he must inevitably double up, if it were cast loose. He had, under his arm, a hat of great size and weight, shelving downward from the crown to the brim; and in his hand a pair of white gloves, with which he flapped it, as he stood poised on one leg, in a high-shouldered round-elbowed state of elegance not to be surpassed. He had a cane, he had an eye-glass, he had a snuff-box, he had rings, he had wristbands, he had everything but a touch of nature; he was not like youth, he was not like age, he was like nothing in the world but a model of Deportment.

"Father! A visitor. Miss Jellyby's friend, Miss Summerson."

"Distinguished," said Mr. Turveydrop, "by Miss Summerson's presence." As he bowed to me in that tight state, I almost believed I saw creases come into the whites of his eyes.

"My father," said the son, aside, to me, with quite an affecting belief in him, "is a celebrated character. My father is greatly admired."

"Go on, Prince! Go on!" said Mr. Turveydrop, standing with his back to the fire, and waving his gloves condescendingly. "Go on, my son!"

At this command, or by this gracious permission, the lesson went on. Prince Turveydrop, sometimes, played the kit, dancing; sometimes played the piano, standing; sometimes hummed the tune with what little breath he could spare, while he set a pupil right; always conscientiously moved with the least proficient through every step and every part of the figure; and never rested for an instant. His distinguished father did nothing whatever, but stand before the fire, a model of Deportment.

"And he never does anything else," said the old lady of the censorious countenance. "Yet would you believe that's *his* name on the doorplate?"

"His son's name is the same, you know," said I.

"He wouldn't let his son have any name, if he could take it from him," returned the old lady. "Look at the son's dress!" It certainly was plain—threadbare—almost shabby. "Yet the father must be garnished and tricked out," said the old lady, "because of his Deportment. I'd deport him. Transport him would be better!"

I felt curious to know more, concerning this person. I asked, "Does he give lessons in Deportment, now?"

"Now!" returned the old lady, shortly. "Never did."

After a moment's consideration, I suggested that perhaps fencing had been his accomplishment?

"I don't believe he can fence at all, ma'am," said the old lady.

I looked surprised and inquisitive. The old lady, becoming more and more incensed against the Master of Deportment as she dwelt upon the subject, gave me some particulars of his career, with strong assurances that they were mildly stated.

He had married a meek little dancing-mistress, with a tolerable connexion (having never in his life before done anything but deport himself), and had worked her to death, or had, at the best, suffered her to work herself to death, to maintain him in those expenses which were indispensable to his position. At once to exhibit his Deportment to the best models, and to keep the best models constantly before himself, he had found it necessary to frequent all public places of fashionable and lounging resort; to be seen at Brighton and elsewhere at fashionable times; and to lead an idle life in the very best clothes. To enable him to do this, the affectionate little dancing-mistress had toiled and labored, and would have toiled and labored to that hour, if her strength had lasted so long. For, the mainspring of the story was, that, in spite of the man's absorbing selfishness, his wife (overpowered by his Deportment) had, to the last, believed in him, and had, on her death-bed, in the most moving terms, confided him to their son as one who had an inextinguishable claim upon him, and whom he could never regard with too much pride and deference. The son, inheriting his mother's belief, and having the Deportment always before him, had lived and grown in the same faith, and now, at thirty years of age, worked for his father twelve hours a-day, and looked up to him with veneration on the old imaginary pinnacle.

"The airs the fellow gives himself!" said my informant, shaking her head at old Mr. Turveydrop with speechless indignation as he drew on his tight gloves: of course unconscious of the homage she was rendering. "He fully believes he is one of the aristocracy! And he is so condescending to the son he so egregiously deludes, that you might suppose him the most virtuous of parents. O!" said the old lady, apostrophising him with infinite vehemence, "I could bite you!"

I could not help being amused, though I heard the old lady out with feelings of real concern. It was difficult to doubt her, with the father and son before me. What I might have thought of them without the old lady's account, or what I might have thought of the old lady's account without them, I cannot say. There was a fitness of things in the whole that carried conviction with it.

My eyes were yet wandering, from young Mr. Turveydrop working so hard to old Mr. Turveydrop deporting himself so beautifully, when the latter came ambling up to me, and entered into conversation.

He asked me, first of all, whether I conferred a charm and a distinction on London, by residing in it? I did not think it necessary to reply that I was perfectly aware I should not do that, in any case, but merely told him where I did reside.

"A lady so graceful and accomplished," he said, kissing his right glove, and afterwards extending it towards the pupils, "will look leniently on the deficiencies here. We do our best to polish—polish—polish!"

He sat down beside me; taking some pains to sit on the form, I thought, in imitation of the print of his illustrious model on the sofa. And really he did look very like it.

"To polish—polish—polish!" he repeated, taking a pinch of snuff and gently fluttering his fingers. "But we are not—if I may say so, to one formed to be graceful both by Nature and Art;" with the high-shouldered bow, which it seemed impossible for him to make without lifting up his eyebrows and

shutting his eyes—"we are not what we used to be in point of Deportment."

"Are we not, sir?" said I.

"We have degenerated," he returned, shaking his head, which he could do, to a very limited extent, in his cravat. "A levelling age is not favorable to Deportment. It develops vulgarity. Perhaps I speak with some little partiality. It may not be for me to say that I have been called, for some years now, Gentleman Turveydrop; or that His Royal Highness the Prince Regent did me the honor to inquire, on my removing my hat as he drove out of the Pavilion at Brighton (that fine building), 'Who is he? Who the Devil is he? Why don't I know him? Why hasn't he thirty thousand a year?' But these are little matters of anecdote—the general property, ma'am—still repeated, occasionally, among the upper classes."

"Indeed?" said I.

He replied with the high-shouldered bow. "Where what is left among us of Deportment," he added, "still lingers, England—alas, my country!—has degenerated very much, and is degenerating every day. She has not many gentlemen left. We are few. I see nothing to succeed us, but a race of weavers."

"One might hope that the race of gentlemen would be perpetuated here," said I.

"You are very good," he smiled, with the high-shouldered bow again. "You flatter me. But, no—no! I have never been able to imbue my poor boy with that part of his art. Heaven forbid that I should disparage my dear child, but he has—no Deportment."

"He appears to be an excellent master," I observed.

"Understand me, my dear madam, he *is* an excellent master. All that can be acquired, he has acquired. All that can be imparted, he can impart. But there *are* things"—he took another pinch of snuff and made the bow again, as if to add, "this kind of thing, for instance."

I glanced towards the centre of the room, where Miss Jellyby's lover, now engaged with single pupils, was undergoing greater drudgery than ever.

"My amiable child," murmured Mr. Turveydrop, adjusting his cravat.

"Your son is indefatigable," said I.

"It is my reward," said Mr. Turveydrop, "to hear you say so. In some respects, he treads in the footsteps of his sainted mother. She was a devoted creature. But Wooman, lovely Wooman," said Mr. Turveydrop, with very disagreeable gallantry, "what a sex you are!"

I rose and joined Miss Jellyby, who was, by this time, putting on her bonnet. The time allotted to a lesson having fully elapsed, there was a general putting on of bonnets. When Miss Jellyby and the unfortunate Prince found an opportunity to become betrothed I don't know, but they certainly found none, on this occasion, to exchange a dozen words.

"My dear," said Mr. Turveydrop benignly to his son, "do you know the hour?"

"No, father." The son had no watch. The father had a handsome gold one, which he pulled out, with an air that was an example to mankind.

"My son," said he, "it's two o'clock. Recollect your school at Kensington at three."

"That's time enough for me, father," said Prince. "I can take a morsel of dinner, standing, and be off."

"My dear boy," returned his father, "you must be very quick. You will find the cold mutton on the table."

"Thank you, father. Are *you* off now, father?"

"Yes, my dear. I suppose," said Mr. Turveydrop, with modest consciousness, "that I must show myself, as usual, about town."

"You had better dine out comfortably, somewhere," said his son.

"My dear child, I intend to. I shall take my little meal, I think, at the French house, in the Opera Colonnade."

"That's right. Good bye, father!" said Prince, shaking hands.

"Good bye, my son. Bless you!"

Mr. Turveydrop said this in quite a pious manner, and it seemed to do his son good; who, in parting from him, was so pleased with him, so dutiful to him, and so proud of him, that I almost felt as if it were an unkindness to the younger man not to be able to believe implicitly in the elder. The few moments that were occupied by Prince in taking leave of us (and particularly of one of us, as I saw, being in the secret), enhanced my favorable impression of his almost childish character. I felt a liking for him, and a compassion for him, as he put his little kit in his pocket—and with it his desire to stay a little while with Caddy—and went away good-humouredly to his cold mutton and his school at Kensington, that made me scarcely less irate with his father than the censorious old lady.

The father opened the room door for us, and bowed us out, in a manner, I must acknowledge, worthy of his shining original. In the same style he presently passed us on the other side of the street, on his way to the aristocratic part of the town, where he was going to show himself among the few other gentlemen left. For some moments, I was so lost in reconsidering what I had heard and seen in Newman Street, that I was quite unable to talk to Caddy, or even to fix my attention on what she said to me: especially, when I began to inquire in my mind whether there were, or ever had been, any other gentlemen, not in the dancing profession, who lived and founded a reputation entirely on their Deportment. This became so bewildering, and suggested the possibility of so many Mr. Turveydrops, that I said, "Esther, you must make up your mind to abandon this subject altogether, and attend to Caddy." I accordingly did so, and we chatted all the rest of the way to Lincoln's Inn.

Caddy told me that her lover's education had been so neglected, that it was not always easy to read his notes. She said, if he were not so anxious about his spelling, and took less pains to make it clear, he would do better; but he put so many unnecessary letters into short words, that they sometimes quite lost their English appearance. "He does it with the best intentions," observed Caddy, "but it hasn't the effect he means, poor fellow!" Caddy then went on to reason, how could he be expected to be a scholar, when he had passed his whole life in the dancing-school, and had done nothing but teach and fag, fag and teach, morning, noon, and night! And what did it matter? She could write letters enough for both, as she knew to her cost, and it was far better for him to be amiable than learned. "Besides, it's not as if I was an accomplished girl who had any right to give herself airs," said Caddy. "I know little enough, I am sure, thanks to Ma!"

"There's another thing I want to tell you, now we are alone," continued Caddy, "which I should not have liked to mention unless you had seen Prince, Miss Summerson. You know what a house ours is. It's of no use my trying to learn anything that it would be useful for Prince's wife to know, in *our* house. We live in such a state of muddle

that it's impossible, and I have only been more disheartened whenever I have tried. So, I get a little practice with—who do you think? Poor Miss Flite! Early in the morning, I help her to tidy her room, and clean her birds; and I make her cup of coffee for her (of course she taught me), and I have learnt to make it so well that Prince says it's the very best coffee he ever tasted, and would quite delight old Mr. Turveydrop, who is very particular indeed about his coffee. I can make little puddings too; and I know how to buy neck of mutton, and tea, and sugar, and butter, and a good many housekeeping things. I am not clever at my needle, yet," said Caddy, glancing at the repairs on Peepy's frock, "but perhaps I shall improve. And since I have been engaged to Prince, and have been doing all this, I have felt better-tempered, I hope, and more forgiving to Ma. It rather put me out, at first this morning, to see you and Miss Clare looking so neat and pretty, and to feel ashamed of Peepy and myself too; but, on the whole, I hope I am better-tempered than I was, and more forgiving to Ma."

The poor girl, trying so hard, said it from her heart, and touched mine. "Caddy, my love," I replied, "I begin to have a great affection for you, and I hope we shall become friends." "Oh, do you?" cried Caddy; "how happy that would make me!" "My dear Caddy," said I, "let us be friends from this time, and let us often have a chat about these matters, and try to find the right way through them." Caddy was overjoyed. I said everything I could, in my old-fashioned way, to comfort and encourage her; and I would not have objected to old Mr. Turveydrop, that day, for any smaller consideration than a settlement on his daughter-in-law.

By this time, we were come to Mr. Krook's, whose private door stood open. There was a bill, pasted on the door-post, announcing a room to let on the second floor. It reminded Caddy to tell me as we proceeded up-stairs, that there had been a sudden death there, and an inquest; and that our little friend had been ill of the fright. The door and window of the vacant room being open, we looked in. It was the room with the dark door, to which Miss Flite had secretly directed my attention when I was last in the house. A sad and desolate place it was; a gloomy, sorrowful place, that gave me a strange sensation of mournfulness and even dread. "You look pale," said Caddy, when we came out, "and cold!" I felt as if the room had chilled me.

We had walked slowly, while we were talking; and my guardian and Ada were here before us. We found them in Miss Flite's garret. They were looking at the birds, while a medical gentleman who was so good as to attend Miss Flite with much solicitude and compassion, spoke with her cheerfully by the fire.

"I have finished my professional visit," he said, coming forward. "Miss Flite is much better, and may appear in court (as her mind is set upon it) to-morrow. She has been greatly missed there, I understand."

Miss Flite received the compliment with complacency, and dropped a general curtsey to us.

"Honored, indeed," said she, "by another visit from the Wards in Jarndyce! Ve-ry happy to receive Jarndyce of Bleak House beneath my humble roof!" with a special curtsey. "Fitz-Jarndyce, my dear;" she had bestowed that name on Caddy, it appeared, and always called her by it; "a double welcome!"

"Has she been very ill?" asked Mr. Jarndyce of the gentleman whom we had found in attendance on her. She answered for herself directly, though he had put the question in a whisper.

"O decidedly unwell! O very unwell indeed," she said, confidentially. "Not pain, you know—trouble. Not bodily so much as nervous, nervous! The truth is," in a subdued voice and trembling, "we have had death here. There was poison in the house. I am very susceptible to such horrid things. It frightened me. Only Mr. Woodcourt knows how much. My physician, Mr. Woodcourt!" with great stateliness. "The Wards in Jarndyce—Jarndyce of Bleak House—Fitz-Jarndyce!"

"Miss Flite," said Mr. Woodcourt, in a grave kind of voice as if he were appealing to her while speaking to us; and laying his hand gently on her arm; "Miss Flite describes her illness with her usual accuracy. She was alarmed by an occurrence in the house which might have alarmed a stronger person, and was made ill by the distress and agitation. She brought me here, in the first hurry of the discovery, though too late for me to be of any use to the unfortunate man. I have compensated myself for that disappointment by coming here since, and being of some small use to her."

"The kindest physician in the college," whispered Miss Flite to me. "I expect a Judgment. On the day of Judgment. And shall then confer estates."

"She will be as well, in a day or two," said Mr. Woodcourt, looking at her with an observant smile, "as she ever will be. In other words, quite well of course. Have you heard of her good fortune?"

"Most extraordinary!" said Miss Flite, smiling brightly. "You never heard of such a thing, my dear! Every Saturday, Conversation Kenge, or Guppy (clerk to Conversation K.), places in my hand a paper of shillings. Shillings. I assure you! Always the same number in the paper. Always one for every day in the week. Now you know, really! So well-timed, is it not? Ye-es! From whence do these papers come, you say? That is the great question. Naturally. Shall I tell you what *I* think? *I* think," said Miss Flite, drawing herself back with a very shrewd look, and shaking her right forefinger in a most significant manner, "that the Lord Chancellor, aware of the length of time during which the Great Seal has been open, (for it has been open a long time!) forwards them. Until the Judgment I expect, is given. Now that's very creditable, you know. To confess in that way that he *is* a little slow for human life. So delicate! Attending Court the other day—I attend it regularly—with my documents—I taxed him with it, and he almost confessed. That is, I smiled at him from my bench, and *he* smiled at me from his bench. But it's great good fortune, is it not? And Fitz-Jarndyce lays the money out for me to great advantage. O, I assure you to the greatest advantage!"

I congratulated her (as she addressed herself to me) upon this fortunate addition to her income, and wished her a long continuance of it. I did not speculate upon the source from which it came, or wonder whose humanity was so considerate. My Guardian stood before me, contemplating the birds, and I had no need to look beyond him.

"And what do you call these little fellows, ma'am?" said he in his pleasant voice. "Have they any names?"

"I can answer for Miss Flite that they have," said I, "for she promised to tell us what they were. Ada remembers?" Ada remembered very well.

"Did I?" said Miss Flite.—"Who's that at my door? What are you listening at my door for, Krook?"

The old man of the house, pushing it open before him, appeared there with his fur-cap in his hand, and his cat at his heels.

"*I* warn't listening, Miss Flite," he said. "I was going to give a rap with my knuckles, only you're so quick!"

"Make your cat go down. Drive her away!" the old lady angrily exclaimed.

"Bah, bah!—There ain't no danger, gentlefolks," said Mr. Krook, looking slowly and sharply from one to another, until he had looked at all of us; "she'd never offer at the birds when I was here, unless I told her to it."

"You will excuse my landlord," said the old lady with a dignified air. "M, quite M! What do you want, Krook, when I have company?"

"Hi!" said the old man. "You know I am the Chancellor."

"Well?" returned Miss Flite. "What of that?"

"For the Chancellor," said the old man, with a chuckle, "not to be acquainted with a Jarndyce is queer, ain't it, Miss Flite? Mightn't I take the liberty?—Your servant, sir. I know Jarndyce and Jarndyce a'most as well as you do, sir. I knowed old Squire Tom, sir. I never to my knowledge see you afore though, not even in court. Yet, I go there a mortal sight of times in the course of the year, taking one day with another."

"I never go there," said Mr. Jarndyce (which he never did on any consideration). "I would sooner go—somewhere else."

"Would you though?" returned Krook, grinning. "You're bearing hard upon my noble and learned brother in your meaning, sir; though, perhaps, it is but nat'ral in a Jarndyce. The burnt child, sir! What, you're looking at my lodger's birds, Mr. Jarndyce?" The old man had come by little and little into the room, until he now touched my Guardian with his elbow, and looked close up into his face with his spectacled eyes. "It's one of her strange ways, that she'll never tell the names of these birds if she can help it, though she named 'em all." This was in a whisper. "Shall I run 'em over, Flite?" he asked aloud, winking at us and pointing at her as she turned away, affecting to sweep the grate.

"If you like," she answered hurriedly.

The old man, looking up at the cages, after another look at us, went through the list.

"Hope, Joy, Youth, Peace, Rest, Life, Dust, Ashes, Waste, Want, Ruin, Despair, Madness, Death, Cunning, Folly, Words, Wigs, Rags, Sheepskin, Plunder, Precedent, Jargon, Gammon, and Spinach. That's the whole collection," said the old man, "all cooped up together, by my noble and learned brother."

"This is a bitter wind!" muttered my Guardian.

"When my noble and learned brother gives his Judgment, they're to be let go free," said Krook, winking at us again. "And then," he added, whispering and grinning, "if that ever was to happen—which it won't—the birds that have never been caged would kill 'em."

"If ever the wind was in the east," said my Guardian, pretending to look out of the window for a weathercock, "I think it's there to-day!"

We found it very difficult to get away from the house. It was not Miss Flite who detained us; she was as reasonable a little creature in consulting the convenience of others, as there possibly could be. It was Mr. Krook. He seemed unable to detach himself from Mr. Jarndyce. If he had been linked to him, he could hardly have attended him more closely. He proposed to show us his Court of Chancery, and all the strange medley it contained; during the whole of our inspection (prolonged by himself) he kept close to Mr. Jarndyce, and sometimes detained him, under one pretence or other, until we had passed on, as if he were tormented by an inclination to enter upon some secret subject, which he could not make up his mind to approach. I cannot imagine a countenance and manner more singularly expressive of caution and indecision, and a perpetual impulse to do something he could not resolve to venture on, than Mr. Krook's was, that day. His watchfulness of my Guardian was incessant. He rarely removed his eyes from his face. If he went on beside him, he observed him with the slyness of an old white fox. If he went before, he looked back. When we stood still, he got opposite to him, and drawing his hand across and across his open mouth with a curious expression of a sense of power, and turning up his eyes, and lowering his grey eyebrows until they appeared to be shut, seemed to scan every lineament of his face.

At last, having been (always attended by the cat) all over the house, and having seen the whole stock of miscellaneous lumber, which was certainly curious, we came into the back part of the shop. Here, on the head of an empty barrel stood on end, were an ink-bottle, some old stumps of pens, and some dirty playbills; and, against the wall, were pasted several large printed alphabets in several plain hands.

"What are you doing here?" asked my Guardian.

"Trying to learn myself to read and write," said Krook.

"And how do you get on?"

"Slow. Bad," returned the old man, impatiently. "It's hard at my time of life."

"It would be easier to be taught by some one,' said my Guardian.

"Aye, but they might teach me wrong!" returned the old man, with a wonderfully suspicious flash of his eye. "I don't know what I may have lost, by not being learnd afore. I wouldn't like to lose anything by being learnd wrong now."

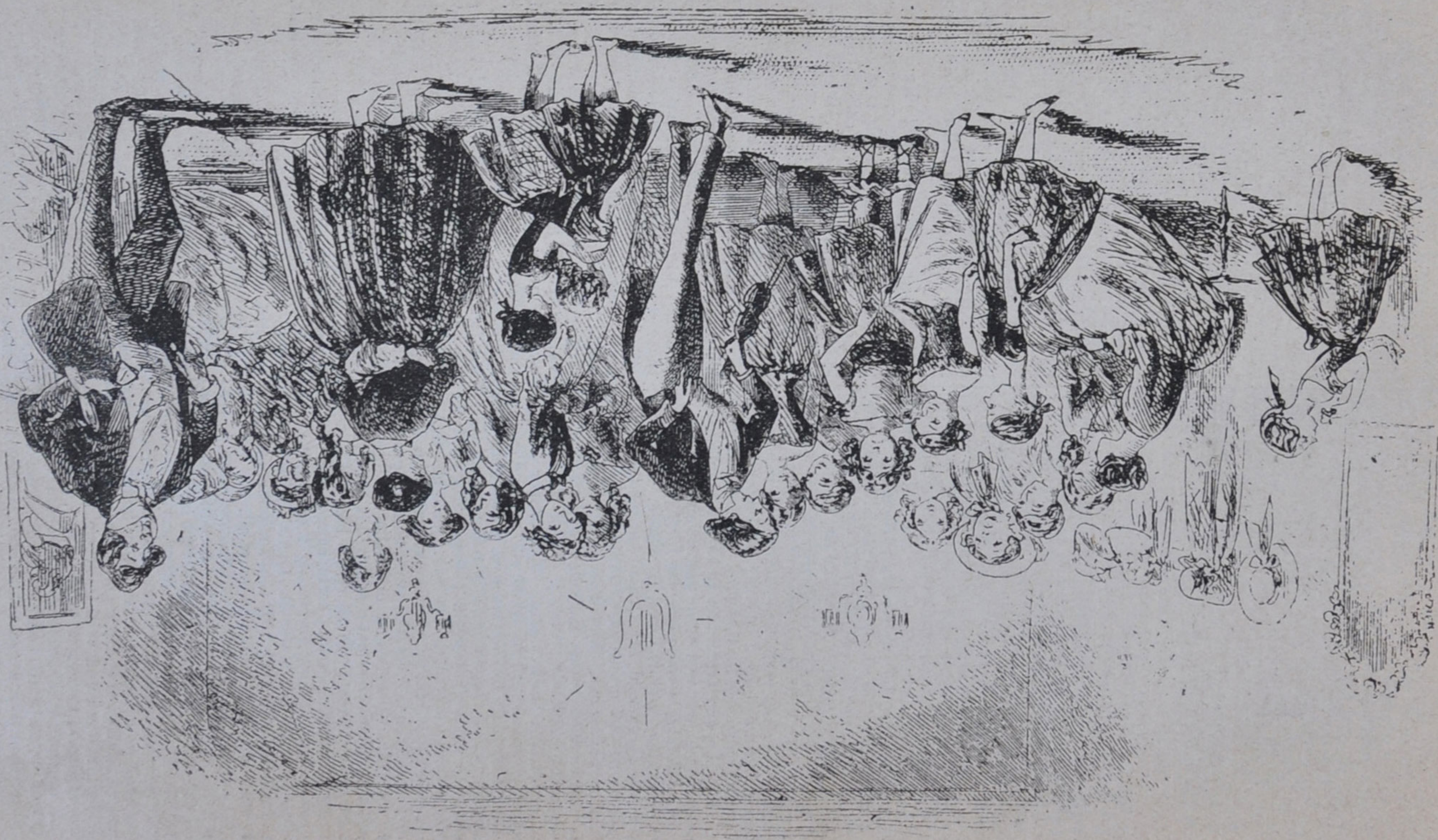
"Wrong?" said my Guardian, with his good-humoured smile. "Who do you suppose would teach you wrong?"

"I don't know, Mr. Jarndyce of Bleak House!" replied the old man, turning up his spectacles on his forehead, and rubbing his hands. "I don't suppose as anybody would—but I'd rather trust my own self than another!"

These answers, and his manner, were strange enough to cause my Guardian to enquire of Mr. Woodcourt, as we all walked across Lincoln's Inn together, whether Mr. Krook were really, as his lodger represented him, deranged? The young surgeon replied, no, he had seen no reason to think so. He was exceedingly distrustful, as ignorance usually was, and he was always more or less under the influence of raw gin: of which he drank great quantities, and of which he and his back-shop, as we might have observed, smelt strongly; but he did not think him mad, as yet.

On our way home, I so conciliated Peepy's affections by buying him a windmill and two flour-sacks, that he would suffer nobody else to take off his hat and gloves, and would sit nowhere at dinner but at my side. Caddy sat upon the other side of me, next to Ada, to whom we imparted the whole history of the engagement as soon as we got back. We made much of Caddy, and Peepy too; and Caddy brightened exceedingly; and my Guardian was as merry as we were; and we were all very happy

THE DANCING SCHOOL.



indeed; until Caddy went home at night in a hackney-coach, with Peepy fast asleep, but holding tight to the windmill.

I have forgotten to mention—at least I have not mentioned—that Mr. Woodcourt was the same dark young surgeon whom we had met at Mr. Badger's. Or, that Mr. Jarndyce invited him to dinner that day. Or, that he came. Or, that when they were all gone, and I said to Ada, "Now, my darling, let us have a little talk about Richard!" Ada laughed and said——

But, I don't think it matters what my darling said. She was always merry.

CHAPTER XV.

BELL YARD.

WHILE we were in London, Mr. Jarndyce was constantly beset by the crowd of exciteable ladies and gentlemen whose proceedings had so much astonished us. Mr. Quale, who presented himself soon after our arrival, was in all such excitements. He seemed to project those two shining knobs of temples of his into everything that went on, and to brush his hair farther and farther back, until the very roots were almost ready to fly out of his head in inappeasable philanthropy. All objects were alike to him, but he was always particularly ready for anything in the way of a testimonial to any one. His great power seemed to be his power of indiscriminate admiration. He would sit, for any length of time, with the utmost enjoyment, bathing his temples in the light of any order of luminary. Having first seen him perfectly swallowed up in admiration of Mrs. Jellyby, I had supposed her to be the absorbing object of his devotion. I soon discovered my mistake, and found him to be the train bearer and organ-blower to a whole procession of people.

Mrs. Pardiggle came one day for a subscription to something—and with her, Mr. Quale. Whatever Mrs. Pardiggle said, Mr. Quale repeated to us; and just as he had drawn Mrs. Jellyby out, he drew Mrs. Pardiggle out. Mrs. Pardiggle wrote a letter of introduction to my Guardian, in behalf of her eloquent friend, Mr. Gusher. With Mr. Gusher, appeared Mr. Quale again. Mr. Gusher being a flabby gentleman with a moist surface, and eyes so much too small for his moon of a face that they seemed to have been originally made for somebody else, was not at first sight prepossessing; yet, he was scarcely seated, before Mr. Quale asked Ada and me, not inaudibly, whether he was not a great creature—which he certainly was, flabbily speaking: though Mr. Quale meant in intellectual beauty—and whether we were not struck by his massive configuration of brow? In short, we heard of a great many Missions of various sorts, among this sort of people; but, nothing respecting them was half so clear to us, as that it was Mr. Quale's mission to be in ecstacies with everybody else's mission, and that it was the most popular mission of all.

Mr. Jarndyce had fallen into this company, in the tenderness of his heart and his earnest desire to do all the good in his power; but, that he felt it to be too often an unsatisfactory company, where benevolence took spasmodic forms; where charity was assumed, as a regular uniform, by loud professors and speculators in cheap notoriety, vehement in profession, restless and vain in action, servile in the last degree of meanness to the great, adulatory of one another, and intolerable to those who were anxious quietly to help the weak from falling, rather than with a great deal of bluster and self-laudation to raise them up a little way when they were down; he plainly told us. When a testimonial was originated to Mr. Quale, by Mr. Gusher (who had already got one, originated by Mr. Quale), and when Mr. Gusher spoke for an hour and a half on the subject to a meeting, including two charity schools of small boys and girls, who were specially reminded of the widow's mite, and requested to come forward with half-pence and be acceptable sacrifices; I think the wind was in the east for three whole weeks.

I mention this, because I am coming to Mr. Skimpole again. It seemed to me, that his off-hand professions of childishness and carelessness were a great relief to my Guardian, by contrast with such things, and were the more readily believed in; since, to find one perfectly undesigning and candid man, among many opposites, could not fail to give him pleasure. I should be sorry to imply that Mr. Skimpole divined this, and was politic: I really never understood him well enough to know. What he was to my Guardian, he certainly was to the rest of the world.

He had not been very well; and thus, though he lived in London, we had seen nothing of him until now. He appeared one morning, in his usual agreeable way, and as full of pleasant spirits as ever.

Well, he said, here he was! He had been bilious, but rich men were often bilious, and therefore he had been persuading himself that he was a man of property. So he was, in a certain point of view—in his expansive intentions. He had been enriching his medical attendant in the most lavish manner. He had always doubled, and sometimes quadrupled, his fees. He had said to the doctor, "Now, my dear doctor, it is quite a delusion on your part to suppose that you attend me for nothing. I am overwhelming you with money—in my expansive intentions—if you only knew it!" And really (he said) he meant it to that degree, that he thought it much the same as doing it. If he had had those bits of metal or thin paper to which mankind attached so much importance, to put in the doctor's hand, he would have put them in the doctor's hand. Not having them, he substituted the will for the deed. Very well! If he really meant it—if his will were genuine and real: which it was—it appeared to him that it was the same as coin, and cancelled the obligation.

"It may be, partly, because I know nothing the value of money," said Mr. Skimpole, "but often feel this. It seems so reasonable! My butcher says to me, he wants that little bill. It's a part of the pleasant unconscious poetry of the man's nature, that he always calls it a 'little' bill—to make the payment appear easy to both of us. I reply to the butcher, My good friend, if you knew it you are paid. You haven't had the trouble of coming to ask for the little bill. You are paid. I mean it."

"But, suppose," said my Guardian, laughing, "he had meant the meat in the bill, instead of providing it?"

"My dear Jarndyce," he returned, "you surprise me. You take the butcher's position. A butcher I once dealt with, occupied that very ground. Says he, 'Sir, why did you eat spring lamb at eighteen-pence a pound?' 'Why did I eat spring lamb at eighteen-pence a pound, my honest friend?' said I, naturally amazed by the question. 'I like spring lamb!' This was so far convincing. 'Well, sir,' says he, 'I wish I had meant the lamb as you mean the money!' 'My good fellow,' said I, 'pray let us reason like intellectual beings. How could that be? It was impossible. You *had* got the lamb, and I

have *not* got the money. You couldn't really mean the lamb without sending it in, whereas I can, and do, really mean the money without paying it!' He had not a word. There was an end of the subject."

"Did he take no legal proceedings?" inquired my Guardian.

"Yes, he took legal proceedings," said Mr. Skimpole. "But, in that, he was influenced by passion; not by reason. Passion reminds me of Boythorn. He writes me that you and the ladies have promised him a short visit at his bachelor-house in Lincolnshire."

"He is a great favorite with my girls," said Mr. Jarndyce, "and I have promised for them."

"Nature forgot to shade him off, I think?" observed Mr. Skimpole to Ada and me. "A little too boisterous—like the sea? A little too vehement—like a bull, who has made up his mind to consider every colour scarlet? But, I grant a sledge-hammering sort of merit in him!"

I should have been surprised if those two could have thought very highly of one another; Mr. Boythorn attaching so much importance to many things, and Mr. Skimpole caring so little for anything. Besides which, I had noticed Mr. Boythorn more than once on the point of breaking out into some strong opinion, when Mr. Skimpole was referred to. Of course I merely joined Ada in saying that we had been greatly pleased with him.

"He has invited me," said Mr. Skimpole; "and if a child may trust herself in such hands: which the present child is encouraged to do, with the united tenderness of two angels to guard him: I shall go. He proposes to frank me down and back again. I suppose it will cost money? Shillings perhaps? Or pounds? Or something of that sort? By the bye. Coavinses. You remember our friend Coavinses, Miss Summerson?"

He asked me, as the subject arose in his mind, in his graceful light-hearted manner, and without the least embarrassment.

"O yes!" said I.

"Coavinses has been arrested by the great Bailiff," said Mr. Skimpole. "He will never do violence to the sunshine any more."

It quite shocked me to hear it; for, I had already recalled, with anything but a serious association, the image of the man sitting on the sofa that night, wiping his head.

"His successor informed me of it yesterday," said Mr. Skimpole. "His successor is in my house now—in possession, I think he calls it. He came yesterday on my blue-eyed daughter's birthday. I put it to him, 'This is unreasonable and inconvenient. If you had a blue-eyed daughter you wouldn't like *me* to come, uninvited, on *her* birthday?' But, he stayed."

Mr. Skimpole laughed at the pleasant absurdity, and lightly touched the piano by which he was seated.

"And he told me," he said, playing little chords where I shall put full stops, "That Coavinses had left. Three children. No mother. And that Coavinses profession. Being unpopular. The rising Coavinses. Were at a considerable disadvantage."

Mr. Jarndyce got up, rubbing his head, and began to walk about. Mr. Skimpole played the melody of one of Ada's favourite songs. Ada and I both looked at Mr. Jarndyce, thinking that we knew what was passing in his mind.

After walking, and stopping, and several times leaving off rubbing his head, and beginning again, my Guardian put his hand upon the keys and stopped Mr. Skimpole's playing. "I don't like this, Skimpole," he said, thoughtfully.

Mr. Skimpole, who had quite forgotten the subject, looked up surprised.

"The man was necessary," pursued my Guardian, walking backward and forward in the very short space between the piano and the end of the room, and rubbing his hair up from the back of his head as if a high east wind had blown it into that form. "If we make such men necessary by our faults and follies, or by our want of worldly knowledge, or by our misfortunes, we must not revenge ourselves upon them. There was no harm in his trade. He maintained his children. One would like to know more about this."

"O! Coavinses?" cried Mr. Skimpole, at length perceiving what he meant. "Nothing easier. A walk to Coavinses head-quarters, and you can know what you will."

Mr. Jarndyce nodded to us, who were only waiting for the signal. "Come! We will walk that way, my dears. Why not that way, as soon as another!" We were quickly ready, and went out. Mr. Skimpole went with us, and quite enjoyed the expedition. It was so new and so refreshing, he said, for him to want Coavinses, instead of Coavinses wanting him!

He took us, first, to Cursitor Street, Chancery Lane, where there was a house with barred windows, which he called Coavinses Castle. On our going into the entry and ringing a bell, a very hideous boy came out of a sort of office, and looked at us over a spiked wicket.

"Who did you want?" said the boy, fitting two of the spikes into his chin.

"There was a follower, or an officer, or something here," said Mr. Jarndyce, "who is dead."

"Yes?" said the boy. "Well?"

"I want to know his name, if you please?"

"Name of Neckett," said the boy.

"And his address?"

"Bell Yard," said the boy. "Chandler's shop, left hand side, name of Blinder."

"Was he—I don't know how to shape the question," murmured my guardian—"industrious?"

"Was Neckett?" said the boy. "Yes, wery much so. He was never tired of watching. He'd set upon a post at a street corner, eight or ten hours at a stretch, if he undertook to do it."

"He might have done worse," I heard my Guardian soliloquize. "He might have undertaken to do it, and not done it. Thank you. That's all I want."

We left the boy, with his head on one side, and his arms on the gate, fondling and sucking the spikes; and went back to Lincoln's Inn, where Mr. Skimpole, who had not cared to remain nearer Coavinses, awaited us. Then, we all went to Bell Yard: a narrow alley, at a very short distance. We soon found the chandler's shop. In it, was a good-natured-looking old woman, with a dropsy, or an asthma, or perhaps both.

"Neckett's children?" she said, in reply to my inquiry. "Yes, surely, miss. Three pair, if you please. Door right opposite the top of the stairs." And she handed me a key across the counter.

I glanced at the key, and glanced at her: but, she took it for granted that I knew what to do with it. As it could only be intended for the children's door, I came out, witnout asking any more questions, and led the way up the dark stairs. We went as quietly as we could; but, four of us made some noise on the aged boards; and, when we

came to the second story, we found we had disturbed a man who was standing there, looking out of his room.

"Is it Gridley that's wanted?" he said, fixing his eyes on me with an angry stare.

"No, sir," said I, "I am going higher up."

He looked at Ada, and at Mr. Jarndyce, and at Mr. Skimpole: fixing the same angry stare on each in succession, as they passed and followed me. Mr. Jarndyce gave him good day. "Good day!" he said, abruptly, and fiercely. He was a tall sallow man, with a care-worn head, on which but little hair remained, a deeply-lined face, and prominent eyes. He had a combative look; and a chafing, irritable manner, which, associated with his figure —still large and powerful, though evidently in its decline—rather alarmed me. He had a pen in his hand, and, in the glimpse I caught of his room in passing, I saw that it was covered with a litter of papers.

Leaving him standing there, we went up to the top room. I tapped at the door, and a little shrill voice inside said, "We are locked in. Mrs. Blinder's got the key!"

I applied the key on hearing this, and opened the door. In a poor room with a sloping ceiling, and containing very little furniture, was a mite of a boy, some five or six years old, nursing and hushing a heavy child of eighteen months. There was no fire, though the weather was cold; both children were wrapped in some poor shawls and tippets, as a substitute. Their clothing was not so warm, however, but that their noses looked red and pinched, and their small figures shrunken, as the boy walked up and down, nursing and hushing the child with its head on his shoulder.

"Who has locked you up here alone?" we naturally asked.

"Charley," said the boy, standing still to gaze at us.

"Is Charley your brother?"

"No. She's my sister, Charlotte. Father called her Charley."

"Are there any more of you besides Charley?"

"Me," said the boy, "and Emma," patting the limp bonnet of the child he was nursing. "And Charley."

"Where is Charley now?"

"Out a washing," said the boy, beginning to walk up and down again, and taking the nankeen bonnet much too near the bedstead, by trying to gaze at us at the same time.

We were looking at one another, and at these two children, when there came into the room a very little girl, childish in figure but shrewd and older-looking in the face—pretty-faced too—wearing a womanly sort of bonnet much too large for her, and drying her bare arms on a womanly sort of apron. Her fingers were white and wrinkled with washing, and the soap-suds were yet smoking which she wiped off her arms. But for this, she might have been a child, playing at washing, and imitating a poor working woman with a quick observation of the truth.

She had come running from some place in the neighbourhood, and had made all the haste she could. Consequently, though she was very light, she was out of breath, and could not speak at first, as she stood panting, and wiping her arms, and looking quietly at us.

"O, here's Charley!" said the boy.

The child he was nursing, stretched forth its arms, and cried out to be taken by Charley. The little girl took it, in a womanly sort of manner belonging to the apron and the bonnet, and stood looking at us over the burden that clung to her most affectionately.

"Is it possible," whispered my Guardian, as we put a chair for the little creature, and got her to sit down with her load: the boy keeping close to her, holding to her apron, "that this child works for the rest? Look at this! For God's sake look at this!"

It was a thing to look at. The three children close together, and two of them relying solely on the third, and the third so young and yet with an air of age and steadiness that sat so strangely on the childish figure.

"Charley, Charley!" said my Guardian. "How old are you?"

"Over thirteen, sir," replied the child.

"O! What a great age," said my Guardian. "What a great age, Charley!"

I cannot describe the tenderness with which he spoke to her; half playfully, yet all the more compassionately and mournfully.

"And do you live alone here with these babies, Charley?" said my Guardian.

"Yes, sir," returned the child, looking up into his face with perfect confidence, "since father died."

"And how do you live, Charley? O! Charley," said my Guardian, turning his face away for a moment, "how do you live?"

"Since father died, sir, I've gone out to work. I'm out washing to-day."

"God help you, Charley!" said my Guardian. "You're not tall enough to reach the tub!"

"In pattens I am, sir," she said quickly. "I've got a high pair as belonged to mother."

"And when did mother die? Poor mother!"

"Mother died just after Emma was born," said the child, glancing at the face upon her bosom. "Then, father said I was to be as good a mother to her as I could. And so I tried. And so I worked at home, and did cleaning and nursing and washing, for a long time before I began to go out. And that's how I know how: don't you see, sir?"

"And do you often go out?"

"As often as I can," said Charley, opening her eyes, and smiling, "because of earning sixpences and shillings!"

"And do you always lock the babies up when you go out?"

"To keep 'em safe, sir, don't you see?" said Charley. "Mrs. Blinder comes up now and then, and Mr. Gridley comes up sometimes, and perhaps I can run in sometimes, and they can play you know, and Tom an't afraid of being locked up, are you, Tom?"

"No-o!" said Tom, stoutly.

"When it comes on dark, the lamps are lighted down in the court, and they show up here quite bright—almost quite bright. Don't they, Tom?"

"Yes, Charley," said Tom, "almost quite bright."

"Then he's as good as gold," said the little creature—O! in such a motherly, womanly way! "And when Emma's tired, he puts her to bed. And when he's tired, he goes to bed himself. And when I come home and light the candle, and has a bit of supper, he sits up again and has it with me. Don't you, Tom?"

"O yes, Charley!" said Tom. "That I do!" And either in this glimpse of the great pleasure of his life, or in gratitude and love for Charley, who was all in all to him, he laid his face among the scanty folds of her frock, and passed from laughing into crying.

It was the first time since our entry, that a tear

had been shed among these children. The little orphan girl had spoken of their father, and their mother, as if all that sorrow were subdued by the necessity of taking courage, and by her childish importance in being able to work, and by her bustling, busy way. But, now, when Tom cried; although she sat quite tranquil, looking quietly at us, and did not by any movement disturb a hair of the head of either of her little charges; I saw two silent tears fall down her face.

I stood at the window with Ada, pretending to look at the housetops, and the blackened stacks of chimnies, and the poor plants, and the birds in little cages belonging to the neighbours, when I found that Mrs. Blinder, from the shop below, had come in (perhaps it had taken her all this time to get up stairs) and was talking to my Guardian.

"It's not much to forgive 'em the rent, sir," she said: "who could take it from them!"

"Well, well!" said my Guardian to us two. "It is enough that the time will come when this good woman will find that it *was* much, and that forasmuch as she did it unto the least of these—! This child," he added, after a few moments, "could she possibly continue this?"

"Really, sir, I think she might," said Mrs. Blinder, getting her heavy breath by painful degrees. "She's as handy as it's possible to be. Bless you, sir, the way she tended them two children, after the mother died, was the talk of the yard! And it was a wonder to see her with him after he was took ill, it really was! 'Mrs. Blinder,' he said to me the very last he spoke—he was lying there—'Mrs. Blinder, whatever my calling may have been, I see a Angel sitting in this room last night along with my child, and I trust her to Our Father!"

"He had no other calling?" said my Guardian.

"No, sir," returned Mrs. Blinder, "he was nothing but a follerer. When he first came to lodge here, I didn't know what he was, and I confess that when I found out I gave him notice. It wasn't liked in the yard. It wasn't approved by the other lodgers. It is *not* a genteel calling," said Mrs. Blinder, "and most people do object to it. Mr. Gridley objected to it, very strong; and he is a good lodger, though his temper has been hard tried."

"So you gave him notice?" said my Guardian.

"So I gave him notice," said Mrs. Blinder. "But really when the time came, and I knew no other ill of him, I was in doubts. He was punctual and diligent; he did what he had to do, sir," said Mrs. Blinder, unconsciously fixing Mr. Skimpole with her eye; "and it's something, in this world, even to do that."

"So you kept him after all?"

"Why, I said that if he could arrange with Mr. Gridley, I could arrange it with the other lodgers, and should not so much mind its being liked or disliked in the yard. Mr. Gridley gave his consent gruff—but gave it. He was always gruff with him, but he has been kind to the children since. A person is never known till a person is proved."

"Have many people been kind to the children?" asked Mr. Jarndyce.

"Upon the whole, not so bad, sir," said Mrs. Blinder, "but, certainly not so many as would have been, if their father's calling had been different. Mr. Coavins gave a guinea, and the follerers made up a little purse. Some neighbours in the yard, that had always joked and tapped their shoulders when he went by, came forward with a little subscription, and—in general—not so bad. Similarly with Charlotte. Some people won't employ her, because she was a follerer's child; some people that do employ her, cast it at her; some make a merit of having her to work for them, with that and all her drawbacks upon her: and perhaps pay her less and put upon her more. But she's patienter than others would be, and is clever too, and always willing, up to the full mark of her strength and over. So I should say, in general, not so bad, sir, but might be better."

Mrs. Blinder sat down to give herself a more favorable opportunity of recovering her breath, exhausted anew by so much talking before it was fully restored. Mr. Jarndyce was turning to speak to us. when his attention was attracted, by the abrupt entrance into the room of the Mr. Gridley who had been mentioned, and whom we had seen on our way up.

"I don't know what you may be doing here, ladies and gentlemen," he said," as if he resented our presence, "but you'll excuse my coming in. I don't come in, to stare about me. Well, Charley! Well, Tom! Well, little one! How is it with us all today?"

He bent over the group, in a caressing way, and clearly was regarded as a friend by the children, though his face retained its stern character, and his manner to us was as rude as it could be. My Guardian noticed it, and respected it.

"No one, surely, would come here to stare about him," he said mildly.

"May be so, sir, may be so," returned the other, taking Tom upon his knee, and waving him off impatiently. "I don't want to argue with ladies and gentlemen. I have had enough of arguing, to last one man his life."

"You have sufficient reason, I dare say," said Mr. Jarndyce, "for being chafed and irritated——"

"There again!" exclaimed the man, becoming violently angry. "I am of a quarrelsome temper. I am irascible. I am not polite!"

"Not very, I think."

"Sir," said Gridley, putting down the child, and going up to him as if he meant to strike him. "Do you know anything of Courts of Equity?"

"Perhaps I do, to my sorrow."

"To your sorrow?" said the man, pausing in his wrath. "If so, I beg your pardon. I am not polite, I know. I beg your pardon! Sir," with renewed violence, "I have been dragged for five-and-twenty years over burning iron, and I have lost the habit of treading upon velvet. Go into the Court of Chancery yonder, and ask what is one of the standing jokes that brighten up their business sometimes, and they will tell you that the best joke they have, is the man from Shropshire. I," he said, beating one hand on the other passionately, "am the man from Shropshire."

"I believe, I and my family have also had the honour of furnishing some entertainment in the same grave place," said my Guardian, composedly, "You may have heard my name—Jarndyce."

"Mr. Jarndyce," said Gridley, with a rough sort of salutation, "you bear your wrongs more quietly than I can bear mine. More than that, I tell you and I tell this gentleman, and these young ladies, if they are friends of yours—that if I took my wrongs in any other way, I should be driven mad! It is only by resenting them, and by revenging them in my mind, and by angrily demanding the justice I never get, that I am able to keep my wits together. It is only that!" he said, speaking in a homely, rustic way, and with great vehemence. "You may tell me that I over-excite myself. I answer that it's in my nature to do it, under wrong, and I must do it.