

Podsnap, or any other young person properly born and bred, could not be exactly put away like the plate, brought out like the plate, polished like the plate, counted, weighed, and valued like the plate. That such a young person could possibly have a morbid vacancy in the heart for anything younger than the plate, or less monotonous than the plate; or that such a young person's thoughts could try to scale the region bounded on the north, south, east, and west, by the plate; was a monstrous imagination which he would on the spot have flourished into space. This perhaps in some sort arose from Mr. Podsnap's blushing young person being, so to speak, all check: whereas there is a possibility that there may be young persons of a rather more complex organization.

If Mr. Podsnap, pulling up his shirt-collar, could only have heard himself called "that fellow" in a certain short dialogue which passed between Mr. and Mrs. Lammlé in their opposite corners of their little carriage, rolling home!

"Sophronia, are you awake?"

"Am I likely to be asleep, sir?"

"Very likely, I should think, after that fellow's company. Attend to what I am going to say."

"I have attended to what you have already said, have I not? What else have I been doing all night?"

"Attend, I tell you" (in a raised voice), "to what I am going to say. Keep close to that idiot girl. Keep her under your thumb. You have her fast, and you are not to let her go. Do you hear?"

"I hear you."

"I foresee there is money to be made out of this, besides taking that fellow down a peg. We owe each other money, you know."

Mrs. Lammlé winced a little at the reminder, but only enough to shake her scents and essences anew into the atmosphere of the little carriage, as she settled herself afresh into her own dark corner.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SWEAT OF AN HONEST MAN'S BROW.

MR. MORTIMER LIGHTWOOD and Mr. Eugene Wrayburn took a coffee-house dinner together in Mr. Lightwood's office. They had newly agreed to set up a joint establishment together. They had taken a bachelor cottage near Hampton, on the brink of the Thames, with a lawn, and a boat-house, and all things fitting, and were to float with the stream through the summer and the Long Vacation.

It was not summer yet, but spring; and it was not gentle spring ethereally mild, as in Thomson's Seasons, but nipping spring with an easterly wind, as in Johnson's, Jackson's, Dickson's, Smith's, and Jones's Seasons. The grating wind sawed rather than blew; and as it sawed, the sawdust whirled about the sawpit. Every street was a sawpit, and there were no top-sawyers; every passenger was an under-sawyer, with the sawdust blinding him and choking him.

That mysterious paper currency which circulates in London when the wind blows, gyrated here and there and everywhere. Whence can it come, whither can it go? It hangs on every bush, flutters in every tree, is caught flying by the electric wires, haunts every enclosure, drinks at every pump, cowers at every grating, shudders upon every plot of grass, seeks rest in vain behind the legions of iron rails. In Paris, where nothing is wasted, costly and luxurious city though it be, but where

wonderful human ants creep out of holes and pick up every scrap, there is no such thing. There, it blows nothing but dust. There, sharp eyes and sharp stomachs reap even the east wind, and get something out of it.

The wind sawed, and the sawdust whirled. The shrubs wrung their many hands, bemoaning that they had been over-persuaded by the sun to bud; the young leaves pined; the sparrows repented of their early marriages, like men and women; the colours of the rainbow were discernible, not in floral spring, but in the faces of the people whom it nibbled and pinched. And ever the wind sawed, and the sawdust whirled.

When the spring evenings are too long and light to shut out, and such weather is rife, the city which Mr. Podsnap so explanatorily called London, Londres, London, is at its worst. Such a black shrill city, combining the qualities of a smoky house and a scolding wife; such a gritty city; such a hopeless city, with no rent in the leaden canopy of its sky; such a beleaguered city, invested by the great Marsh Forces of Essex and Kent. So the two old schoolfellows felt it to be, as their dinner done, they turned towards the fire to smoke. Young Blight was gone, the coffee-house waiter was gone, the plates and dishes were gone, the wine was going—but not in the same direction.

"The wind sounds up here," quoth Eugene, stirring the fire, "as if we were keeping a lighthouse. I wish we were."

"Don't you think it would bore us?" Lightwood asked.

"Not more than any other place. And there would be no Circuit to go. But that's a selfish consideration, personal to me."

"And no clients to come," added Lightwood. "Not that that's a selfish consideration at all personal to me."

"If we were on an isolated rock in a stormy sea," said Eugene, smoking with his eyes on the fire, "Lady Tippins couldn't put off to visit us, or, better still, might put off and get swamped. People couldn't ask one to wedding breakfasts. There would be no Precedents to hammer at, except the plain-sailing Precedent of keeping the light up. It would be exciting to look out for wrecks."

"But otherwise," suggested Lightwood, "there might be a degree of sameness in the life."

"I have thought of that also," said Eugene, as if he really had been considering the subject in its various bearings with an eye to the business; "but it would be a defined and limited monotony. It would not extend beyond two people. Now, it's a question with me, Mortimer, whether a monotony defined with that precision and limited to that extent might not be more endurable than the unlimited monotony of one's fellow-creatures."

As Lightwood laughed and passed the wine, he remarked, "We shall have an opportunity, in our boating summer, of trying the question."

"An imperfect one," Eugene acquiesced, with a sigh, "but so we shall. I hope we may not prove too much for one another."

"Now, regarding your respected father," said Lightwood, bringing him to a subject they had expressly appointed to discuss: always the most slippery eel of eels of subjects to lay hold of.

"Yes, regarding my respected father," assented Eugene, settling himself in his arm-chair. "I would rather have approached my respected father by candlelight, as a theme requiring a little artificial brilliancy; but we will take him by twilight, enlivened with a glow of Wallsend."

He stirred the fire again as he spoke, and having made it blaze, resumed.

"My respected father has found, down in the parental neighbourhood, a wife for his not-generally-respected son."

"With some money, of course?"

"With some money, of course, or he would not have found her. My respected father—let me shorten the dutiful tautology by substituting in future M. R. F., which sounds military, and rather like the Duke of Wellington."

"What an absurd fellow you are, Eugene!"

"Not at all, I assure you. M. R. F. having always in the clearest manner provided (as he calls it) for his children by pre-arranging from the hour of the birth of each, and sometimes from an earlier period, what the devoted little victim's calling and course in life should be, M. R. F. pre-arranged for myself that I was to be the barrister I am (with the slight addition of an enormous practice, which has not accrued), and also the married man I am not."

"The first you have often told me."

"The first I have often told you. Considering myself sufficiently incongruous on my legal eminence, I have until now suppressed my domestic destiny. You know M. R. F., but not as well as I do. If you knew him as well as I do, he would amuse you."

"Filially spoken, Eugene!"

"Perfectly so, believe me; and with every sentiment of affectionate deference towards M. R. F. But if he amuses me, I can't help it. When my eldest brother was born, of course the rest of us knew (I mean the rest of us would have known, if we had been in existence) that he was heir to the Family Embarrassments—we call it before company the Family Estate. But when my second brother was going to be born by-and-by, 'this,' says M. R. F., 'is a little pillar of the church.' Was born, and became a pillar of the church; a very shaky one. My third brother appeared, considerably in advance of his engagement to my mother; but M. R. F., not at all put out by surprise, instantly declared him a Circumnavigator. Was pitchforked into the Navy, but has not circumnavigated. I announced myself, and was disposed of with the highly satisfactory results embodied before you. When my younger brother was half an hour old, it was settled by M. R. F. that he should have a mechanical genius, and so on. Therefore I say that M. R. F. amuses me."

"Touching the lady, Eugene?"

"There M. R. F. ceases to be amusing, because my intentions are opposed to touching the lady."

"Do you know her?"

"Not in the least."

"Hadh't you better see her?"

"My dear Mortimer, you have studied my character. Could I possibly go down there, labelled 'ELIGIBLE. ON VIEW,' and meet the lady, similarly labelled? Anything to carry out M. R. F.'s arrangements, I am sure, with the greatest pleasure—except matrimony. Could I possibly support it? I, so soon bored, so constantly, so fatally?"

"But you are not a consistent fellow, Eugene."

"In susceptibility to boredom," returned that worthy, "I assure you I am the most consistent of mankind."

"Why, it was but now that you were dwelling on the advantages of a monotony of two."

"In a lighthouse. Do me the justice to remember the condition. In a lighthouse."

Mortimer laughed again, and Eugene, having laughed too for the first time, as if he found himself on reflection rather entertaining, relapsed into his usual gloom, and drowsily said, as he enjoyed his cigar, "No, there is no help for it: one of the prophetic deliveries of M. R. F. must for ever remain unfulfilled. With every disposition to oblige him, he must submit to a failure."

It had grown darker as they talked, and the wind was sawing and the sawdust

was whirling outside paler windows. The underlying churchyard was already settling into deep dim shade, and the shade was creeping up to the housetops among which they sat. "As if," said Eugene, "as if the churchyard ghosts were rising."

He had walked to the window with his cigar in his mouth, to exalt its flavour by comparing the fireside with the outside, when he stopped midway on his return to his arm-chair, and said:

"Apparently one of the ghosts has lost its way, and dropped in to be directed. Look at this phantom!"

Lightwood, whose back was towards the door, turned his head, and there, in the darkness of the entry, stood a something in the likeness of a man: to whom he addressed the not irrelevant inquiry, "Who the devil are you?"

"I ask your pardons, Governors," replied the ghost, in a hoarse double-barrelled whisper, "but might either on you be Lawyer Lightwood?"

"What do you mean by not knocking at the door?" demanded Mortimer.

"I ask your pardons, Governors," replied the ghost, as before, "but probable you was not aware your door stood open."

"What do you want?"

Hereunto the ghost again hoarsely replied, in its double-barrelled manner, "I ask your pardons, Governors, but might one on you be Lawyer Lightwood?"

"One of us is," said the owner of that name.

"All right, Governors Both," returned the ghost, carefully closing the room door; "tickler business."

Mortimer lighted the candles. They showed the visitor to be an ill-looking visitor with a squinting leer, who, as he spoke, fumbled at an old sodden fur cap, formless and mangy, that looked like a furry animal, dog or cat, puppy or kitten, drowned and decaying.

"Now," said Mortimer, "what is it?"

"Governors Both," returned the man, in what he meant to be a wheedling tone, "which on you might be Lawyer Lightwood?"

"I am."

"Lawyer Lightwood," ducking at him with a servile air, "I am a man as gets my living, and as seeks to get my living, by the sweat of my brow. Not to risk being done out of the sweat of my brow, by any chances, I should wish afore going further to be swore in."

"I am not a swearer in of people, man."

The visitor, clearly anything but reliant on this assurance, doggedly muttered "Alfred David."

"Is that your name?" asked Lightwood.

"My name?" returned the man. "No; I want to take a Alfred David."

(Which Eugene, smoking and contemplating him, interpreted as meaning Affidavit.)

"I tell you, my good fellow," said Lightwood, with his indolent laugh, "that I have nothing to do with swearing."

"He can swear at you," Eugene explained; "and so can I. But we can't do more for you."

Much discomfited by this information, the visitor turned the drowned dog or cat, puppy or kitten, about and about, and looked from one of the Governors Both to the other of the Governors Both, while he deeply considered within himself. At length he decided:

"Then I must be took down."

"Where?" asked Lightwood.

"Here," said the man. "In pen and ink."

"First, let us know what your business is about."

"It's about," said the man, taking a step forward, dropping his hoarse voice, and shading it with his hand, "it's about from five to ten thousand pound reward. That's what it's about. It's about Murder. That's what it's about."

"Come nearer the table. Sit down. Will you have a glass of wine?"

"Yes, I will," said the man; "and I don't deceive you, Governors."

It was given him. Making a stiff arm to the elbow, he poured the wine into his mouth, tilted it into his right cheek, as saying, "What do you think of it?" tilted it into his left cheek, as saying, "What do you think of it?" jerked it into his stomach, as saying, "What do you think of it?" To conclude, smacked his lips, as if all three replied, "We think well of it."

"Will you have another?"

"Yes, I will," he repeated, "and I don't deceive you, Governors." And also repeated the other proceedings.

"Now," began Lightwood, "what's your name?"

"Why, there you're rather fast, Lawyer Lightwood," he replied, in a remonstrant manner. "Don't you see, Lawyer Lightwood? There you're a little bit fast. I'm going to earn from five to ten thousand pound by the sweat of my brow; and as a poor man doing justice to the sweat of my brow, is it likely I can afford to part with so much as my name without its being took down?"

Deferring to the man's sense of the binding powers of pen and ink and paper, Lightwood nodded acceptance of Eugene's nodded proposal to take those spells in hand. Eugene, bringing them to the table, sat down as clerk or notary.

"Now," said Lightwood, "what's your name?"

But further precaution was still due to the sweat of this honest fellow's brow.

"I should wish, Lawyer Lightwood," he stipulated, "to have that T'other Governor as my witness that what I said I said. Consequent, will the T'other Governor be so good as chuck me his name and where he lives?"

Eugene, cigar in mouth and pen in hand, tossed him his card. After spelling it out slowly, the man made it into a little roll, and tied it up in an end of his neckerchief still more slowly.

"Now," said Lightwood, for the third time, "if you have quite completed your various preparations, my friend, and have fully ascertained that your spirits are cool and not in any way hurried, what's your name?"

"Roger Riderhood."

"Dwelling-place?"

"Lime us Hole."

"Calling or occupation?"

Not quite so glib with this answer as with the previous two, Mr. Riderhood gave in the definition, "Waterside character."

"Anything against you?" Eugene quietly put in as he wrote.

Rather baulked, Mr. Riderhood evasively remarked, with an innocent air, that he believed the T'other Governor had asked him summat.

"Ever in trouble?" said Eugene.

"Once." (Might happen to any man, Mr. Riderhood added incidentally.)

"On suspicion of—?"

"Of seaman's pocket," said Mr. Riderhood. "Whereby I was in reality the man's best friend, and tried to take care of him."

"With the sweat of your brow?" asked Eugene.

"Till it poured down like rain," said Roger Riderhood.

Eugene leaned back in his chair, and smoked with his eyes negligently turned on the informer, and his pen ready to reduce him to more writing. Lightwood also smoked, with his eyes negligently turned on the informer.

"Now let me be took down again," said Riderhood, when he had turned the drowned cap over and under, and had brushed it the wrong way (if it had a right way) with his sleeve. "I give information that the man that done the Harmon Murder is Gaffer Hexam, the man that found the body. The hand of Jesse Hexam, commonly called Gaffer on the river and alongshore, is the hand that done that deed. His hand and no other."

The two friends glanced at one another with more serious faces than they had shown yet.

"Tell us on what grounds you make this accusation," said Mortimer Lightwood.

"On the grounds," answered Riderhood, wiping his face with his sleeve, "that I was Gaffer's pardner, and suspected of him many a long day and many a dark night. On the grounds that I knowed his ways. On the grounds that I broke the pardnership because I see the danger; which I warn you his daughter may tell you another story about that, for anythink I can say, but you know what it'll be worth, for she'd tell you lies, the world round and the heavens broad, to save her father. On the grounds that it's well understood along the cause'ays and the stairs that he done it. On the grounds that he's fell off from, because he done it. On the grounds that I will swear he done it. On the grounds that you may take me where you will, and get me sworn to it. I don't want to back out of the consequences. I have made up *my* mind. Take me anywhere."

"All this is nothing," said Lightwood.

"Nothing?" repeated Riderhood, indignantly and amazedly.

"Merely nothing. It goes to no more than that you suspect this man of the crime. You may do so with some reason, or you may do so with no reason, but he cannot be convicted on your suspicion."

"Haven't I said—I appeal to the T'other Governor as my witness—haven't I said from the first minute that I opened my mouth in this here world-without-end-everlasting chair" (he evidently used that form of words as next in force to an affidavit), "that I was willing to swear that he done it? Haven't I said, Take me and get me sworn to it? Don't I say so now? You won't deny it, Lawyer Lightwood?"

"Surely not; but you only offer to swear to your suspicion, and I tell you it is not enough to swear to your suspicion."

"Not enough, ain't it, Lawyer Lightwood?" he cautiously demanded.

"Positively not."

"And did I say it *was* enough? Now, I appeal to the T'other Governor. Now, fair! Did I say so?"

"He certainly has not said that he had no more to tell," Eugene observed in a low voice without looking at him, "whatever he seemed to imply."

"Hah!" cried the informer, triumphantly perceiving that the remark was generally in his favour, though apparently not closely understanding it. "Fort'nate for me I had a witness!"

"Go on, then," said Lightwood. "Say out what you have to say. No after-thought."

"Let me be took down then!" cried the informer, eagerly and anxiously. "Let me be took down, for by George and the Draggin I'm a coming to it now! Don't do nothing to keep back from a honest man the fruits of the sweat of his brow! I give information, then, that he told me that he done it. Is *that* enough?"

"Take care what you say, my friend," returned Mortimer.

"Lawyer Lightwood, take care, you, what I say; for I judge you'll be answerable for follering it up!" Then, slowly and emphatically beating it all out with his open right hand on the palm of his left; "I, Roger Riderhood, Lime'us Hole,

Waterside character, tell you, Lawyer Lightwood, that the man Jesse Hexam, commonly called upon the river and alongshore Gaffer, told me that he done the deed. What's more, he told me with his own lips that he done the deed. What's more, he said that he done the deed. And I'll swear it!"

"Where did he tell you so?"

"Outside," replied Riderhood, always beating it out, with his head determinedly set askew, and his eyes watchfully dividing their attention between his two auditors, "outside the door of the Six Jolly Fellowships, towards a quarter arter twelve o'clock at midnight—but I will not in my conscience undertake to swear to so fine a matter as five minutes—on the night when he picked up the body. The Six Jolly Fellowships stands on the spot still. The Six Jolly Fellowships won't run away. If it turns out that he warn't at the Six Jolly Fellowships that night at midnight, I'm a liar."

"What did he say?"

"I'll tell you (take me down, T'other Governor, I ask no better). He come out first; I come out last. I might be a minute arter him; I might be half a minute, I might be a quarter of a minute; I cannot swear to that, and therefore I won't. That's knowing the obligations of a Alfred David, ain't it?"

"Go on."

"I found him a waiting to speak to me. He says to me, 'Rogue Riderhood'—for that's the name I'm mostly called by—not for any meaning in it, for meaning it has none, but because of its being similar to Roger."

"Never mind that."

"Scuse me, Lawyer Lightwood, it's a part of the truth, and as such I do mind it, and I must mind it and I will mind it. 'Rogue Riderhood,' he says, 'words passed betwixt us on the river to-night.' Which they had; ask his daughter! 'I threatened you,' he says, 'to chop you over the fingers with my boat's stretcher, or take a aim at your brains with my boat-hook. I did so on accounts of your looking too hard at what I had in tow, as if you was suspicious, and on accounts of your holding on to the gunwale of my boat.' I says to him, 'Gaffer, I know it.' He says to me, 'Rogue Riderhood, you are a man in a dozen'—I think he said in a score, but of that I am not positive, so take the lowest figure, for precious be the obligations of a Alfred David. 'And,' he says, 'when your fellow-men is up, be it their lives or be it their watches, sharp is ever the word with you. Had you suspicions?' I says, 'Gaffer, I had; and what's more, I have.' He falls a shaking, and he says, 'Of what?' I says, 'Of foul play.' He falls a shaking worse, and he says, 'There *was* foul play then. I done it for his money. Don't betray me!' Those were the words as ever he used."

There was a silence, broken only by the fall of the ashes in the grate. An opportunity which the informer improved by smearing himself all over the head and neck and face with his drowned cap, and not at all improving his own appearance.

"What more?" asked Lightwood.

"Of him, d'ye mean, Lawyer Lightwood?"

"Of anything to the purpose."

"Now, I'm blest if I understand you, Governors Both," said the informer, in a creeping manner; propitiating both, though only one had spoken. "What? Ain't *that* enough?"

"Did you ask him how he did it, where he did it, when he did it?"

"Far be it from me, Lawyer Lightwood! I was so troubled in my mind, that I wouldn't have knowed more, no, not for the sum as I expect to earn from you by the sweat of my brow, twice told! I had put an end to the pardnership. I had cut the connexion. I couldn't undo what was done; and when he begs and prays, 'Old pardner, on my knees, don't split upon me!' I only makes answer

"Never speak another word to Roger Riderhood, nor lock him in the face!" and I shuns that man."

Having given these words a swing to make them mount the higher and go the further, Rogue Riderhood poured himself out another glass of wine unbidden, and seemed to chew it, as, with the half-emptied glass in his hand, he stared at the candles.

Mortimer glanced at Eugene, but Eugene sat glowering at his paper, and would give him no responsive glance. Mortimer again turned to the informer, to whom he said:

"You have been troubled in your mind a long time, man?"

Giving his wine a final chew, and swallowing it, the informer answered in a single word:

"Hages!"

"When all that stir was made, when the Government reward was offered, when the police were on the alert, when the whole country rang with the crime!" said Mortimer, impatiently.

"Hah!" Mr. Riderhood very slowly and hoarsely chimed in, with several retrospective nods of his head. "Warn't I troubled in my mind then!"

"When conjecture ran wild, when the most extravagant suspicions were afloat, when half-a-dozen innocent people might have been laid by the heels any hour in the day!" said Mortimer, almost warming.

"Hah!" Mr. Riderhood chimed in, as before. "Warn't I troubled in my mind through it all!"

"But he hadn't," said Eugene, drawing a lady's head upon his writing-paper, and touching it at intervals, "the opportunity then of earning so much money, you see."

"The T'other Governor hits the nail, Lawyer Lightwood! It was that as turned me. I had many times and again struggled to relieve myself of the trouble on my mind, but I couldn't get it off. I had once very nigh got it off to Miss Abbey Potterson which keeps the Six Jolly Fellowships—there is the 'ouse, it won't run away,—there lives the lady, she ain't likely to be struck dead afore you get there—ask her!—but I couldn't do it. At last, out comes the new bill with your own lawful name, Lawyer Lightwood, printed to it, and then I asks the question of my own intellects, Am I to have this trouble on my mind for ever? Am I never to throw it off? Am I always to think more of Gaffer than of my own self? If he's got a daughter, ain't I got a daughter?"

"And echo answered—" Eugene suggested.

"You have," said Mr. Riderhood, in a firm tone.

"Incidentally mentioning, at the same time, her age?" inquired Eugene.

"Yes, Governor. Two-and-twenty last October. And then I put it to myself, 'Regarding the money. It is a pot of money.' For it is a pot," said Mr. Riderhood, with candour, "and why deny it?"

"Hear!" from Eugene as he touched his drawing.

"It is a pot of money; but is it a sin for a labouring man that moistens every crust of bread he earns with his tears—or if not with them, with the colds he catches in his head—is it a sin for that man to earn it? Say there is anything again earning it. This I put to myself strong, as in duty bound; 'how can it be said without blaming Lawyer Lightwood for offering it to be earned?' And was it for me to blame Lawyer Lightwood? No."

"No," said Eugene.

"Certainly not, Governor," Mr. Riderhood acquiesced. "So I made up my mind to get my trouble off my mind, and to earn by the sweat of my brow what was held out to me. And what's more," he added, suddenly turning bloodthirsty,

"I mean to have it! And now I tell you, once and away, Lawyer Lightwood, that Jesse Hexam, commonly called Gaffer, his hand and no other, done the deed, on his own confession to me. And I give him up to you, and I want him took. This night!"

After another silence, broken only by the fall of the ashes in the grate, which attracted the informer's attention as if it were the chinking of money, Mortimer Lightwood leaned over his friend, and said in a whisper:

"I suppose I must go with this fellow to our imperturbable friend at the police-station."

"I suppose," said Eugene, "there is no help for it."

"Do you believe him?"

"I believe him to be a thorough rascal. But he may tell the truth, for his own purpose, and for this occasion only."

"It doesn't look like it."

"He doesn't," said Eugene. "But neither is his late partner, whom he denounces, a prepossessing person. The firm are cut-throat Shepherds both, in appearance. I should like to ask him one thing."

The subject of this conference sat leering at the ashes, trying with all his might to overhear what was said, but feigning abstraction as the "Governors Both" glanced at him.

"You mentioned (twice, I think) a daughter of this Hexam's," said Eugene, aloud. "You don't mean to imply that she had any guilty knowledge of the crime?"

The honest man, after considering—perhaps considering how his answer might affect the fruits of the sweat of his brow—replied unreservedly, "No, I don't."

"And you implicate no other person?"

"It ain't what I implicate, it's what Gaffer implicated," was the dogged and determined answer. "I don't pretend to know more than that his words to me was, 'I done it.' Those was his words."

"I must see this out, Mortimer," whispered Eugene, rising. "How shall we go?"

"Let us walk," whispered Lightwood, "and give this fellow time to think of it."

Having exchanged the question and answer, they prepared themselves for going out, and Mr. Riderhood rose. While extinguishing the candles, Lightwood, quite as a matter of course, took up the glass from which that honest gentleman had drunk, and coolly tossed it under the grate, where it fell shivering into fragments.

"Now, if you will take the lead," said Lightwood, "Mr. Wrayburn and I will follow. You know where to go, I suppose?"

"I suppose I do, Lawyer Lightwood."

"Take the lead, then."

The waterside character pulled his drowned cap over his ears with both hands, and making himself more round-shouldered than nature had made him, by the sullen and persistent slouch with which he went, went down the stairs, round by the Temple Church, across the Temple into Whitefriars, and so on by the waterside streets.

"Look at his hang-dog air," said Lightwood, following.

"It strikes me rather as a hang-man air," returned Eugene. "He has undeniable intentions that way."

They said little else as they followed. He went on before them as an ugly Fate might have done, and they kept him in view, and would have been glad enough to lose sight of him. But on he went before them always at the same distance,

and the same rate. Aslant against the hard implacable weather and the rough wind, he was no more to be driven back than hurried forward, but held on like an advancing Destiny. There came, when they were about midway on their journey, a heavy rush of hail, which in a few minutes pelted the streets clear, and whitened them. It made no difference to him. A man's life being to be taken and the price of it got, the hailstones to arrest the purpose must be larger and deeper than those. He crushed through them, leaving marks in the fast-melting slush that were mere shapeless holes; one might have fancied, following, that the very fashion of humanity had departed from his feet.

The blast went by, and the moon contended with the fast-flying clouds, and the wild disorder reigning up there made the pitiful little tumults in the streets of no account. It was not that the wind swept all the brawlers into places of shelter, as it had swept the hail still lingering in heaps wherever there was refuge for it; but that it seemed as if the streets were absorbed by the sky, and the night were all in the air.

"If he has had time to think of it," said Eugene, "he has not had time to think better of it—or differently of it, if that's better. There is no sign of drawing back in him; and as I recollect this place, we must be close upon the corner where we alighted that night."

In fact, a few abrupt turns brought them to the river side, where they had slipped about among the stones, and where they now slipped more; the wind coming against them in slants and flaws, across the tide and the windings of the river, in a furious way. With that habit of getting under the lee of any shelter which waterside characters acquire, the waterside character at present in question led the way to the lee side of the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters before he spoke.

"Look round here, Lawyer Lightwood, at them red curtains. It's the Fellowships, the 'ouse as I told you wouldn't run away. And has it run away?"

Not showing himself much impressed by this remarkable confirmation of the informer's evidence, Lightwood inquired what other business they had there?

"I wished you to see the Fellowships for yourself, Lawyer Lightwood, that you might judge whether I'm a liar; and now I'll see Gaffer's window for myself, that we may know whether he's at home."

With that, he crept away.

"He'll come back, I suppose?" murmured Lightwood.

"Ay! and go through with it," murmured Eugene.

He came back after a very short interval indeed.

"Gaffer's out, and his boat's out. His daughter's at home, sitting a-looking at the fire. But there's some supper getting ready, so Gaffer's expected. I can find what move he's upon, easy enough, presently."

Then he beckoned and led the way again, and they came to the police-station, still as clean and cool and steady as before, saving that the flame of its lamp—being but a lamp-flame, and only attached to the Force as an outsider—flickered in the wind.

Also, within doors, Mr. Inspector was at his studies as of yore. He recognised the friends the instant they reappeared, but their reappearance had no effect on his composure. Not even the circumstance that Riderhood was their conductor moved him, otherwise than that as he took a dip of ink he seemed, by a settlement of his chin in his stock, to propound to that personage, without looking at him, the question, "What have *you* been up to, last?"

Mortimer Lightwood asked him, would he be so good as look at those notes? Handing him Eugene's.

Having read the first few lines, Mr. Inspector mounted to that (for him) extraordinary pitch of emotion that he said, "Does either of you two gentlemen

happen to have a pinch of snuff about him?" Finding that neither had, he did quite as well without it, and read on.

"Have you heard these read?" he then demanded of the honest man.

"No," said Riderhood.

"Then you had better hear them." And so read them aloud, in an official manner.

"Are these notes correct, now, as to the information you bring here and the evidence you mean to give?" he asked, when he had finished reading.

"They are. They are as correct," returned Mr. Riderhood, "as I am. I can't say more than that for 'em."

"I'll take this man myself, sir," said Mr. Inspector to Lightwood. Then to Riderhood, "Is he at home? Where is he? What's he doing? You have made it your business to know all about him, no doubt."

Riderhood said what he did know, and promised to find out in a few minutes what he didn't know.

"Stop," said Mr. Inspector; "not till I tell you. We mustn't look like business. Would you two gentlemen object to making a pretence of taking a glass of something in my company at the Fellowships? Well-conducted house, and highly respectable landlady."

They replied that they would be happy to substitute a reality for the pretence, which, in the main, appeared to be as one with Mr. Inspector's meaning.

"Very good," said he, taking his hat from its peg, and putting a pair of handcuffs in his pocket as if they were his gloves. "Reserve!" Reserve saluted. "You know where to find me?" Reserve again saluted. "Riderhood, when you have found out concerning his coming home, come round to the window of Cosy, tap twice at it, and wait for me. Now, gentlemen."

As the three went out together, and Riderhood slouched off from under the trembling lamp his separate way, Lightwood asked the officer what he thought of this?

Mr. Inspector replied, with due generality and reticence, that it was always more likely that a man had done a bad thing than that he hadn't. That he himself had several times "reckoned up" Gaffer, but had never been able to bring him to a satisfactory criminal total. That if this story was true, it was only in part true. That the two men, very shy characters, would have been jointly and pretty equally "in it;" but that this man had "spotted" the other, to save himself and get the money.

"And I think," added Mr. Inspector, in conclusion, "that if all goes well with him, he's in a tolerable way of getting it. But as this is the Fellowships, gentlemen, where the lights are, I recommend dropping the subject. You can't do better than be interested in some lime works anywhere down about Northfleet, and doubtful whether some of your lime don't get into bad company, as it comes up in barges."

"You hear, Eugene?" said Lightwood, over his shoulder. "You are deeply interested in lime."

"Without lime," returned that unmoved barrister-at-law, "my existence would be unilluminated by a ray of hope."