

many pints of porter. On the one hand, the young woman has the boat. On the other hand, she consumes so many pounds of beef-steaks and so many pints of porter. Those beef-steaks and that porter are the fuel to that young woman's engine. She derives therefrom a certain amount of power to row the boat; that power will produce so much money; and thus you get at the young woman's income. That (it seems to the Contractor) is the way of looking at it.

The fair enslaver having fallen into one of her gentle sleeps during this last exposition, nobody likes to wake her. Fortunately, she comes awake of herself, and puts the question to the Wandering Chairman. The Wanderer can only speak of the case as if it were his own. If such a young woman as the young woman described, had saved his own life, he would have been very much obliged to her, wouldn't have married her, and would have got her a berth in an Electric Telegraph Office, where young women answer very well.

What does the Genius of the three hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds, no shillings, and no pence, think? He can't say what he thinks, without asking: Had the young woman any money?

"No," says Lightwood, in an uncompromising voice; "no money."

"Madness and moonshine," is then the compressed verdict of the Genius. "A man may do any thing lawful, for money. But for no money?—Bosh!"

What does Boots say?

Boots says he wouldn't have done it under twenty thousand pound.

What does Brewer say?

Brewer says what Boots says.

What does Buffer say?

Buffer says he knows a man who married a bathing-woman, and bolted.

Lady Tippins fancies she has collected the suffrages of the whole Committee (nobody dreaming of asking the Vencerings for their opinion), when, looking round the table through her eye-glass, she perceives Mr. Twemlow with his hand to his forehead.

Good gracious! My Twemlow forgotten! My dearest! My own! What is his vote?

Twemlow has the air of being ill at ease, as he takes his hand from his forehead and replies.

"I am disposed to think," says he, "that this is a question of the feelings of a gentleman."

"A gentleman can have no feelings who contracts such a marriage," flushes Podsnap.

"Pardon me, Sir," says Twemlow, rather less mildly than usual, "I don't agree with you. If this gentleman's feelings of gratitude, of respect, of admiration, and affection, induced him (as I presume they did) to marry this lady—"

"This lady!" echoes Podsnap.

"Sir," returns Twemlow, with his wristbands bristling a little, "*you* repeat the word. *I* repeat the word. This lady. What else would you call her if the gentleman were present?"

This being something in the nature of a poser for Podsnap, he merely waves it away with a speechless wave.

"I say," resumes Twemlow, "if such feelings on the part of this gentleman induced this gentleman to marry this lady, I think he is the greater gentleman for the action, and makes her the greater lady. I beg to say, that when I use the word gentleman, I use it in the sense in which the degree may be attained by any man. The feelings of a gentleman I hold sacred, and I confess I am not comfortable when they are made the subject of sport or general discussion."

"I should like to know," sneers Podsnap, "whether your noble relation would be of your opinion."

"Mr. Podsnap," retorts Twemlow, "permit me. He might be, or he might not be. I can not say. But I could not allow even him to dictate to me on a point of great delicacy, on which I feel very strongly."

Somehow a canopy of wet blanket seems to descend upon the company, and Lady Tippins was never known to turn so very greedy or so very cross. Mortimer Lightwood alone brightens. He has been asking himself, as to every other member of the Committee in turn, "I wonder whether you are the Voice!" But he does not ask himself the question after Twemlow has spoken, and he glances in Twemlow's direction as if he were grateful. When the company disperse—by which time Mr. and Mrs. Vencerings have had quite as much as they want of the honor, and the guests have had quite as much as *they* want of the other honor—Mortimer sees Twemlow home, shakes hands with him cordially at parting, and fares to the Temple, gayly.

POSTSCRIPT,

IN LIEU OF PREFACE.

WHEN I devised this story, I foresaw the likelihood that a class of readers and commentators would suppose that I was at great pains to conceal exactly what I was at great pains to suggest: namely, that Mr. John Harmon was not slain, and that Mr. John Rokesmith was he. Pleasing myself with the idea that the supposition might in part arise out of some ingenuity in the story, and thinking it worth while, in the interests of art, to hint to an audience that an artist (of whatever denomination) may perhaps be trusted to know what he is about in his vocation, if they will concede him a little patience, I was not alarmed by the anticipation.

To keep for a long time unsuspected, yet always working itself out, another purpose originating in that leading incident, and turning it to a pleasant and useful account at last, was at once the most interesting and the most difficult part of my design. Its difficulty was much enhanced by the mode of publication; for it would be very unreasonable to expect that many read-

ers, pursuing a story in portions from month to month through nineteen months, will, until they have it before them complete, perceive the relations of its finer threads to the whole pattern which is always before the eyes of the story-weaver at his loom. Yet, that I hold the advantages of the mode of publication to outweigh its disadvantages, may be easily believed of one who revived it in the Pickwick Papers after long disuse, and has pursued it ever since.

There is sometimes an odd disposition in this country to dispute as improbable in fiction what are the commonest experiences in fact. Therefore I note here, though it may not be at all necessary, that there are hundreds of Will Cases (as they are called) far more remarkable than that fancied in this book; and that the stores of the Prerogative Office teem with instances of testators who have made, changed, contradicted, hidden, forgotten, left canceled, and left uncanceled, each many more wills than were ever made by the elder Mr. Harmon of Harmony Jail.

In my social experience, since Mrs. Betty Higden came upon the scene and left it, I have found Circumlocutional authorities disposed to be warm with me on the subject of my view of the Poor Law. My friend Mr. Bounderby could never see any difference between leaving the Coketown "hands" exactly as they were, and requiring them to be fed with turtle soup and venison out of gold spoons. Idiotic propositions of a parallel nature have been freely offered for my acceptance, and I have been called upon to admit that I would give Poor Law relief to any body, any where, any how. Putting this nonsense aside, I have observed a suspicious tendency in the various authorities to divide into two parties; the one contending that there are no deserving

Poor who prefer death by slow starvation and bitter weather to the mercies of some Relieving Officers and some Union Houses; the other admitting that there are such Poor, but denying that they have any cause or reason for what they do. The records in our newspapers, the late exposure by THE LANCET, and the common sense and senses of common people, furnish too abundant evidence against both defenses. But that my view of the Poor Law may not be mistaken or misrepresented, I will state it. I believe there has been in England, since the days of the STUARTS, no law so often infamously administered, no law so often openly violated, no law habitually so ill-supervised. In the majority of the shameful cases of disease and death from destitution that shock the Public and disgrace the country, the illegality is quite equal to the inhumanity—and known language could say no more of their lawlessness.

On Friday the Ninth of June, in the present year, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin (in their manuscript dress of receiving Mr. and Mrs. Lamble at breakfast) were on the Southeastern Railway with me in a terribly destructive accident. When I had done what I could to help others, I climbed back into my carriage—nearly turned over a viaduct, and caught aslant upon the turn—to extricate the worthy couple. They were much soiled, but otherwise unhurt. The same happy result attended Miss Bella Wilfer on her wedding-day, and Mr. Riderhood inspecting Bradley Headstone's red neckerchief as he lay asleep. I remember with devout thankfulness that I can never be nearer parting company with my readers forever than I was then, until there shall be written against my life the two words with which I have this day closed this book—THE END.

September 2, 1865.

AT CHRISTMAS TIME.

TO-NIGHT we gather round the hearth
While now the Christmas time is near,
The time we keep with song and mirth,
With noisy games and festal cheer.

Not quite twelve fleeting months have passed,
With rapid changes, through a year
Of shifting light and shade, since last
We kept our merry Christmas here.

Then War's fierce clarion sounded loud,
And faces that we see to-night,
Once veiled within the battle's cloud,
Shone in the camp-fire's lurid light.

And others, whom, no more we see,
Lie silent in Death's dreamless sleep,
Nor shocks of ages yet to be
Shall vex their slumbers long and deep.

To them we fill our glasses high,
We pledge them through all future years,
To them we drain the goblet dry
In spite of rising wells of tears.

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What tears for them?—let sorrow cease
For those who know not grief or care;
Theirs is a deeper, holier peace—
They breathe a calmer, purer air!

Long ages since the dawn of day,
Gilding the edges of the morn,
Looked in athwart the gloom where lay
The Christ-child of the Virgin born.

And high o'er Bethlehem's halls and towers,
Through the long watches of the night,
Crowning the dark and silent hours,
One pale star shone with mystic light.

Oh happy morn, whose dawning gave
Hope to a lost and sinful race,
Thy influence reaches past the grave,
On through remotest time and space!

Ring bells of cheer, ring in the day
When cruel wrong at last shall cease;
When feud and hate shall pass away,
And bring the reign of Love and Peace!