

CHAPTER XII.

MORE BIRDS OF PREY.

ROGUE RIDERHOOD dwelt deep and dark in Limehouse Hole, among the riggers, and the mast, oar and block makers, and the boat-builders, and the sail-lofts, as in a kind of ship's hold stored full of waterside characters, some no better than himself, some very much better, and none much worse. The Hole, albeit in a general way not over nice in its choice of company, was rather shy in reference to the honour of cultivating the Rogue's acquaintance; more frequently giving him the cold shoulder than the warm hand, and seldom or never drinking with him unless at his own expense. A part of the Hole, indeed, contained so much public spirit and private virtue that not even this strong leverage could move it to good fellowship with a tainted accuser. But, there may have been the drawback on this magnanimous morality, that its exponents held a true witness before Justice to be the next unneighbourly and accursed character to a false one.

Had it not been for the daughter whom he often mentioned, Mr. Riderhood might have found the Hole a mere grave as to any means it would yield him of getting a living. But Miss Pleasant Riderhood had some little position and connection in Limehouse Hole. Upon the smallest of small scales, she was an unlicensed pawnbroker, keeping what was popularly called a Leaving Shop, by lending insignificant sums on insignificant articles of property deposited with her as security. In her four-and-twentieth year of life, Pleasant was already in her fifth year of this way of trade. Her deceased mother had established the business, and on that parent's demise she had appropriated a secret capital of fifteen shillings to establishing herself in it; the existence of such capital in a pillow being the last intelligible confidential communication made to her by the de-

parted, before succumbing to dropsical conditions of snuff and gin, incompatible equally with coherence and existence.

Why christened Pleasant, the late Mrs. Riderhood might possibly have been able at some time to explain, and possibly not. Her daughter had no information on that point. Pleasant she found herself, and she couldn't help it. She had not been consulted on the question, any more than on the question of her coming into these terrestrial parts, to want a name. Similarly, she found herself possessed of what is colloquially termed a swivel eye (derived from her father), which she might perhaps have declined if her sentiments on the subject had been taken. She was not otherwise positively ill-looking, though anxious, meagre, of a muddy complexion, and looking as old again as she really was.

As some dogs have it in the blood, or are trained, to worry certain creatures to a certain point, so—not to make the comparison disrespectfully—Pleasant Riderhood had it in the blood, or had been trained, to regard seamen, within certain limits, as her prey. Show her a man in a blue jacket, and, figuratively speaking, she pinned him instantly. Yet, all things considered, she was not of an evil mind or an unkindly disposition. For, observe how many things were to be considered according to her own unfortunate experience. Show Pleasant Riderhood a Wedding in the street, and she only saw two people taking out a regular license to quarrel and fight. Show her a Christening, and she saw a little heathen personage having a quite superfluous name bestowed upon it, inasmuch as it would be commonly addressed by some abusive epithet: which little personage was not in the least wanted by anybody, and would be shoved and banged out of every-

body's way, until it should grow big enough to shove and bang. Show her a Funeral, and she saw an unremunerative ceremony in the nature of a black masquerade, conferring a temporary gentility on the performers, at an immense expense, and representing the only formal party ever given by the deceased. Show her a live father, and she saw but a duplicate of her own father, who from her infancy had been taken with fits and starts of discharging his duty to her, which duty was always incorporated in the form of a fist or a leathern strap, and being discharged hurt her. All things considered, therefore, Pleasant Riderhood was not so very, very bad. There was even a touch of romance in her—of such romance as could creep into Limehouse Hole—and maybe sometimes of a summer evening, when she stood with folded arms at her shop-door, looking from the reeking street to the sky where the sun was setting, she may have had some vaporious visions of far-off islands in the southern seas or elsewhere (not being geographically particular) where it would be good to roam with a congenial partner among groves of bread-fruit, waiting for ships to be wafted from the hollow ports of civilization. For sailors to be got the better of were essential to Miss Pleasant's Eden.

Not on a summer evening did she come to her little shop-door, when a certain man standing over against the house on the opposite side of the street took notice of her. That was on a cold shrewd windy evening, after dark. Pleasant Riderhood shared with most of the lady inhabitants of the Hole, the peculiarity that her hair was a ragged knot, constantly coming down behind, and that she never could enter upon any undertaking without first twisting it into place. At that particular moment, being newly come to the threshold to take a look out of doors, she was winding herself up with both hands after this fashion. And so prevalent was the fashion, that on the occasion

of a fight or other disturbance in the Hole, the ladies would be seen flocking from all quarters universally twisting their back-hair as they came along, and many of them, in the hurry of the moment, carrying their back combs in their mouths.

It was a wretched little shop, with a roof that any man standing in it could touch with his hand; little better than a cellar or cave, down three steps. Yet in its ill-lighted window, among a flaring handkerchief or two, an old peacot or so, a few valueless watches and compasses, a jar of tobacco and two crossed pipes, a bottle of walnut ketchup, and some horrible sweets—these creature discomforts serving as a blind to the main business of the Leaving Shop—was displayed the inscription SEAMAN'S BOARDING-HOUSE.

Taking notice of Pleasant Riderhood at the door, the man crossed so quickly that she was still winding herself up, when he stood close before her.

"Is your father at home?" said he.

"I think he is," returned Pleasant, dropping her arms; "come in."

It was a tentative reply, the man having a seafaring appearance. Her father was not at home, and Pleasant knew it. "Take a seat by the fire," were her hospitable words when she had got him in; "men of your calling are always welcome here."

"Thankee," said the man.

His manner was the manner of a sailor, and his hands were the hands of a sailor, except that they were smooth. Pleasant had an eye for sailors, and she noticed the unused colour and texture of the hands, sunburnt though they were, as sharply as she noticed their unmistakable looseness and suppleness, as he sat himself down with his left arm carelessly thrown across his left leg a little above the knee, and the right arm as carelessly thrown over the elbow of the wooden chair, with the hand curved, half open and half shut, as if it had just let go a rope.

"Might you be looking for a Boarding-House?" Pleasant inquired,

taking her observant stand on one side of the fire.

"I don't rightly know my plans yet," returned the man.

"You ain't looking for a Leaving Shop?"

"No," said the man.

"No," assented Pleasant, "you've got too much of an outfit on you for that. But if you should want either, this is both."

"Ay, ay!" said the man, glancing round the place. "I know. I've been here before."

"Did you Leave anything when you were here before?" asked Pleasant, with a view to principal and interest.

"No." The man shook his head.

"I am pretty sure you never boarded here?"

"No." The man again shook his head.

"What *did* you do here when you were here before?" asked Pleasant.

"For I don't remember you."

"It's not at all likely you should. I only stood at the door, one night—on the lower step there—while a shipmate of mine looked in to speak to your father. I remember the place well." Looking very curiously round it.

"Might that have been long ago?"

"Ay, a goodish bit ago. When I came off my last voyage."

"Then you have not been to sea lately?"

"No. Been in the sick bay since then, and been employed ashore."

"Then, to be sure, that accounts for your hands."

The man with a keen look, a quick smile, and a change of manner, caught her up. "You're a good observer. Yes. That accounts for my hands."

Pleasant was somewhat disquieted by his look, and returned it suspiciously. Not only was his change of manner, though very sudden, quite collected, but his former manner, which he resumed, had a certain suppressed confidence and sense of power in it that were half threatening.

"Will your father be long?" he inquired.

"I don't know. I can't say."

"As you supposed he was at home, it would seem that he has just gone out? How's that?"

"I supposed he had come home," Pleasant explained.

"Oh! You supposed he had come home? Then he has been some time out? How's that?"

"I don't want to deceive you. Father's on the river in his boat."

"At the old work?" asked the man.

"I don't know what you mean," said Pleasant, shrinking a step back.

"What on earth d'ye want?"

"I don't want to hurt your father. I don't want to say I might, if I chose. I want to speak to him. Not much in that, is there? There shall be no secrets from you; you shall be by. And plainly, Miss Riderhood, there's nothing to be got out of me, or made of me. I am not good for the Leaving Shop, I am not good for the Boarding-House, I am not good for anything in your way to the extent of sixpenn'orth of halfpence. Put the idea aside, and we shall get on together."

"But you're a seafaring man?" argued Pleasant, as if that were a sufficient reason for his being good for something in her way.

"Yes and no. I have been, and I may be again. But I am not for you. Won't you take my word for it?"

The conversation had arrived at a crisis to justify Miss Pleasant's hair in tumbling down. It tumbled down accordingly, and she twisted it up, looking from under her bent forehead at the man. In taking stock of his familiarly worn rough-weather nautical clothes, piece by piece, she took stock of a formidable knife in a sheath at his waist ready to his hand, and of a whistle hanging round his neck, and of a short jagged knotted club with a loaded head that peeped out of a pocket of his loose outer jacket or frock. He sat quietly looking at her; but, with these appendages partially revealing themselves, and with a quantity of bristling oakum-coloured head and whisker, he had a formidable appearance.

"Won't you take my word for it?" he asked again.

Pleasant answered with a short dumb nod. He rejoined with another short dumb nod. Then he got up and stood with his arms folded, in front of the fire, looking down into it occasionally, as she stood with her arms folded, leaning against the side of the chimney-piece.

"To wile away the time till your father comes," he said,—"pray is there much robbing and murdering of seamen about the water-side now?"

"No," said Pleasant.

"Any?"

"Complaints of that sort are sometimes made, about Ratcliffe and Wapping, and up that way. But who knows how many are true?"

"To be sure. And it don't seem necessary."

"That's what I say," observed Pleasant. "Where's the reason for it? Bless the sailors, it ain't as if they ever could keep what they have, without it."

"You're right. Their money may be soon got out of them, without violence," said the man.

"Of course it may," said Pleasant; "and then they ship again, and get more. And the best thing for 'em, too, to ship again as soon as ever they can be brought to it. They're never so well off as when they're afloat."

"I'll tell you why I ask," pursued the visitor, looking up from the fire. "I was once beset that way myself, and left for dead."

"No?" said Pleasant. "Where did it happen?"

"It happened," returned the man, with a ruminative air, as he drew his right hand across his chin, and dipped the other in the pocket of his rough outer coat, "it happened somewhere about here as I reckon. I don't think it can have been a mile from here."

"Were you drunk?" asked Pleasant.

"I was muddled, but not with fair drinking. I had not been drinking, you understand. A mouthful did it."

Pleasant with a grave look shook her head; importing that she understood the process, but decidedly disapproved.

"Fair trade is one thing," said she, "but that's another. No one has a right to carry on with Jack in that way."

"The sentiment does you credit," returned the man, with a grim smile; and added, in a mutter, "the more so, as I believe it's not your father's.—Yes, I had a bad time of it, that time. I lost everything, and had a sharp struggle for my life, weak as I was."

"Did you get the parties punished?" asked Pleasant.

"A tremendous punishment followed," said the man, more seriously; "but it was not of my bringing about."

"Of whose, then?" asked Pleasant.

The man pointed upward with his forefinger, and, slowly recovering that hand, settled his chin in it again as he looked at the fire. Bringing her inherited eye to bear upon him, Pleasant Riderhood felt more and more uncomfortable, his manner was so mysterious, so stern, so self-possessed.

"Anyways," said the damsel, "I am glad punishment followed, and I say so. Fair trade with seafaring men gets a bad name through deeds of violence. I am as much against deeds of violence being done to seafaring men, as seafaring men can be themselves. I am of the same opinion as my mother was, when she was living. Fair trade, my mother used to say, but no robbery and no blows."

In the way of trade Miss Pleasant would have taken—and indeed did take when she could—as much as thirty shillings a week for board that would be dear at five, and likewise conducted the Leaving business upon correspondingly equitable principles; yet she had that tenderness of conscience and those feelings of humanity, that the moment her ideas of trade were overstepped, she became the seaman's champion, even against her father, whom she seldom otherwise resisted.

But, she was here interrupted by her father's voice exclaiming angrily, "Now, Poll Parrot!" and by her father's hat being heavily flung from his hand and striking her face. Accustomed to such occasional manifestations of his sense of parental duty, Pleasant merely wiped her face on her hair (which of course had tumbled down) before she twisted it up. This was another common procedure on the part of the ladies of the Hole, when heated by verbal or fistic altercation.

"Blest if I believe such a Poll Parrot as you was ever learned to speak!" growled Mr. Riderhood, stooping to pick up his hat, and making a feint at her with his head and right elbow; for he took the delicate subject of robbing seamen in extraordinary dudgeon, and was out of humour too. "What are you Poll Parrotting at now? Ain't you got nothing to do but fold your arms and stand a Poll Parrotting all night?"

"Let her alone," urged the man.

"She was only speaking to me."

"Let her alone too!" retorted Mr. Riderhood, eyeing him all over. "Do you know she's my daughter?"

"Yes."

"And don't you know that I won't have no Poll Parrotting on the part of my daughter? No, nor yet that I won't take no Poll Parrotting from no man? And who may you be, and what may you want?"

"How can I tell you until you are silent?" returned the other fiercely.

"Well," said Mr. Riderhood, quailing a little, "I am willing to be silent for the purpose of hearing. But don't Poll Parrot me."

"Are you thirsty, you?" the man asked, in the same fierce short way, after returning his look.

"Why nat'rally," said Mr. Riderhood, "ain't I always thirsty?" (Indignant at the absurdity of the question.)

"What will you drink?" demanded the man.

"Sherry wine," returned Mr. Ri-

derhood, in the same sharp tone, "if you're capable of it."

The man put his hand in his pocket, took out half a sovereign, and begged the favour of Miss Pleasant that she would fetch a bottle. "With the cork undrawn," he added, emphatically, looking at her father.

"I'll take my Alfred David," muttered Mr. Riderhood, slowly relaxing into a dark smile, "that you know a move. Do I know you? N—n—no, I don't know you."

The man replied, "No, you don't know me." And so they stood looking at one another surlily enough, until Pleasant came back.

"There's small glasses on the shelf," said Riderhood to his daughter. "Give me the one without a foot. I gets my living by the sweat of my brow, and it's good enough for me." This had a modest self-denying appearance; but it soon turned out that as, by reason of the impossibility of standing the glass upright while there was anything in it, it required to be emptied as soon as filled, Mr. Riderhood managed to drink in the proportion of three to one.

With his Fortunatus's goblet ready in his hand, Mr. Riderhood sat down on one side of the table before the fire, and the strange man on the other: Pleasant occupying a stool between the latter and the fireside. The background, composed of handkerchiefs, coats, shirts, hats, and other old articles "On Leaving," had a general dim resemblance to human listeners; especially where a shiny black sou'wester suit and hat hung, looking very like a clumsy mariner with his back to the company, who was so curious to overhear, that he paused for the purpose with his coat half pulled on, and his shoulders up to his ears in the uncompleted action.

The visitor first held the bottle against the light of the candle, and next examined the top of the cork. Satisfied that it had not been tampered with, he slowly took from his breast-pocket a rusty clasp-knife, and, with a corkscrew in the handle, opened

the wine. That done, he looked at the cork, unscrewed it from the corkscrew, laid each separately on the table, and, with the end of the sailor's knot of his neckerchief, dusted the inside of the neck of the bottle. All this with great deliberation.

At first Riderhood had sat with his footless glass extended at arm's length for filling, while the very deliberate stranger seemed absorbed in his preparations. But, gradually his arm reverted home to him, and his glass was lowered and lowered until he rested it upside down upon the table. By the same degrees his attention became concentrated on the knife. And now, as the man held out the bottle to fill all round, Riderhood stood up, leaned over the table to look closer at the knife, and stared from it to him.

"What's the matter?" asked the man.

"Why, I know that knife!" said Riderhood.

"Yes, I daresay you do."

He motioned to him to hold up his glass, and filled it. Riderhood emptied it to the last drop and began again.

"That there knife——"

"Stop," said the man composedly. "I was going to drink to your daughter. Your health, Miss Riderhood."

"That knife was the knife of a seaman named George Radfoot."

"It was."

"That seaman was well bekown to me."

"He was."

"What's come to him?"

"Death has come to him. Death came to him in an ugly shape. He looked," said the man, "very horrible after it."

"Arter what?" said Riderhood, with a frowning stare.

"After he was killed."

"Killed. Who killed him?"

Only answering with a shrug, the man filled the footless glass, and Riderhood emptied it: looking amazedly from his daughter to his visitor.

"You don't mean to tell a honest man——" he was recommencing with his empty glass in his hand, when his eye became fascinated by the stranger's outer coat. He leaned across the table to see it nearer, touched the sleeve, turned the cuff to look at the sleeve lining (the man, in his perfect composure, offering not the least objection), and exclaimed, "It's my belief as this here coat was George Radfoot's too!"

"You are right. He wore it the last time you ever saw him, and the last time you ever will see him—in this world."

"It's my belief you mean to tell me to my face you killed him!" exclaimed Riderhood; but, nevertheless, allowing his glass to be filled again.

The man only answered with another shrug, and showed no symptom of confusion.

"Wish I may die if I know what to be up to with this chap!" said Riderhood, after staring at him, and tossing his last glassful down his throat. "Let's know what to make of you. Say something plain."

"I will," returned the other, leaning forward across the table, and speaking in a low impressive voice. "What a liar you are!"

The honest witness rose, and made as though he would fling his glass in the man's face. The man not wincing, and merely shaking his forefinger half knowingly, half menacingly, the piece of honesty thought better of it and sat down again, putting the glass down too.

"And when you went to that lawyer yonder in the Temple with that invented story," said the stranger, in an exasperatingly comfortable sort of confidence, "you might have had your strong suspicions of a friend of your own, you know. I think you had, you know."

"Me my suspicions? Of what friend?"

"Tell me again whose knife was this?" demanded the man.

"It was possessed by, and was the property of—him as I have made men-

tion on," said Riderhood, stupidly evading the actual mention of the name.

"Tell me again whose coat was this?"

"That there article of clothing likewise belonged to, and was wore by—him as I have made mention on," was again the dull Old Bailey evasion.

"I suspect that you gave him the credit of the deed, and of keeping cleverly out of the way. But there was small cleverness in his keeping out of the way. The cleverness would have been, to have got back for one single instant to the light of the sun."

"Things is come to a pretty pass," growled Mr. Riderhood, rising to his feet, goaded to stand at bay, "when bullyers as is wearing dead men's clothes, and bullyers as s armed with dead men's knives, is to come into the houses of honest live men, getting their livings by the sweats of their brows, and is to make these here sort of charges with no rhyme and no reason, neither the one nor yet the other! Why should I have had my suspicions of him?"

"Because you knew him," replied the man; "because you had been one with him, and knew his real character under a fair outside; because on the night which you had afterwards reason to believe to be the very night of the murder, he came in here, within an hour of his having left his ship in the docks, and asked you in what lodgings he could find room. Was there no stranger with him?"

"I'll take my world-without-end everlasting Alfred David that you warn't with him," answered Riderhood. "You talk big, you do, but things look pretty black against yourself, to my thinking. You charge again' me that George Radfoot got lost sight of, and was no more thought of. What's that for a sailor? Why there's fifty such, out of sight and out of mind, ten times as long as him—through entering in different names, re-shipping when the out'ard voyage

is made, and what not—a turning up to light every day about here, and no matter made of it. Ask my daughter. You could go on Poll Parrotting enough with her, when I warn't come in: Poll Parrot a little with her on this pint. You and your suspicions of my suspicions of him! What are my suspicions of you? You tell me George Radfoot got killed. I ask you who done it and how you know it? You carry his knife and you wear his coat. I ask you how you come by 'em? Hand over that there bottle!" Here Mr. Riderhood appeared to labour under a virtuous delusion that it was his own property. "And you," he added, turning to his daughter, as he filled the footless glass, "if it warn't wasting good sherry wine on you, I'd chuck this at you, for Poll Parrotting with this man. It's along of Poll Parrotting that such like as him gets their suspicions, whereas I gets mine by arguement, and being nat'rally a honest man, and sweating away at the brow as a honest man ought." Here he filled the footless goblet again, and stood chewing one-half of its contents and looking down into the other as he slowly rolled the wine about in the glass; while Pleasant, whose sympathetic hair had come down on her being apostrophised, rearranged it, much in the style of the tail of a horse when proceeding to market to be sold.

"Well? Have you finished?" asked the strange man.

"No," said Riderhood, "I ain't. Far from it. Now then! I want to know how George Radfoot come by his death, and how you come by his kit?"

"If you ever do know, you won't know now."

"And next I want to know," proceeded Riderhood, "whether you mean to charge that what-you-may-call-it murder——"

"Harmon murder, father," suggested Pleasant.

"No Poll Parrotting!" he vociferated, in return. "Keep your mouth shut!—I want to know, you

sir, whether you charge that there crime on George Radfoot?"

"If you ever do know, you won't know now."

"Perhaps you do it yourself?" said Riderhood, with a threatening action.

"I alone know," returned the man, sternly shaking his head, "the mysteries of that crime. I alone know that your trumped-up story cannot possibly be true. I alone know that it must be altogether false, and that you must know it to be altogether false. I came here to-night to tell you so much of what I know, and no more."

Mr. Riderhood, with his crooked eye upon his visitor, meditated for some moments, and then refilled his glass, and tipped the contents down his throat in three tips.

"Shut the shop-door!" he then said to his daughter, putting the glass suddenly down. "And turn the key and stand by it! If you know all this, you sir," getting, as he spoke, between the visitor and the door, "why han't you gone to Lawyer Lightwood?"

"That, also, is alone known to myself," was the cool answer.

"Don't you know that, if you didn't do the deed, what you say you could tell is worth from five to ten thousand pound?" asked Riderhood.

"I know it very well, and when I claim the money you shall share it."

The honest man paused, and drew a little nearer to the visitor, and a little further from the door.

"I know it," repeated the man, quietly, "as well as I know that you and George Radfoot were one together in more than one dark business; and as well as I know that you, Roger Riderhood, conspired against an innocent man for blood-money; and as well as I know that I can—and that I swear I will!—give you up on both scores, and be the proof against you in my own person, if you defy me!"

"Father!" cried Pleasant, from the door. "Don't defy him! Give

way to him! Don't get into more trouble, father!"

"Will you leave off a Poll Parrotting, I ask you?" cried Mr. Riderhood, half beside himself between the two. Then, propitiatingly and crawlingly: "You sir! You han't said what you want of me. Is it fair, is it worthy of yourself, to talk of my defying you afore ever you say what you want of me?"

"I don't want much," said the man. "This accusation of yours must not be left half made and half unmade. What was done for the blood-money must be thoroughly undone."

"Well; but Shipmate——"

"Don't call me Shipmate," said the man.

"Captain, then," urged Mr. Riderhood; "there! You won't object to Captain. It's a honourable title, and you fully look it. Captain! Ain't the man dead? Now I ask you fair. Ain't Gaffer dead?"

"Well," returned the other, with impatience, "yes, he is dead. What then?"

"Can words hurt a dead man, Captain? I only ask you fair."

"They can hurt the memory of a dead man, and they can hurt his living children. How many children had this man?"

"Meaning Gaffer, Captain?"

"Of whom else are we speaking?" returned the other, with a movement of his foot, as if Rogue Riderhood were beginning to sneak before him in the body as well as the spirit, and he spurned him off. "I have heard of a daughter, and a son. I ask for information; I ask *your* daughter; I prefer to speak to her. What children did Hexam leave?"

Pleasant, looking to her father for permission to reply, that honest man exclaimed with great bitterness:

"Why the devil don't you answer the Captain? You can Poll Parrot enough when you ain't wanted to Poll Parrot, you perverse jade!"

Thus encouraged, Pleasant explained that there were only Lizzie,

the daughter in question, and the youth. Both very respectable, she added.

"It is dreadful that any stigma should attach to them," said the visitor, whom the consideration rendered so uneasy that he rose, and paced to and fro, muttering, "Dreadful! Unforeseen? How could it be foreseen!" Then he stopped, and asked aloud: "Where do they live?"

Pleasant further explained that only the daughter had resided with the father at the time of his accidental death, and that she had immediately afterwards quitted the neighbourhood.

"I know that," said the man, "for I have been to the place they dwelt in, at the time of the inquest. Could you quietly find out for me where she lives now?"

Pleasant had no doubt she could do that. Within what time, did she think? Within a day. The visitor said that was well, and he would return for the information, relying on its being obtained. To this dialogue Riderhood had attended in silence, and he now obsequiously bespake the Captain.

"Captain! Mentioning them unfort'net words of mine respecting Gaffer, it is contrarily to be bore in mind that Gaffer always were a precious rascal, and that his line were a thieving line. Likeways when I went to them two Governors, Lawyer Lightwood and the t'other Governor, with my information, I may have been a little over-eager for the cause of justice, or (to put it another way) a little over-stimulated by them feelings which rouses a man up, when a pot of money is going about, to get his hand into that pot of money for his family's sake. Besides which, I think the wine of them two Governors was—I will not say a hocused wine, but fur from a wine as was elthy for the mind. And there's another thing to be remembered, Captain. Did I stick to them words when Gaffer was no more, and did I say bold to them two Governors,

'Governors both, wot I informed I still inform; wot was took down I hold to?' No. I says, frank and open—no shuffling, mind you, Captain!—'I may have been mistook, I've been a thinking of it, it mayn't have been took down correct on this and that, and I won't swear to thick and thin, I'd rayther forfeit your good opinions than do it.' And so far as I know," concluded Mr. Riderhood, by way of proof and evidence to character, "I have actualy forfeited the good opinions of several persons—even your own, Captain, if I understand your words—but I'd sooner do it than be forswore. There; if that's conspiracy, call me conspirator."

"You shall sign," said the visitor, taking very little heed of this oration, "a statement that it was all utterly false, and the poor girl shall have it. I will bring it with me for your signature, when I come again."

"When might you be expected, Captain?" inquired Riderhood, again dubiously getting between him and the door.

"Quite soon enough for you. I shall not disappoint you; don't be afraid."

"Might you be inclined to leave any name, Captain?"

"No, not at all. I have no such intention."

"('Shall' is summ'at of a hard word, Captain," urged Riderhood, still feebly dodging between him and the door, as he advanced. "When you say a man 'shall' sign this and that and t'other, Captain, you order him about in a grand sort of a way. Don't it seem so to yourself?")

The man stood still, and angrily fixed him with his eyes.

"Father, father!" entreated Pleasant, from the door, with her disengaged hand nervously trembling at her lips; "don't! Don't get into trouble any more!"

"Hear me out, Captain, hear me out! All I was wishing to mention, Captain, afore you took your departer," said the sneaking Mr. Rider-

hood, falling out of his path, "was, your handsome words relating to the reward."

"When I claim it," said the man, in a tone which seemed to leave some such words as "you dog," very distinctly understood, "you shall share it."

Looking steadfastly at Riderhood, he once more said in a low voice, this time with a grim sort of admiration of him as a perfect piece of evil, "What a liar you are!" and, nodding his head twice or thrice over the compliment, passed out of the shop. But, to Pleasant he said good-night kindly.

The honest man who gained his living by the sweat of his brow remained in a state akin to stupefaction, until the footless glass and the unfinished bottle conveyed themselves into his mind. From his mind he conveyed them into his hands, and so conveyed the last of the wine into his stomach. When that was done, he awoke to a clear perception that Poll Parrot was solely chargeable with what had passed. Therefore, not to be remiss in his duty as a father, he threw a pair of sea-boots at Pleasant, which she ducked to avoid, and then cried, poor thing, using her hair for a pocket-handkerchief.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SOLO AND A DUETT.

THE wind was blowing so hard when the visitor came out at the shop-door into the darkness and dirt of Limehouse Hole, that it almost blew him in again. Doors were slamming violently, lamps were flickering or blown out, signs were rocking in their frames, the water of the kennels, wind-dispersed, flew about in drops like rain. Indifferent to the weather, and even preferring it to better weather for its clearance of the streets, the man looked about him with a scrutinizing glance. "Thus much I know," he murmured. "I have never been here since that night, and never was here before that night, but thus much I recognise. I wonder which way did we take when we came out of that shop. We turned to the right as I have turned, but I can recall no more. Did we go by this alley? Or down that little lane?"

He tried both, but both confused him equally, and he came straying back to the same spot. "I remember there were poles pushed out of upper windows on which clothes were drying, and I remember a low public-house, and the sound flowing down a narrow passage belonging to it of the scrap-

ing of a fiddle and the shuffling of feet. But here are all these things in the lane, and here are all these things in the alley. And I have nothing else in my mind but a wall, a dark doorway, a flight of stairs, and a room."

He tried a new direction, but made nothing of it; walls, dark doorways, flights of stairs and rooms, were too abundant. And, like most people so puzzled, he again and again described a circle, and found himself at the point from which he had begun. "This is like what I have read in narratives of escape from prison," said he, "where the little track of the fugitives in the night always seems to take the shape of the great round world, on which they wander; as if it were a secret law."

Here he ceased to be the oakum-headed, oakum-whiskered man on whom Miss Pleasant Riderhood had looked, and, allowing for his being still wrapped in a nautical overcoat, became as like that same lost wanted Mr. Julius Handford, as never man was like another in this world. In the breast of the coat he stowed the bristling hair and whisker, in a mo-