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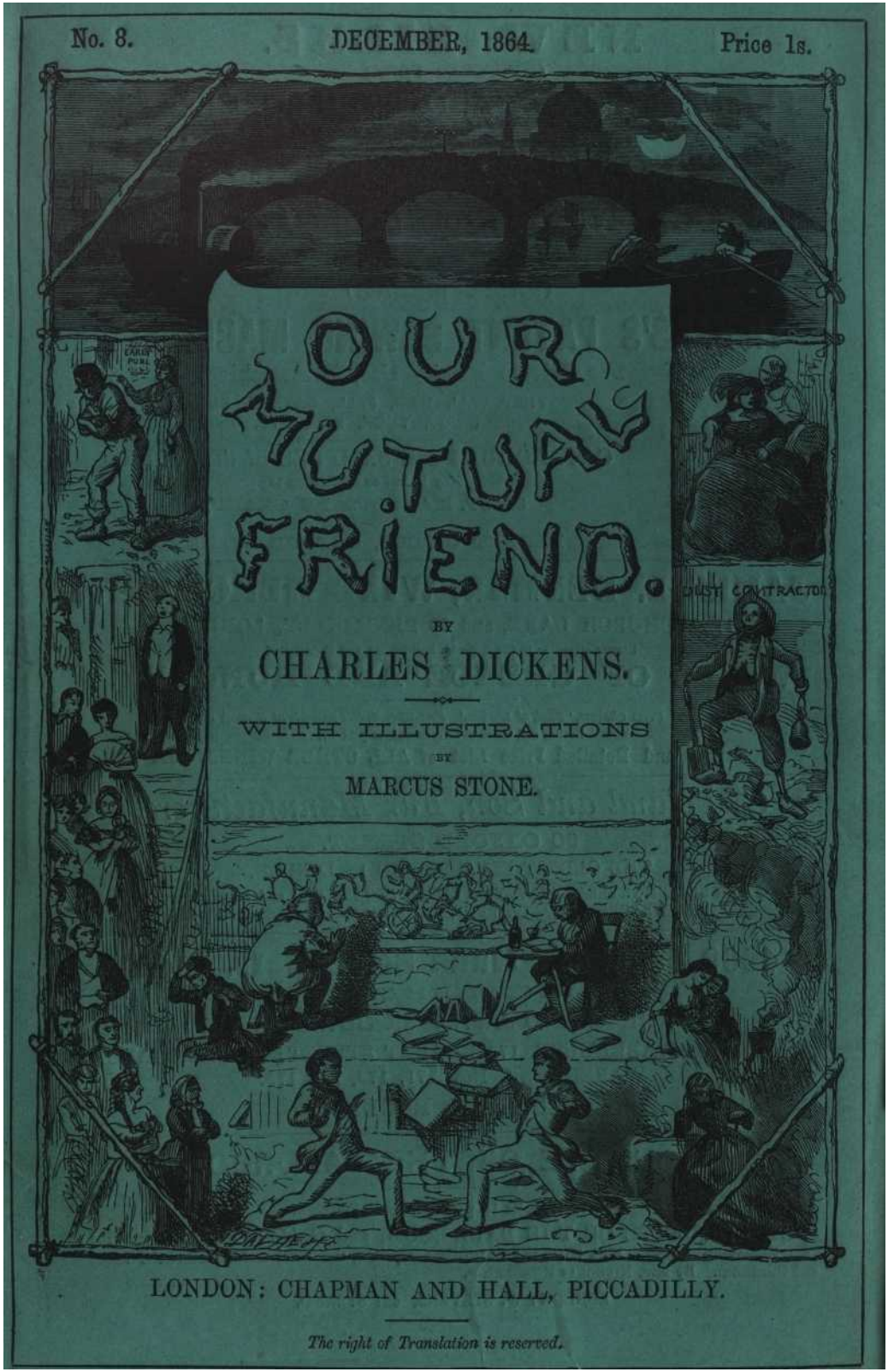

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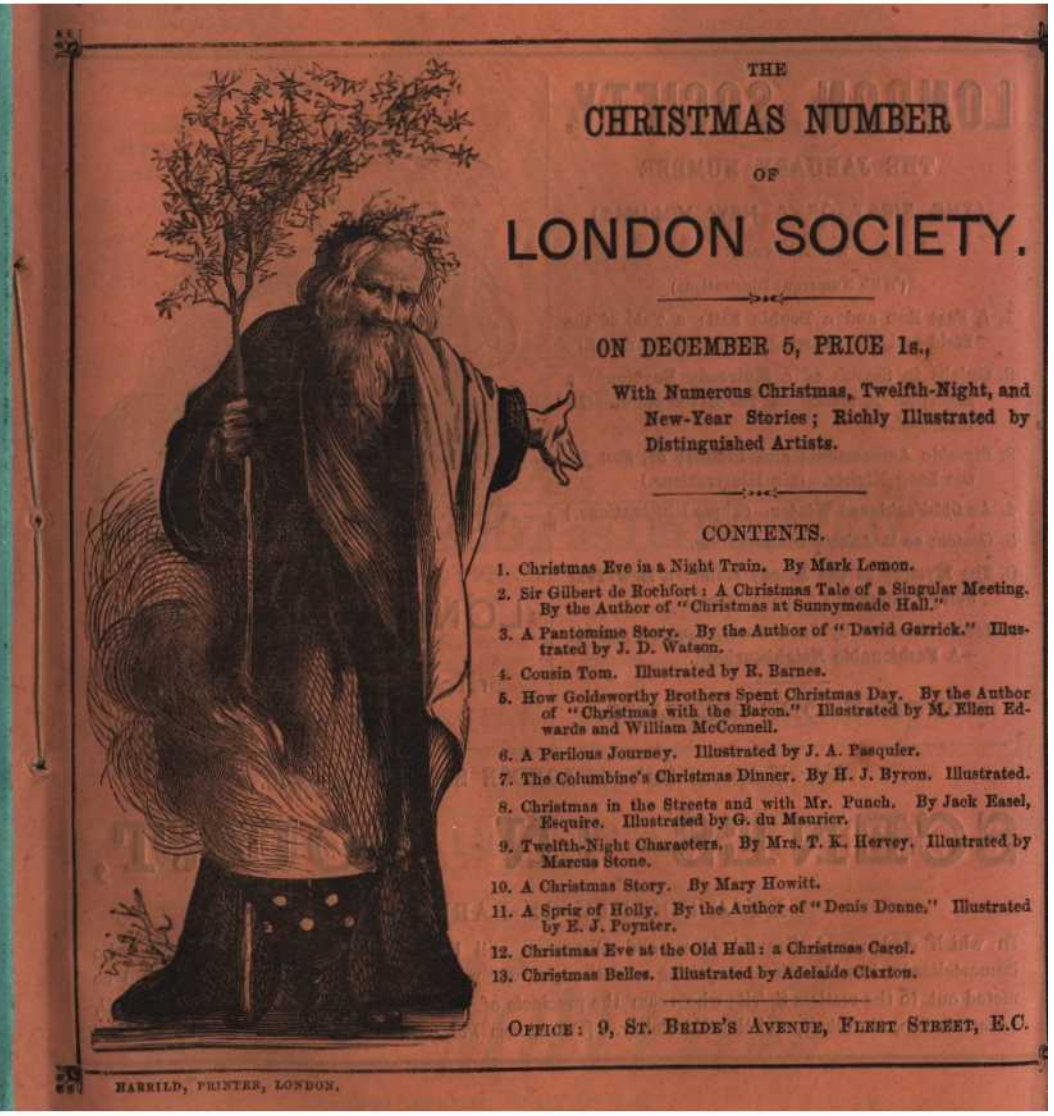

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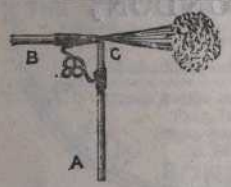

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12 Table Spoons	1 13 0	2 0 0	2 4 0	2 10 0
12 Dessert Forks	1 4 0	1 10 0	1 12 0	1 15 0
12 Dessert Spoons	1 4 0	1 10 0	1 12 0	1 15 0
12 Tea Spoons	16 0	1 0 0	1 2 0	1 5 0
6 Egg Spoons, gilt bowls	10 0	12 0	12 0	13 6
2 Sauce Ladles	6 0	8 0	8 0	9 0
1 Gravy Spoon	6 6	9 0	10 0	11 0
2 Salt Spoons, gilt bowls	3 4	4 0	4 0	4 6
1 Mustard Spoon, gilt bowl	1 8	2 0	2 0	2 3
1 Pair Sugar Tongs	2 6	3 6	3 6	4 0
1 Pair Fish Carvers	1 4 0	1 10 0	1 10 0	1 10 0
1 Butter Knife	2 6	4 0	5 6	6 0
1 Soup Ladle	10 0	12 0	16 0	17 0
1 Sugar Sifter	3 3	4 6	4 6	5 0
Total	9 19 9	12 9 0	13 9 6	14 17 3

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White bone handles	11 0	8 6	2 0
Ditto, balance handles	21 0	17 0	4 6
Black horn, rim'd shoulders	17 0	14 0	4 0
Do., very strong rivetted hdls.	12 0	9 0	3 0

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PA'S LODGER, AND PA'S DAUGHTER.

OUR JOHNNY.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH A FRIENDLY MOVE IS ORIGINATED.

THE arrangement between Mr. Boffin and his literary man, Mr. Silas Wegg, so far altered with the altered habits of Mr. Boffin's life, as that the Roman Empire usually declined in the morning and in the eminently aristocratic family mansion, rather than in the evening, as of yore, and in Boffin's Bower. There were occasions, however, when Mr. Boffin, seeking a brief refuge from the blandishments of fashion, would present himself at the Bower after dark, to anticipate the next sallying forth of Wegg, and would there, on the old settle, pursue the downward fortunes of those enervated and corrupted masters of the world who were by this time on their last legs. If Wegg had been worse paid for his office, or better qualified to discharge it, he would have considered these visits complimentary and agreeable; but, holding the position of a handsomely-remunerated humbug, he resented them. This was quite according to rule, for the incompetent servant, by whomsoever employed, is always against his employer. Even those born governors, noble and right honorable creatures, who have been the most imbecile in high places, have uniformly shown themselves the most opposed (sometimes in belying distrust, sometimes in vapid insolence) to *their* employer. What is in such wise true of the public master and servant, is equally true of the private master and servant all the world over.

When Mr. Silas Wegg did at last obtain free access to "Our House," as he had been wont to call the mansion outside which he had sat shelterless so long, and when he did at last find it in all particulars as different from his mental plans of it as according to the nature of things it well could be, that far-seeing and far-reaching character, by way of asserting himself and making out a case for compensation, affected to fall into a melancholy strain of musing over the mournful past; as if the house and he had had a fall in life together.

"And this, sir," Silas would say to his patron, sadly nodding his head and musing, "was once Our House! This, sir, is the building from which I have so often seen those great creatures, Miss Elizabeth, Master George, Aunt Jane, and Uncle Parker"—whose very names were of his own inventing—"pass and repass! And has it come to this, indeed! Ah dear me, dear me!"

So tender were his lamentations, that the kindly Mr. Boffin was quite sorry for him, and almost felt mistrustful that in buying the house he had done him an irreparable injury.

Two or three diplomatic interviews, the result of great subtlety on Mr. Wegg's part, but assuming the mask of careless yielding to a fortuitous combination of circumstances impelling him towards Clerkenwell, had enabled him to complete his bargain with Mr. Venus.

"Bring me round to the Bower," said Silas, when the bargain was

closed, "next Saturday evening, and if a sociable glass of old Jamaikey warm should meet your views, I am not the man to begrudge it."

"You are aware of my being poor company, sir," replied Mr. Venus, "but be it so."

It being so, here is Saturday evening come, and here is Mr. Venus come, and ringing at the Bower-gate.

Mr. Wegg opens the gate, descries a sort of brown paper truncheon under Mr. Venus's arm, and remarks, in a dry tone: "Oh! I thought perhaps you might have come in a cab."

"No, Mr. Wegg," replies Venus. "I am not above a parcel."

"Above a parcel! No!" says Wegg, with some dissatisfaction. But does not openly growl, "a certain sort of parcel might be above you."

"Here is your purchase, Mr. Wegg," says Venus, politely handing it over, "and I am glad to restore it to the source from whence it —flowed."

"Thankee," says Wegg. "Now this affair is concluded, I may mention to you in a friendly way that I've my doubts whether, if I had consulted a lawyer, you could have kept this article back from me. I only throw it out as a legal point."

"Do you think so, Mr. Wegg? I bought you in open contract."

"You can't buy human flesh and blood in this country, sir; not alive, you can't," says Wegg, shaking his head. "Then query, bone?"

"As a legal point?" asks Venus.

"As a legal point."

"I am not competent to speak upon that, Mr. Wegg," says Venus, reddening and growing something louder; "but upon a point of fact I think myself competent to speak; and as a point of fact I would have seen you—will you allow me to say, further?"

"I wouldn't say more than further, if I was you," Mr. Wegg suggests, pacifically.

—"Before I'd have given that packet into your hand without being paid my price for it. I don't pretend to know how the point of law may stand, but I'm thoroughly confident upon the point of fact."

As Mr. Venus is irritable (no doubt owing to his disappointment in love), and as it is not the cue of Mr. Wegg to have him out of temper, the latter gentleman soothingly remarks, "I only put it as a little case; I only put it ha'porthetically."

"Then I'd rather, Mr. Wegg, you put it another time, penn'orthetically," is Mr. Venus's retort, "for I tell you candidly I don't like your little cases."

Arrived by this time in Mr. Wegg's sitting-room, made bright on the chilly evening by gaslight and fire, Mr. Venus softens and compliments him on his abode; profiting by the occasion to remind Wegg that he (Venus) told him he had got into a good thing.

"Tolerable," Wegg rejoins. "But bear in mind, Mr. Venus, that there's no gold without its alloy. Mix for yourself and take a seat in the chimbley-corner. Will you perform upon a pipe, sir?"

"I am but an indifferent performer, sir," returns the other; "but I'll accompany you with a whiff or two at intervals."

So, Mr. Venus mixes, and Wegg mixes; and Mr. Venus lights and puffs, and Wegg lights and puffs.

"And there's alloy even in this metal of yours, Mr. Wegg, you was remarking?"

"Mystery," returns Wegg. "I don't like it, Mr. Venus. I don't like to have the life knocked out of former inhabitants of this house, in the gloomy dark, and not know who did it."

"Might you have any suspicions, Mr. Wegg?"

"No," returns that gentleman. "I know who profits by it. But I've no suspicions."

Having said which, Mr. Wegg smokes and looks at the fire with a most determined expression of Charity; as if he had caught that cardinal virtue by the skirts as she felt it her painful duty to depart from him, and held her by main force.

"Similarly," resumes Wegg, "I have observations as I can offer upon certain points and parties; but I make no objections, Mr. Venus. Here is an immense fortune drops from the clouds upon a person that shall be nameless. Here is a weekly allowance, with a certain weight of coals, drops from the clouds upon me. Which of us is the better man? Not the person that shall be nameless. That's an observation of mine, but I don't make it an objection. I take my allowance and my certain weight of coals. He takes his fortune. That's the way it works."

"It would be a good thing for me, if I could see things in the calm light you do, Mr. Wegg."

"Again look here," pursues Silas, with an oratorical flourish of his pipe and his wooden leg: the latter having an undignified tendency to tilt him back in his chair; "here's another observation, Mr. Venus, unaccompanied with an objection. Him that shall be nameless is liable to be talked over. He gets talked over. Him that shall be nameless, having me at his right hand, naturally looking to be promoted higher, and you may perhaps say meriting to be promoted higher——"

(Mr. Venus murmurs that he does say so.)

"—Him that shall be nameless, under such circumstances passes me by, and puts a talking-over stranger above my head. Which of us two is the better man? Which of us two can repeat most poetry? Which of us two has, in the service of him that shall be nameless, tackled the Romans, both civil and military, till he has got as husky as if he'd been weaned and ever since brought up on sawdust? Not the talking-over stranger. Yet the house is as free to him as if it was his, and he has his room, and is put upon a footing, and draws about a thousand a year. I am banished to the Bower, to be found in it like a piece of furniture whenever wanted. Merit, therefore, don't win. That's the way it works. I observe it, because I can't help observing it, being accustomed to take a powerful sight of notice; but I don't object. Ever here before, Mr. Venus?"

"Not inside the gate, Mr. Wegg."

"You've been as far as the gate then, Mr. Venus?"

"Yes, Mr. Wegg, and peeped in from curiosity."

"Did you see anything?"

"Nothing but the dust-yard."

Mr. Wegg rolls his eyes all round the room, in that ever unsatisfied quest of his, and then rolls his eyes all round Mr. Venus; as if suspicious of his having something about him to be found out.

"And yet, sir," he pursues, "being acquainted with old Mr. Harmon, one would have thought it might have been polite in you, too, to give him a call. And you're naturally of a polite disposition, you are." This last clause as a softening compliment to Mr. Venus.

"It is true, sir," replies Venus, winking his weak eyes, and running his fingers through his dusty shock of hair, "that I was so, before a certain observation soured me. You understand to what I allude, Mr. Wegg? To a certain written statement respecting not wishing to be regarded in a certain light. Since that, all is fled, save gall."

"Not all," says Mr. Wegg, in a tone of sentimental condolence.

"Yes, sir," returns Venus, "all! The world may deem it harsh, but I'd quite as soon pitch into my best friend as not. Indeed, I'd sooner!"

Involuntarily making a pass with his wooden leg to guard himself as Mr. Venus springs up in the emphasis of this unsociable declaration, Mr. Wegg tilts over on his back, chair and all, and is rescued by that harmless misanthrope, in a disjointed state and ruefully rubbing his head.

"Why, you lost your balance, Mr. Wegg," says Venus, handing him his pipe.

"And about time to do it," grumbles Silas, "when a man's visitors, without a word of notice, conduct themselves with the sudden wiciousness of Jacks-in-boxes! Don't come flying out of your chair like that, Mr. Venus!"

"I ask your pardon, Mr. Wegg. I am so soured."

"Yes, but hang it," says Wegg argumentatively, "a well-governed mind can be soured sitting! And as to being regarded in lights, there's bumpey lights as well as bony. *In* which," again rubbing his head, "I object to regard myself."

"I'll bear it in memory, sir."

"If you'll be so good." Mr. Wegg slowly subdues his ironical tone and his lingering irritation, and resumes his pipe. "We were talking of old Mr. Harmon being a friend of yours."

"Not a friend, Mr. Wegg. Only known to speak to, and to have a little deal with now and then. A very inquisitive character, Mr. Wegg, regarding what was found in the dust. As inquisitive as secret."

"Ah! You found him secret?" returns Wegg, with a greedy relish.

"He had always the look of it, and the manner of it."

"Ah!" with another roll of his eyes. "As to what was found in the dust now. Did you ever hear him mention how he found it, my dear friend? Living on the mysterious premises, one would like to know. For instance, where he found things? Or, for instance, how he set about it? Whether he began at the top of the mounds, or whether he began at the bottom. Whether he prodded;" Mr. Wegg's pantomime is skilful and expressive here; "or whether he scooped? Should you say scooped, my dear Mr. Venus; or should you—as a man—say prodded?"

"I should say neither, Mr. Wegg."

"As a fellow-man, Mr. Venus—mix again—why neither?"

"Because I suppose, sir, that what was found, was found in the sorting and sifting. All the mounds are sorted and sifted?"

"You shall see 'em and pass your opinion. Mix again."

On each occasion of his saying "mix again," Mr. Wegg, with a hop on his wooden leg, hitches his chair a little nearer; more as if he were proposing that himself and Mr. Venus should mix again, than that they should replenish their glasses.

"Living (as I said before) on the mysterious premises," says Wegg when the other has acted on his hospitable entreaty, "one likes to know. Would you be inclined to say now—as a brother—that he ever hid things in the dust, as well as found 'em?"

"Mr. Wegg, on the whole I should say he might."

Mr. Wegg claps on his spectacles, and admiringly surveys Mr. Venus from head to foot.

"As a mortal equally with myself, whose hand I take in mine for the first time this day, having unaccountably overlooked that act so full of boundless confidence binding a fellow-creetur *to* a fellow-creetur," says Wegg, holding Mr. Venus's palm out, flat and ready for smiting, and now smiting it; "as such—and no other—for I scorn all lowlier ties betwixt myself and the man walking with his face erect that alone I call my Twin—regarded and regarding in this trustful bond—what do you think he might have hid?"

"It is but a supposition, Mr. Wegg."

"As a Being with his hand upon his heart," cries Wegg; and the apostrophe is not the less impressive for the Being's hand being actually upon his rum and water; "put your supposition into language, and bring it out, Mr. Venus!"

"He was the species of old gentleman, sir," slowly returns that practical anatomist, after drinking, "that I should judge likely to take such opportunities as this place offered, of stowing away money, valuables, maybe papers."

"As one that was ever an ornament to human life," says Mr. Wegg, again holding out Mr. Venus's palm as if he were going to tell his fortune by chiromancy, and holding his own up ready for smiting it when the time should come; "as one that the poet might have had his eye on, in writing the national naval words:

> Helm a-weather, now lay her close,
> Yard arm and yard arm she lies;
> Again, cried I, Mr. Venus, give her t'other dose,
> Man shrouds and grapple, sir, or she flies!

—that is to say, regarded in the light of true British Oak, for such you are—explain, Mr. Venus, the expression 'papers'!"

"Seeing that the old gentleman was generally cutting off some near relation, or blocking out some natural affection," Mr. Venus rejoins, "he most likely made a good many wills and codicils."

The palm of Silas Wegg descends with a sounding smack upon

"Nothing but the dust-yard."

Mr. Wegg rolls his eyes all round the room, in that ever unsatisfied quest of his, and then rolls his eyes all round Mr. Venus; as if suspicious of his having something about him to be found out.

"And yet, sir," he pursues, "being acquainted with old Mr. Harmon, one would have thought it might have been polite in you, too, to give him a call. And you're naturally of a polite disposition, you are." This last clause as a softening compliment to Mr. Venus.

"It is true, sir," replies Venus, winking his weak eyes, and running his fingers through his dusty shock of hair, "that I was so, before a certain observation soured me. You understand to what I allude, Mr. Wegg? To a certain written statement respecting not wishing to be regarded in a certain light. Since that, all is fled, save gall."

"Not all," says Mr. Wegg, in a tone of sentimental condolence.

"Yes, sir," returns Venus, "all! The world may deem it harsh, but I'd quite as soon pitch into my best friend as not. Indeed, I'd sooner!"

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the palm of Venus, and Wegg lavishly exclaims, "Twin in opinion equally with feeling! Mix a little more!"

Having now hitched his wooden leg and his chair close in front of Mr. Venus, Mr. Wegg rapidly mixes for both, gives his visitor his glass, touches its rim with the rim of his own, puts his own to his lips, puts it down, and spreading his hands on his visitor's knees thus addresses him:

"Mr. Venus. It ain't that I object to being passed over for a stranger, though I regard the stranger as a more than doubtful customer. It ain't for the sake of making money, though money is ever welcome. It ain't for myself, though I am not so haughty as to be above doing myself a good turn. It's for the cause of the right."

Mr. Venus, passively winking his weak eyes both at once, demands: "What is, Mr. Wegg?"

"The friendly move, sir, that I now propose. You see the move, sir?"

"Till you have pointed it out, Mr. Wegg, I can't say whether I do or not."

"If there *is* anything to be found on these premises, let us find it together. Let us make the friendly move of agreeing to look for it together. Let us make the friendly move of agreeing to share the profits of it equally betwixt us. In the cause of the right." Thus Silas assuming a noble air.

"Then," says Mr. Venus, looking up, after meditating with his hair held in his hands, as if he could only fix his attention by fixing his head; "if anything was to be unburied from under the dust, it would be kept a secret by you and me? Would that be it, Mr. Wegg?"

"That would depend upon what it was, Mr. Venus. Say it was money, or plate, or jewellery, it would be as much ours as anybody else's."

Mr. Venus rubs an eyebrow, interrogatively.

"In the cause of the right it would. Because it would be unknowingly sold with the mounds else, and the buyer would get what he was never meant to have, and never bought. And what would that be, Mr. Venus, but the cause of the wrong?"

"Say it was papers," Mr. Venus propounds.

"According to what they contained we should offer to dispose of 'em to the parties most interested," replies Wegg, promptly.

"In the cause of the right, Mr. Wegg?"

"Always so, Mr. Venus. If the parties should use them in the cause of the wrong, that would be their act and deed. Mr. Venus. I have an opinion of you, sir, to which it is not easy to give mouth. Since I called upon you that evening when you were, as I may say, floating your powerful mind in tea, I have felt that you required to be roused with an object. In this friendly move, sir, you will have a glorious object to rouse you."

Mr. Wegg then goes on to enlarge upon what throughout has been uppermost in his crafty mind:—the qualifications of Mr. Venus for such a search. He expatiates on Mr. Venus's patient habits and delicate manipulation; on his skill in piecing little things together; on his knowledge of various tissues and textures; on the likelihood of small indications leading him on to the discovery of great concealments. "While as to myself," says Wegg, "I am not good at it. Whether I gave myself up to prodding, or whether I gave myself up to scooping, I couldn't do it with that delicate touch so as not to show that I was disturbing the mounds. Quite different with *you*, going to work (as *you* would) in the light of a fellow-man, holily pledged in a friendly move to his brother man." Mr. Wegg next modestly remarks on the want of adaptation in a wooden leg to ladders and such like airy perches, and also hints at an inherent tendency in that timber fiction, when called into action for the purposes of a promenade on an ashey slope, to stick itself into the yielding foothold, and peg its owner to one spot. Then, leaving this part of the subject, he remarks on the special phenomenon that before his installation in the Bower, it was from Mr. Venus that he first heard of the legend of hidden wealth in the Mounds: "which," he observes with a vaguely pious air, "was surely never meant for nothing." Lastly, he returns to the cause of the right, gloomily foreshadowing the possibility of something being unearthed to criminate Mr. Boffin (of whom he once more candidly admits it cannot be denied that he profits by a murder), and anticipating his denunciation by the friendly movers to avenging justice. And this, Mr. Wegg expressly points out, not at all for the sake of the reward—though it would be a want of principle not to take it.

To all this, Mr. Venus, with his shock of dusty hair cocked after the manner of a terrier's ears, attends profoundly. When Mr. Wegg, having finished, opens his arms wide, as if to show Mr. Venus how bare his breast is, and then folds them pending a reply, Mr. Venus winks at him with both eyes some little time before speaking.

"I see you have tried it by yourself, Mr. Wegg," he says when he does speak. "You have found out the difficulties by experience."

"No, it can hardly be said that I have tried it," replies Wegg, a little dashed by the hint. "I have just skimmed it. Skimmed it."

"And found nothing besides the difficulties?"

Wegg shakes his head.

"I scarcely know what to say to this, Mr. Wegg," observes Venus, after ruminating for a while.

"Say yes," Wegg naturally urges.

"If I wasn't soured, my answer would be no. But being soured, Mr. Wegg, and driven to reckless madness and desperation, I suppose it's Yes."

Wegg joyfully reproduces the two glasses, repeats the ceremony of clinking their rims, and inwardly drinks with great heartiness to the health and success in life of the young lady who has reduced Mr. Venus to his present convenient state of mind.

The articles of the friendly move are then severally recited and agreed upon. They are but secrecy, fidelity, and perseverance. The Bower to be always free of access to Mr. Venus for his researches, and every precaution to be taken against their attracting observation in the neighbourhood.

"There's a footstep!" exclaims Venus.

"Where?" cries Wegg, starting.

"Outside. St!"

They are in the act of ratifying the treaty of friendly move, by shaking hands upon it. They softly break off, light their pipes which have gone out, and lean back in their chairs. No doubt, a footstep. It approaches the window, and a hand taps at the glass. "Come in!" calls Wegg; meaning come round by the door. But the heavy old-fashioned sash is slowly raised, and a head slowly looks in out of the dark background of night.

"Pray is Mr. Silas Wegg here? Oh! I see him!"

The friendly movers might not have been quite at their ease, even though the visitor had entered in the usual manner. But, leaning on the breast-high window, and staring in out of the darkness, they find the visitor extremely embarrassing. Especially Mr. Venus: who removes his pipe, draws back his head, and stares at the starer, as if it were his own Hindoo baby come to fetch him home.

"Good evening, Mr. Wegg. The yard gate-lock should be looked to, if you please; it don't catch."

"Is it Mr. Rokesmith?" falters Wegg.

"It is Mr. Rokesmith. Don't let me disturb you. I am not coming in. I have only a message for you, which I undertook to deliver on my way home to my lodgings. I was in two minds about coming beyond the gate without ringing: not knowing but you might have a dog about."

"I wish I had," mutters Wegg, with his back turned as he rose from his chair. St! Hush! The talking-over stranger, Mr. Venus."

"Is that any one I know?" inquires the staring Secretary.

"No, Mr. Rokesmith. Friend of mine. Passing the evening with me."

"Oh! I beg his pardon. Mr. Boffin wishes you to know that he does not expect you to stay at home any evening, on the chance of his coming. It has occurred to him that he may, without intending it, have been a tie upon you. In future, if he should come without notice, he will take his chance of finding you, and it will be all the same to him if he does not. I undertook to tell you on my way. That's all."

With that, and "Good night," the Secretary lowers the window, and disappears. They listen, and hear his footsteps go back to the gate, and hear the gate close after him.

"And for that individual, Mr. Venus," remarks Wegg, when he is fully gone, "*I* have been passed over! Let me ask you what you think of him?"

Apparently, Mr. Venus does not know what to think of him, for he makes sundry efforts to reply, without delivering himself of any other articulate utterance than that he has "a singular look."

"A double look, you mean, sir," rejoins Wegg, playing bitterly upon the word. "That's *his* look. Any amount of singular look for me, but not a double look! That's an under-handed mind, sir."

"Do you say there's something against him?" Venus asks.

"Something against him?" repeats Wegg. "Something? What would the relief be to my feelings—as a fellow-man—if I wasn't the slave of truth, and didn't feel myself compelled to answer, Every-thing!"

See into what wonderful maudlin refuges, featherless ostriches plunge their heads! It is such unspeakable moral compensation to Wegg, to be overcome by the consideration that Mr. Rokesmith has an underhanded mind!

"On this starlight night, Mr. Venus," he remarks, when he is showing that friendly mover out across the yard, and both are something the worse for mixing again and again: "on this starlight night to think that talking-over strangers, and underhanded minds, can go walking home under the sky, as if they was all square!"

"The spectacle of those orbs," says Mr. Venus, gazing upward with his hat tumbling off, "brings heavy on me her crushing words that she did not wish to regard herself nor yet to be regarded in that——"

"I know! I know! You needn't repeat 'em," says Wegg, pressing his hand. "But think how those stars steady me in the cause of the right against some that shall be nameless. It isn't that I bear malice. But see how they glisten with old remembrances! Old remembrances of what, sir?"

Mr. Venus begins drearily replying, "Of her words, in her own handwriting, that she does not wish to regard herself, nor yet——" when Silas cuts him short with dignity.

"No, sir! Remembrances of Our House, of Master George, of Aunt Jane, of Uncle Parker, all laid waste! All offered up sacrifices to the minion of fortune and the worm of the hour!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH AN INNOCENT ELOPEMENT OCCURS.

THE minion of fortune and the worm of the hour, or in less cutting language, Nicodemus Boffin, Esquire, the Golden Dustman, had become as much at home in his eminently aristocratic family mansion as he was likely ever to be. He could not but feel that, like an eminently aristocratic family cheese, it was much too large for his wants, and bred an infinite amount of parasites; but he was content to regard this drawback on his property as a sort of perpetual Legacy Duty. He felt the more resigned to it, forasmuch as Mrs. Boffin enjoyed herself completely, and Miss Bella was delighted.

That young lady was, no doubt, an acquisition to the Boffins. She was far too pretty to be unattractive anywhere, and far too quick of perception to be below the tone of her new career. Whether it improved her heart might be a matter of taste that was open to question; but as touching another matter of taste, its improvement of her appearance and manner, there could be no question whatever.

And thus it soon came about that Miss Bella began to set Mrs. Boffin right; and even further, that Miss Bella began to feel ill at ease, and as it were responsible, when she saw Mrs. Boffin going

wrong. Not that so sweet a disposition and so sound a nature could ever go very wrong even among the great visiting authorities who agreed that the Boffins were "charmingly vulgar" (which for certain was not their own case in saying so), but that when she made a slip on the social ice on which all the children of Podsnappery, with genteel souls to be saved, are required to skate in circles, or to slide in long rows, she inevitably tripped Miss Bella up (so that young lady felt), and caused her to experience great confusion under the glances of the more skilful performers engaged in those ice-exercises.

At Miss Bella's time of life it was not to be expected that she should examine herself very closely on the congruity or stability of her position in Mr. Boffin's house. And as she had never been sparing of complaints of her old home when she had no other to compare it with, so there was no novelty of ingratitude or disdain in her very much preferring her new one.

"An invaluable man is Rokesmith," said Mr. Boffin, after some two or three months. "But I can't quite make him out."

Neither could Bella, so she found the subject rather interesting.

"He takes more care of my affairs, morning, noon, and night," said Mr. Boffin, "than fifty other men put together either could or would; and yet he has ways of his own that are like tying a scaffolding-pole right across the road, and bringing me up short when I am almost a-walking arm in arm with him."

"May I ask how so, sir?" inquired Bella.

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Boffin, "he won't meet any company here, but you. When we have visitors, I should wish him to have his regular place at the table like ourselves; but no, he won't take it."

"If he considers himself above it," said Miss Bella, with an airy toss of her head, "I should leave him alone."

"It ain't that, my dear," replied Mr. Boffin, thinking it over. "He don't consider himself above it."

"Perhaps he considers himself beneath it," suggested Bella. "If so, he ought to know best."

"No, my dear; nor it ain't that, neither. No," repeated Mr. Boffin, with a shake of his head, after again thinking it over; "Rokesmith's a modest man, but he don't consider himself beneath it."

"Then what does he consider, sir?" asked Bella.

"Dashed if I know!" said Mr. Boffin. "It seemed at first as if it was only Lightwood that he objected to meet. And now it seems to be everybody, except you."

"Oho!" thought Miss Bella. "In—deed! *That's* it, is it!" For Mr. Mortimer Lightwood had dined there two or three times, and she had met him elsewhere, and he had shown her some attention. "Rather cool in a Secretary—and Pa's lodger—to make me the subject of his jealousy!"

That Pa's daughter should be so contemptuous of Pa's lodger was odd; but there were odder anomalies than that in the mind of the spoilt girl: the doubly spoilt girl: spoilt first by poverty, and then by wealth. Be it this history's part, however, to leave them to unravel themselves.

"A little too much, I think," Miss Bella reflected scornfully, "to have Pa's lodger laying claim to me, and keeping eligible people off! A little too much, indeed, to have the opportunities opened to me by Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, appropriated by a mere Secretary and Pa's lodger!"

Yet it was not so very long ago that Bella had been fluttered by the discovery that this same Secretary and lodger seemed to like her. Ah! but the eminently aristocratic mansion and Mrs. Boffin's dressmaker had not come into play then.

In spite of his seemingly retiring manners a very intrusive person, this Secretary and lodger, in Miss Bella's opinion. Always a light in his office-room when we came home from the play or Opera, and he always at the carriage-door to hand us out. Always a provoking radiance too on Mrs. Boffin's face, and an abominably cheerful reception of him, as if it were possible seriously to approve what the man had in his mind!

"You never charge me, Miss Wilfer," said the Secretary, encountering her by chance alone in the great drawing-room, "with commissions for home. I shall always be happy to execute any commands you may have in that direction."

"Pray what may you mean, Mr. Rokesmith?" inquired Miss Bella, with languidly drooping eyelids.

"By home? I mean your father's house at Holloway."

She coloured under the retort—so skilfully thrust, that the words seemed to be merely a plain answer, given in plain good faith—and said, rather more emphatically and sharply:

"What commissions and commands are you speaking of?"

"Only such little words of remembrance as I assume you send somehow or other," replied the Secretary with his former air. "It would be a pleasure to me if you would make me the bearer of them. As you know, I come and go between the two houses every day."

"You needn't remind me of that, sir."

She was too quick in this petulant sally against "Pa's lodger;" and she felt that she had been so when she met his quiet look.

"They don't send many—what was your expression?—words of remembrance to *me*," said Bella, making haste to take refuge in ill-usage.

"They frequently ask me about you, and I give them such slight intelligence as I can."

"I hope it's truly given," exclaimed Bella.

"I hope you cannot doubt it, for it would be very much against you, if you could."

"No, I do not doubt it. I deserve the reproach, which is very just indeed. I beg your pardon, Mr. Rokesmith."

"I should beg you not to do so, but that it shows you to such admirable advantage," he replied with earnestness. "Forgive me; I could not help saying that. To return to what I have digressed from, let me add that perhaps they think I report them to you, deliver little messages, and the like. But I forbear to trouble you, as you never ask me."

"I am going, sir," said Bella, looking at him as if he had reproved her "to see them to-morrow."

"Is that," he asked, hesitating, "said to me, or to them?"

"To which you please."

"To both? Shall I make it a message?"

"You can if you like, Mr. Rokesmith. Message or no message, I am going to see them to-morrow."

"Then I will tell them so."

He lingered a moment, as though to give her the opportunity of prolonging the conversation if she wished. As she remained silent, he left her. Two incidents of the little interview were felt by Miss Bella herself, when alone again, to be very curious. The first was, that he unquestionably left her with a penitent air upon her, and a penitent feeling in her heart. The second was, that she had not had an intention or a thought of going home, until she had announced it to him as a settled design.

"What can I mean by it, or what can he mean by it?" was her mental inquiry: "He has no right to any power over me, and how do I come to mind him when I don't care for him?"

Mrs. Boffin, insisting that Bella should make to-morrow's expedition in the chariot, she went home in great grandeur. Mrs. Wilfer and Miss Lavinia had speculated much on the probabilities and improbabilities of her coming in this gorgeous state, and, on beholding the chariot from the window at which they were secreted to look out for it, agreed that it must be detained at the door as long as possible, for the mortification and confusion of the neighbours. Then they repaired to the usual family room, to receive Miss Bella with a becoming show of indifference.

The family room looked very small and very mean, and the downward staircase by which it was attained looked very narrow and very crooked. The little house and all its arrangements were a poor contrast to the eminently aristocratic dwelling. "I can hardly believe," thought Bella, "that I ever did endure life in this place!"

Gloomy majesty on the part of Mrs. Wilfer, and native pertness on the part of Lavvy, did not mend the matter. Bella really stood in natural need of a little help, and she got none.

"This," said Mrs. Wilfer, presenting a cheek to be kissed, as sympathetic and responsive as the back of the bowl of a spoon, "is quite an honor! You will probably find your sister Lavvy grown, Bella."

"Ma," Miss Lavinia interposed, "there can be no objection to your being aggravating, because Bella richly deserves it; but I really must request that you will not drag in such ridiculous nonsense as my having grown when I am past the growing age."

"I grew, myself," Mrs. Wilfer sternly proclaimed, "after I was married."

"Very well, Ma," returned Lavvy, "then I think you had much better have left it alone."

The lofty glare with which the majestic woman received this answer, might have embarrassed a less pert opponent, but it had no effect upon Lavinia: who, leaving her parent to the enjoyment of any amount of glaring that she might deem desirable under the circumstances, accosted her sister, undismayed.

"I suppose you won't consider yourself quite disgraced, Bella, if I give you a kiss? Well! And how do you do, Bella? And how are your Boffins?"

"Peace!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilfer. "Hold! I will not suffer this tone of levity."

"My goodness me! How are your Spoffins, then?" said Lavvy, "since Ma so very much objects to your Boffins."

"Impertinent girl! Minx!" said Mrs. Wilfer, with dread severity.

"I don't care whether I am a Minx, or a Sphinx," returned Lavinia, coolly, tossing her head; "it's exactly the same thing to me, and I'd every bit as soon be one as the other; but I know this—I'll not grow after I am married!"

"You will not? *You* will not?" repeated Mrs. Wilfer, solemnly.

"No, Ma, I will not. Nothing shall induce me."

Mrs. Wilfer, having waved her gloves, became loftily pathetic. "But it was to be expected;" thus she spake. "A child of mine deserts me for the proud and prosperous, and another child of mine despises me. It is quite fitting."

"Ma," Bella struck in, "Mr. and Mrs. Boffin are prosperous, no doubt; but you have no right to say they are proud. You must know very well that they are not."

"In short, Ma," said Lavvy, bouncing over to the enemy without a word of notice, "you must know very well—or if you don't, more shame for you!—that Mr. and Mrs. Boffin are just absolute perfection."

"Truly," returned Mrs. Wilfer, courteously receiving the deserter, "it would seem that we are required to think so. And this, Lavinia, is my reason for objecting to a tone of levity. Mrs. Boffin (of whose physiognomy I can never speak with the composure I would desire to preserve), and your mother, are not on terms of intimacy. It is not for a moment to be supposed that she and her husband dare to presume to speak of this family as the Wilfers. I cannot therefore condescend to speak of them as the Boffins. No; for such a tone—call it familiarity, levity, equality, or what you will—would imply those social interchanges which do not exist. Do I render myself intelligible?"

Without taking the least notice of this inquiry, albeit delivered in an imposing and forensic manner, Lavinia reminded her sister, "After all, you know, Bella, you haven't told us how your Whatshisnames are."

"I don't want to speak of them here," replied Bella, suppressing indignation, and tapping her foot on the floor. "They are much too kind and too good to be drawn into these discussions."

"Why put it so?" demanded Mrs. Wilfer, with biting sarcasm. "Why adopt a circuitous form of speech? It is polite and it is obliging; but why do it? Why not openly say that they are much too kind and too good for *us?* We understand the allusion. Why disguise the phrase?"

"Ma," said Bella, with one beat of her foot, "you are enough to drive a saint mad, and so is Lavvy."

"Unfortunate Lavvy!" cried Mrs. Wilfer, in a tone of commisera-

tion. "She always comes in for it. My poor child!" But Lavvy, with the suddenness of her former desertion, now bounced over to the other enemy: very sharply remarking, "Don't patronise *me*, Ma, because I can take care of myself."

"I only wonder," resumed Mrs. Wilfer, directing her observations to her elder daughter, as safer on the whole than her utterly unmanageable younger, "that you found time and inclination to tear yourself from Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, and come to see us at all. I only wonder that our claims, contending against the superior claims of Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, had any weight. I feel I ought to be thankful for gaining so much, in competition with Mr. and Mrs. Boffin." (The good lady bitterly emphasized the first letter of the word Boffin, as if it represented her chief objection to the owners of that name, and as if she could have borne Doffin, Moffin, or Poffin much better.)

"Ma," said Bella, angrily, "you force me to say that I am truly sorry I did come home, and that I never will come home again, except when poor dear Pa is here. For, Pa is too magnanimous to feel envy and spite towards my generous friends, and Pa is delicate enough and gentle enough to remember the sort of little claim they thought I had upon them and the unusually trying position in which, through no act of my own, I had been placed. And I always did love poor dear Pa better than all the rest of you put together, and I always do and I always shall!"

Here Bella, deriving no comfort from her charming bonnet and her elegant dress, burst into tears.

"I think, R. W.," cried Mrs. Wilfer, lifting up her eyes and apostrophising the air, "that if you were present, it would be a trial to your feelings to hear your wife and the mother of your family depreciated in your name. But Fate has spared you this, R. W., whatever it may have thought proper to inflict upon her!"

Here Mrs. Wilfer burst into tears.

"I hate the Boffins!" protested Miss Lavinia. "I don't care who objects to their being called the Boffins. I WILL call 'em the Boffins. The Boffins, the Boffins, the Boffins! And I say they are mischief-making Boffins, and I say the Boffins have set Bella against me, and I tell the Boffins to their faces:" which was not strictly the fact, but the young lady was excited: "that they are detestable Boffins, disreputable Boffins, odious Boffins, beastly Boffins. There!"

Here Miss Lavinia burst into tears.

The front garden-gate clanked, and the Secretary was seen coming at a brisk pace up the steps. "Leave Me to open the door to him," said Mrs. Wilfer, rising with stately resignation as she shook her head and dried her eyes; "we have at present no stipendiary girl to do so. We have nothing to conceal. If he sees these traces of emotion on our cheeks, let him construe them as he may."

With those words she stalked out. In a few moments she stalked in again, proclaiming in her heraldic manner, "Mr. Rokesmith is the bearer of a packet for Miss Bella Wilfer."

Mr. Rokesmith followed close upon his name, and of course saw what was amiss. But he discreetly affected to see nothing, and addressed Miss Bella.

"Mr. Boffin intended to have placed this in the carriage for you this morning. He wished you to have it, as a little keepsake he had prepared—it is only a purse, Miss Wilfer—but as he was disappointed in his fancy, I volunteered to come after you with it."

Bella took it in her hand, and thanked him.

"We have been quarrelling here a little, Mr. Rokesmith, but not more than we used; you know our agreeable ways among ourselves. You find me just going. Good-bye, mamma. Good-bye, Lavvy!" And with a kiss for each Miss Bella turned to the door. The Secretary would have attended her, but Mrs. Wilfer advancing and saying with dignity, "Pardon me! Permit me to assert my natural right to escort my child to the equipage which is in waiting for her," he begged pardon and gave place. It was a very magnificent spectacle indeed, to see Mrs. Wilfer throw open the house-door, and loudly demand with extended gloves, "The male domestic of Mrs. Boffin!" To whom presenting himself, she delivered the brief but majestic charge, "Miss Wilfer. Coming out!" and so delivered her over, like a female Lieutenant of the Tower relinquishing a State Prisoner. The effect of this ceremonial was for some quarter of an hour afterwards perfectly paralysing on the neighbours, and was much enhanced by the worthy lady airing herself for that term in a kind of splendidly serene trance on the top step.

When Bella was seated in the carriage, she opened the little packet in her hand. It contained a pretty purse, and the purse contained a bank note for fifty pounds. "This shall be a joyful surprise for poor dear Pa," said Bella, "and I'll take it myself into the City!"

As she was uninformed respecting the exact locality of the place of business of Chicksey Veneering and Stobbles, but knew it to be near Mincing Lane, she directed herself to be driven to the corner of that darksome spot. Thence she despatched "the male domestic of Mrs. Boffin," in search of the counting-house of Chicksey Veneering and Stobbles, with a message importing that if R. Wilfer could come out, there was a lady waiting who would be glad to speak with him. The delivery of these mysterious words from the mouth of a footman caused so great an excitement in the counting-house, that a youthful scout was instantly appointed to follow Rumty, observe the lady, and come in with his report. Nor was the agitation by any means diminished, when the scout rushed back with the intelligence that the lady was "a slap-up gal in a bang-up chariot."

Rumty himself, with his pen behind his ear under his rusty hat, arrived at the carriage-door in a breathless condition, and had been fairly lugged into the vehicle by his cravat and embraced almost unto choking, before he recognised his daughter. "My dear child!" he then panted, incoherently. "Good gracious me! What a lovely woman you are! I thought you had been unkind and forgotten your mother and sister."

"I have just been to see them, Pa dear."

"Oh! and how—how did you find your mother?" asked R. W., dubiously.

"Very disagreeable, Pa, and so was Lavvy."

"They are sometimes a little liable to it," observed the patient cherub; "but I hope you made allowances, Bella, my dear?"

"No. I was disagreeable too, Pa; we were all of us disagreeable together. But I want you to come and dine with me somewhere, Pa."

"Why, my dear, I have already partaken of a—if one might mention such an article in this superb chariot—of a—Saveloy," replied R. Wilfer, modestly dropping his voice on the word, as he eyed the canary-coloured fittings.

"Oh! That's nothing, Pa!"

"Truly, it ain't as much as one could sometimes wish it to be, my dear," he admitted, drawing his hand across his mouth. "Still when, circumstances over which you have no control, interpose obstacles between yourself and Small Germans, you can't do better than bring a contented mind to bear on"—again dropping his voice in deference to the chariot—"Saveloys!"

"You poor good Pa! Pa, do, I beg and pray, get leave for the rest of the day, and come and pass it with me!"

"Well, my dear, I'll cut back and ask for leave."

"But before you cut back," said Bella, who had already taken him by the chin, pulled his hat off, and begun to stick up his hair in her old way, "do say that you are sure I am giddy and inconsiderate, but have never really slighted you, Pa."

"My dear, I say it with all my heart. And might I likewise observe," her father delicately hinted, with a glance out at window, "that perhaps it might be calculated to attract attention, having one's hair publicly done by a lovely woman in an elegant turn-out in Fenchurch Street?"

Bella laughed and put on his hat again. But when his boyish figure bobbed away, its shabbiness and cheerful patience smote the tears out of her eyes. "I hate that Secretary for thinking it of me," she said to herself, "and yet it seems half true!"

Back came her father, more like a boy than ever, in his release from school. "All right, my dear. Leave given at once. Really very handsomely done!"

"Now where can we find some quiet place, Pa, in which I can wait for you while you go on an errand for me, if I send the carriage away?"

It demanded cogitation. "You see, my dear," he explained, "you really have become such a very lovely woman, that it ought to be a very quiet place." At length he suggested, "Near the garden up by the Trinity House on Tower Hill." So, they were driven there, and Bella dismissed the chariot; sending a pencilled note by it to Mrs. Boffin, that she was with her father.

"Now, Pa, attend to what I am going to say, and promise and vow to be obedient."

"I promise and vow, my dear."

"You ask no questions. You take this purse; you go to the nearest place where they keep everything of the very very best, ready made; you buy and put on, the most beautiful suit of clothes, the most beautiful hat, and the most beautiful pair of bright boots

(patent leather, Pa, mind!) that are to be got for money; and you come back to me."

"But, my dear Bella——"

"Take care, Pa!" pointing her forefinger at him, merrily. "You have promised and vowed. It's perjury, you know."

There was water in the foolish little fellow's eyes, but she kissed them dry (though her own were wet), and he bobbed away again. After half an hour, he came back, so brilliantly transformed, that Bella was obliged to walk round him in ecstatic admiration twenty times, before she could draw her arm through his, and delightedly squeeze it.

"Now, Pa," said Bella, hugging him close, "take this lovely woman out to dinner."

"Where shall we go, my dear?"

"Greenwich!" said Bella, valiantly. "And be sure you treat this lovely woman with everything of the best."

While they were going along to take boat, "Don't you wish, my dear," said R. W., timidly, "that your mother was here?"

"No, I don't, Pa, for I like to have you all to myself to-day. I was always your little favourite at home, and you were always mine. We have run away together often, before now; haven't we, Pa?"

"Ah, to be sure we have! Many a Sunday when your mother was—was a little liable to it," repeating his former delicate expression after pausing to cough.

"Yes, and I am afraid I was seldom or never as good as I ought to have been, Pa. I made you carry me, over and over again, when you should have made me walk; and I often drove you in harness, when you would much rather have sat down and read your newspaper: didn't I?"

"Sometimes, sometimes. But Lor, what a child you were! What a companion you were!"

"Companion? That's just what I want to be to-day, Pa."

"You are safe to succeed, my love. Your brothers and sisters have all in their turns been companions to me, to a certain extent, but only to a certain extent. Your mother has, throughout life, been a companion that any man might—might look up to—and—and commit the sayings of, to memory—and—form himself upon—if he——"

"If he liked the model?" suggested Bella.

"We-ell, ye-es," he returned, thinking about it, not quite satisfied with the phrase: "or perhaps I might say, if it was in him. Supposing, for instance, that a man wanted to be always marching, he would find your mother an inestimable companion. But if he had any taste for walking, or should wish at any time to break into a trot, he might sometimes find it a little difficult to keep step with your mother. Or take it this way, Bella," he added, after a moment's reflection; "Supposing that a man had to go through life, we won't say with a companion, but we'll say to a tune. Very good. Supposing that the tune allotted to him was the Dead March in Saul. Well. It would be a very suitable tune for particular occasions—none better—but it would be difficult to keep time

with in the ordinary run of domestic transactions. For instance, if he took his supper after a hard day, to the Dead March in Saul, his food might be likely to sit heavy on him. Or, if he was at any time inclined to relieve his mind by singing a comic song or dancing a hornpipe, and was obliged to do it to the Dead March in Saul, he might find himself put out in the execution of his lively intentions."

"Poor Pa!" thought Bella, as she hung upon his arm.

"Now, what I will say for you, my dear," the cherub pursued mildly and without a notion of complaining, "is, that you are so adaptable. So adaptable."

"Indeed I am afraid I have shown a wretched temper, Pa. I am afraid I have been very complaining, and very capricious. I seldom or never thought of it before. But when I sat in the carriage just now and saw you coming along the pavement, I reproached myself."

"Not at all, my dear. Don't speak of such a thing."

A happy and a chatty man was Pa in his new clothes that day. Take it for all in all, it was perhaps the happiest day he had ever known in his life; not even excepting that on which his heroic partner had approached the nuptial altar to the tune of the Dead March in Saul.

The little expedition down the river was delightful, and the little room overlooking the river into which they were shown for dinner was delightful. Everything was delightful. The park was delightful, the punch was delightful, the dishes of fish were delightful, the wine was delightful. Bella was more delightful than any other item in the festival; drawing Pa out in the gayest manner; making a point of always mentioning herself as the lovely woman; stimulating Pa to order things, by declaring that the lovely woman insisted on being treated with them; and in short causing Pa to be quite enraptured with the consideration that he *was* the Pa of such a charming daughter.

And then, as they sat looking at the ships and steamboats making their way to the sea with the tide that was running down, the lovely woman imagined all sorts of voyages for herself and Pa. Now, Pa, in the character of owner of a lumbering square-sailed collier, was tacking away to Newcastle, to fetch black diamonds to make his fortune with; now, Pa was going to China in that handsome three-masted ship, to bring home opium, with which he would for ever cut out Chicksey Veneering and Stobbles, and to bring home silks and shawls without end for the decoration of his charming daughter. Now, John Harmon's disastrous fate was all a dream, and he had come home and found the lovely woman just the article for him, and the lovely woman had found him just the article for her, and they were going away on a trip, in their gallant bark, to look after their vines, with streamers flying at all points, a band playing on deck, and Pa established in the great cabin. Now, John Harmon was consigned to his grave again, and a merchant of immense wealth (name unknown) had courted and married the lovely woman, and he was so enormously rich that everything you saw upon the river sailing or steaming belonged to him, and he kept a perfect fleet of yachts for pleasure, and that little impudent yacht which you saw over

there, with the great white sail, was called The Bella, in honor of his wife, and she held her state aboard when it pleased her, like a modern Cleopatra. Anon, there would embark in that troop-ship when she got to Gravesend, a mighty general, of large property (name also unknown), who wouldn't hear of going to victory without his wife, and whose wife was the lovely woman, and she was destined to become the idol of all the red coats and blue jackets alow and aloft. And then again: you saw that ship being towed out by a steam-tug? Well! where did you suppose she was going to? She was going among the coral reefs and cocoa-nuts and all that sort of thing, and she was chartered for a fortunate individual of the name of Pa (himself on board, and much respected by all hands), and she was going, for his sole profit and advantage, to fetch a cargo of sweet-smelling woods, the most beautiful that ever were seen, and the most profitable that never were heard of, and her cargo would be a great fortune, as indeed it ought to be: the lovely woman who had purchased her and fitted her expressly for this voyage, being married to an Indian Prince, who was a Something-or-Other, and who wore Cashmere shawls all over himself, and diamonds and emeralds blazing in his turban, and was beautifully coffee-coloured and excessively devoted, though a little too jealous. Thus Bella ran on merrily, in a manner perfectly enchanting to Pa, who was as willing to put his head into the Sultan's tub of water as the beggar-boys below the window were to put *their* heads in the mud.

"I suppose, my dear," said Pa after dinner, "we may come to the conclusion at home, that we have lost you for good?"

Bella shook her head. Didn't know. Couldn't say. All she was able to report was, that she was most handsomely supplied with everything she could possibly want, and that whenever she hinted at leaving Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, they wouldn't hear of it.

"And now, Pa," pursued Bella, "I'll make a confession to you. I am the most mercenary little wretch that ever lived in the world."

"I should hardly have thought it of you, my dear," returned her father, first glancing at himself, and then at the dessert.

"I understand what you mean, Pa, but it's not that. It's not that I care for money to keep as money, but I do care so much for what it will buy!"

"Really I think most of us do," returned R. W.

"But not to the dreadful extent that I do, Pa. O-o!" cried Bella, screwing the exclamation out of herself with a twist of her dimpled chin. "I AM so mercenary!"

With a wistful glance R. W. said, in default of having anything better to say: "About when did you begin to feel it coming on, my dear?"

"That's it, Pa. That's the terrible part of it. When I was at home, and only knew what it was to be poor, I grumbled but didn't so much mind. When I was at home expecting to be rich, I thought vaguely of all the great things I would do. But when I had been disappointed of my splendid fortune, and came to see it from day to day in other hands, and to have before my eyes what it could really do, then I became the mercenary little wretch I am."

"It's your fancy, my dear."

"I can assure you it's nothing of the sort, Pa!" said Bella, nodding at him, with her very pretty eyebrows raised as high as they would go, and looking comically frightened. "It's a fact. I am always avariciously scheming."

"Lor! But how?"

"I'll tell you, Pa. I don't mind telling *you*, because we have always been favourites of each other's, and because you are not like a Pa, but more like a sort of a younger brother with a dear venerable chubbiness on him. And besides," added Bella, laughing as she pointed a rallying finger at his face, "because I have got you in my power. This is a secret expedition. If ever you tell of me, I'll tell of you. I'll tell Ma that you dined at Greenwich."

"Well; seriously, my dear," observed R. W., with some trepidation of manner, "it might be as well not to mention it."

"Aha!" laughed Bella. "I knew you wouldn't like it, sir! So you keep my confidence, and I'll keep yours. But betray the lovely woman, and you shall find her a serpent. Now, you may give me a kiss, Pa, and I should like to give your hair a turn, because it has been dreadfully neglected in my absence."

R. W. submitted his head to the operator, and the operator went on talking; at the same time putting separate locks of his hair through a curious process of being smartly rolled over her two revolving forefingers, which were then suddenly pulled out of it in opposite lateral directions. On each of these occasions the patient winced and winked.

"I have made up my mind that I must have money, Pa. I feel that I can't beg it, borrow it, or steal it; and so I have resolved that I must marry it."

R. W. cast up his eyes towards her, as well as he could under the operating circumstances, and said in a tone of remonstrance, "My de-ar Bella!"

"Have resolved, I say, Pa, that to get money I must marry money. In consequence of which, I am always looking out for money to captivate."

"My de-a-r Bella!"

"Yes, Pa, that is the state of the case. If ever there was a mercenary plotter whose thoughts and designs were always in her mean occupation, I am the amiable creature. But I don't care. I hate and detest being poor, and I won't be poor if I can marry money. Now you are deliciously fluffy, Pa, and in a state to astonish the waiter and pay the bill."

"But, my dear Bella, this is quite alarming at your age."

"I told you so, Pa, but you wouldn't believe it," returned Bella, with a pleasant childish gravity. "Isn't it shocking?"

"It would be quite so, if you fully knew what you said, my dear, or meant it."

"Well, Pa, I can only tell you that I mean nothing else. Talk to me of love!" said Bella, contemptuously: though her face and figure certainly rendered the subject no incongruous one. "Talk to me of fiery dragons! But talk to me of poverty and wealth, and there indeed we touch upon realities."

"My De-ar, this is becoming Awful—" her father was emphatically beginning: when she stopped him.

"Pa, tell me. Did *you* marry money?"

"You know I didn't, my dear."

Bella hummed the Dead March in Saul, and said, after all it signified very little! But seeing him look grave and downcast, she took him round the neck and kissed him back to cheerfulness again.

"I didn't mean that last touch, Pa; it was only said in joke. Now mind! You are not to tell of me, and I'll not tell of you. And more than that; I promise to have no secrets from you, Pa, and you may make certain that, whatever mercenary things go on, I shall always tell you all about them in strict confidence."

Fain to be satisfied with this concession from the lovely woman, R. W. rang the bell, and paid the bill. "Now, all the rest of this, Pa," said Bella, rolling up the purse when they were alone again, hammering it small with her little fist on the table, and cramming it into one of the pockets of his new waistcoat, "is for you, to buy presents with for them at home, and to pay bills with, and to divide as you like, and spend exactly as you think proper. Last of all take notice, Pa, that it's not the fruit of any avaricious scheme. Perhaps if it was, your little mercenary wretch of a daughter wouldn't make so free with it!"

After which, she tugged at his coat with both hands, and pulled him all askew in buttoning that garment over the precious waistcoat pocket, and then tied her dimples into her bonnet-strings in a very knowing way, and took him back to London. Arrived at Mr. Boffin's door, she set him with his back against it, tenderly took him by the ears as convenient handles for her purpose, and kissed him until he knocked muffled double knocks at the door with the back of his head. That done, she once more reminded him of their compact and gaily parted from him.

Not so gaily, however, but that tears filled her eyes as he went away down the dark street. Not so gaily, but that she several times said, "Ah, poor little Pa! Ah, poor dear struggling shabby little Pa!" before she took heart to knock at the door. Not so gaily, but that the brilliant furniture seemed to stare her out of countenance as if it insisted on being compared with the dingy furniture at home. Not so gaily, but that she fell into very low spirits sitting late in her own room, and very heartily wept, as she wished, now that the deceased old John Harmon had never made a will about her, now that the deceased young John Harmon had lived to marry her. "Contradictory things to wish," said Bella, "but my life and fortunes are so contradictory altogether that what can I expect myself to be!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH THE ORPHAN MAKES HIS WILL.

THE Secretary, working in the Dismal Swamp betimes next morning, was informed that a youth waited in the hall who gave the name of Sloppy. The footman who communicated this intelligence made a decent pause before uttering the name, to express that it was forced on his reluctance by the youth in question, and that if the youth had had the good sense and good taste to inherit some other name it would have spared the feelings of him the bearer.

"Mrs. Boffin will be very well pleased," said the Secretary in a perfectly composed way. "Show him in."

Mr. Sloppy being introduced, remained close to the door: revealing in various parts of his form many surprising, confounding, and incomprehensible buttons.

"I am glad to see you," said John Rokesmith, in a cheerful tone of welcome. "I have been expecting you."

Sloppy explained that he had meant to come before, but that the Orphan (of whom he made mention as Our Johnny) had been ailing, and he had waited to report him well.

"Then he is well now?" said the Secretary.

"No he ain't," said Sloppy.

Mr. Sloppy having shaken his head to a considerable extent, proceeded to remark that he thought Johnny "must have took 'em from the Minders." Being asked what he meant, he answered, them that come out upon him and partickler his chest. Being requested to explain himself, he stated that there was some of 'em wot you couldn't kiver with a sixpence. Pressed to fall back upon a nominative case, he opined that they wos about as red as ever red could be. "But as long as they strikes out'ards, sir," continued Sloppy, "they ain't so much. It's their striking in'ards that's to be kep off."

John Rokesmith hoped the child had had medical attendance? Oh yes, said Sloppy, he had been took to the doctor's shop once. And what did the doctor call it? Rokesmith asked him. After some perplexed reflection, Sloppy answered, brightening, "He called it something as wos wery long for spots." Rokesmith suggested measles. "No," said Sloppy, with confidence, "ever so much longer than *them*, sir!" (Mr. Sloppy was elevated by this fact, and seemed to consider that it reflected credit on the poor little patient.)

"Mrs. Boffin will be sorry to hear this," said Rokesmith.

"Mrs. Higden said so, sir, when she kep it from her, hoping as Our Johnny would work round."

"But I hope he will?" said Rokesmith, with a quick turn upon the messenger.

"I hope so," answered Sloppy. "It all depends on their striking in'ards." He then went on to say that whether Johnny had "took 'em" from the Minders, or whether the Minders had "took 'em" from Johnny, the Minders had been sent home and had "got 'em." Furthermore, that Mrs. Higden's days and nights being devoted to Our Johnny, who was never out of her lap, the whole of the mangling arrangements had devolved upon himself, and he had had "rayther a tight time." The ungainly piece of honesty beamed and blushed as he said it, quite enraptured with the remembrance of having been serviceable.

"Last night," said Sloppy, "when I was a-turning at the wheel pretty late, the mangle seemed to go like Our Johnny's breathing. It begun beautiful, then as it went out it shook a little and got unsteady, then as it took the turn to come home it had a rattle-like and lumbered a bit, then it come smooth, and so it went on till I scarce know'd which was mangle and which was Our Johnny. Nor Our Johnny, he scarce know'd either, for sometimes when the mangle lumbers he says, 'Me choking, Granny!' and Mrs. Higden holds him up in her lap and says to me 'Bide a bit, Sloppy,' and we all stops together. And when Our Johnny gets his breathing again, I turns again, and we all goes on together."

Sloppy had gradually expanded with his description into a stare and a vacant grin. He now contracted, being silent, into a half-repressed gush of tears, and, under pretence of being heated, drew the under part of his sleeve across his eyes with a singularly awkward, laborious, and roundabout smear.

"This is unfortunate," said Rokesmith. "I must go and break it to Mrs. Boffin. Stay you here, Sloppy."

Sloppy stayed there, staring at the pattern of the paper on the wall, until the Secretary and Mrs. Boffin came back together. And with Mrs. Boffin was a young lady (Miss Bella Wilfer by name) who was better worth staring at, it occurred to Sloppy, than the best of wall-papering.

"Ah, my poor dear pretty little John Harmon!" exclaimed Mrs. Boffin.

"Yes mum," said the sympathetic Sloppy.

"You don't think he is in a very, very bad way, do you?" asked the pleasant creature with her wholesome cordiality.

Put upon his good faith, and finding it in collision with his inclinations, Sloppy threw back his head and uttered a mellifluous howl, rounded off with a sniff.

"So bad as that!" cried Mrs. Boffin. "And Betty Higden not to tell me of it sooner!"

"I think she might have been mistrustful, mum," answered Sloppy, hesitating.

"Of what, for Heaven's sake?"

"I think she might have been mistrustful, mum," returned Sloppy with submission, "of standing in Our Johnny's light. There's so much trouble in illness, and so much expense, and she's seen such a lot of its being objected to."

"But she never can have thought," said Mrs. Boffin, "that I would grudge the dear child anything?"

"No mum, but she might have thought (as a habit-like) of its standing in Johnny's light, and might have tried to bring him through it unbeknownst."

Sloppy knew his ground well. To conceal herself in sickness, like a lower animal; to creep out of sight and coil herself away and

die; had become this woman's instinct. To catch up in her arms the sick child who was dear to her, and hide it as if it were a criminal, and keep off all ministration but such as her own ignorant tenderness and patience could supply, had become this woman's idea of maternal love, fidelity, and duty. The shameful accounts we read, every week in the Christian year, my lords and gentlemen and honorable boards, the infamous records of small official inhumanity, do not pass by the people as they pass by us. And hence these irrational, blind, and obstinate prejudices, so astonishing to our magnificence, and having no more reason in them—God save the Queen and Con-found their politics—no, than smoke has in coming from fire!

"It's not a right place for the poor child to stay in," said Mrs. Boffin. "Tell us, dear Mr. Rokesmith, what to do for the best."

He had already thought what to do, and the consultation was very short. He could pave the way, he said, in half an hour, and then they would go down to Brentford. "Pray take me," said Bella. Therefore a carriage was ordered, of capacity to take them all, and in the meantime Sloppy was regaled, feasting alone in the Secretary's room, with a complete realization of that fairy vision—meat, beer, vegetables, and pudding. In consequence of which his buttons became more importunate of public notice than before, with the exception of two or three about the region of the waistband, which modestly withdrew into a creasy retirement.

Punctual to the time, appeared the carriage and the Secretary. He sat on the box, and Mr. Sloppy graced the rumble. So, to the Three Magpies as before: where Mrs. Boffin and Miss Bella were handed out, and whence they all went on foot to Mrs. Betty Higden's.

But, on the way down, they had stopped at a toy-shop, and had bought that noble charger, a description of whose points and trappings had on the last occasion conciliated the then worldly-minded orphan, and also a Noah's ark, and also a yellow bird with an artificial voice in him, and also a military doll so well dressed that if he had only been of life-size his brother-officers in the Guards might never have found him out. Bearing these gifts, they raised the latch of Betty Higden's door, and saw her sitting in the dimmest and furthest corner with poor Johnny in her lap.

"And how's my boy, Betty?" asked Mrs. Boffin, sitting down beside her.

"He's bad! He's bad!" said Betty. "I begin to be afeerd he'll not be yours any more than mine. All others belonging to him have gone to the Power and the Glory, and I have a mind that they're drawing him to them—leading him away."

"No, no, no," said Mrs. Boffin.

"I don't know why else he clenches his little hand as if it had hold of a finger that I can't see. Look at it," said Betty, opening the wrappers in which the flushed child lay, and showing his small right hand lying closed upon his breast. "It's always so. It don't mind me."

"Is he asleep?"

"No, I think not. You're not asleep, my Johnny?"

"No," said Johnny, with a quiet air of pity for himself, and without opening his eyes.

"Here's the lady, Johnny. And the horse."

Johnny could bear the lady, with complete indifference, but not the horse. Opening his heavy eyes, he slowly broke into a smile on beholding that splendid phenomenon, and wanted to take it in his arms. As it was much too big, it was put upon a chair where he could hold it by the mane and contemplate it. Which he soon forgot to do.

But, Johnny murmuring something with his eyes closed, and Mrs. Boffin not knowing what, old Betty bent her ear to listen and took pains to understand. Being asked by her to repeat what he had said, he did so two or three times, and then it came out that he must have seen more than they supposed when he looked up to see the horse, for the murmur was, "Who is the boofer lady?" Now, the boofer, or beautiful, lady was Bella; and whereas this notice from the poor baby would have touched her of itself, it was rendered more pathetic by the late melting of her heart to her poor little father, and their joke about the lovely woman. So, Bella's behaviour was very tender and very natural when she kneeled on the brick floor to clasp the child, and when the child, with a child's admiration of what is young and pretty, fondled the boofer lady.

"Now, my good dear Betty," said Mrs. Boffin, hoping that she saw her opportunity, and laying her hand persuasively on her arm; "we have come to remove Johnny from this cottage to where he can be taken better care of."

Instantly, and before another word could be spoken, the old woman started up with blazing eyes, and rushed at the door with the sick child.

"Stand away from me every one of ye!" she cried out wildly. "I see what ye mean now. Let me go my way, all of ye. I'd sooner kill the Pretty, and kill myself!"

"Stay, stay!" said Rokesmith, soothing her. "You don't understand."

"I understand too well. I know too much about it, sir. I've run from it too many a year. No! Never for me, nor for the child, while there's water enough in England to cover us!"

The terror, the shame, the passion of horror and repugnance, firing the worn face and perfectly maddening it, would have been a quite terrible sight, if embodied in one old fellow-creature alone. Yet it "crops up"—as our slang goes—my lords and gentlemen and honorable boards, in other fellow-creatures, rather frequently!

"It's been chasing me all my life, but it shall never take me nor mine alive!" cried old Betty. "I've done with ye. I'd have fastened door and window and starved out, afore I'd ever have let ye in, if I had known what ye came for!"

But, catching sight of Mrs. Boffin's wholesome face, she relented, and crouching down by the door and bending over her burden to hush it, said humbly: "Maybe my fears has put me wrong. If they have so, tell me, and the good Lord forgive me! I'm quick to take this fright, I know, and my head is summ'at light with wearying and watching."

"There, there, there!" returned Mrs. Boffin. "Come, come! Say no more of it, Betty. It was a mistake, a mistake. Any one of us might have made it in your place, and felt just as you do."

"The Lord bless ye!" said the old woman, stretching out her hand.

"Now, see, Betty," pursued the sweet compassionate soul, holding the hand kindly, "what I really did mean, and what I should have begun by saying out, if I had only been a little wiser and handier. We want to move Johnny to a place where there are none but children; a place set up on purpose for sick children; where the good doctors and nurses pass their lives with children, talk to none but children, touch none but children, comfort and cure none but children."

"Is there really such a place?" asked the old woman, with a gaze of wonder.

"Yes, Betty, on my word, and you shall see it. If my home was a better place for the dear boy, I'd take him to it; but indeed indeed it's not."

"You shall take him," returned Betty, fervently kissing the comforting hand, "where you will, my deary. I am not so hard, but that I believe your face and voice, and I will, as long as I can see and hear."

This victory gained, Rokesmith made haste to profit by it, for he saw how wofully time had been lost. He despatched Sloppy to bring the carriage to the door; caused the child to be carefully wrapped up; bade old Betty get her bonnet on; collected the toys, enabling the little fellow to comprehend that his treasures were to be transported with him; and had all things prepared so easily that they were ready for the carriage as soon as it appeared, and in a minute afterwards were on their way. Sloppy they left behind, relieving his overcharged breast with a paroxysm of mangling.

At the Children's Hospital, the gallant steed, the Noah's ark, the yellow bird, and the officer in the Guards, were made as welcome as their child-owner. But the doctor said aside to Rokesmith, "This should have been days ago. Too late!"

However, they were all carried up into a fresh airy room, and there Johnny came to himself, out of a sleep or a swoon or whatever it was, to find himself lying in a little quiet bed, with a little platform over his breast, on which were already arranged, to give him heart and urge him to cheer up, the Noah's ark, the noble steed, and the yellow bird; with the officer in the Guards doing duty over the whole, quite as much to the satisfaction of his country as if he had been upon Parade. And at the bed's head was a colored picture beautiful to see, representing as it were another Johnny seated on the knee of some Angel surely who loved little children. And, marvellous fact, to lie and stare at: Johnny had become one of a little family, all in little quiet beds (except two playing dominoes in little arm-chairs at a little table on the hearth): and on all the little beds were little platforms whereon were to be seen dolls' houses, woolly dogs with mechanical barks in them not very dissimilar from the artificial voice pervading the bowels of the yellow bird, tin armies, Moorish tumblers, wooden tea things, and the riches of the earth.

As Johnny murmured something in his placid admiration, the ministering women at his bed's head asked him what he said. It seemed that he wanted to know whether all these were brothers and sisters of his? So they told him yes. It seemed then, that he wanted to know whether God had brought them all together there? So they told him yes again. They made out then, that he wanted to know whether they would all get out of pain? So they answered yes to that question likewise, and made him understand that the reply included himself.

Johnny's powers of sustaining conversation were as yet so very imperfectly developed, even in a state of health, that in sickness they were little more than monosyllabic. But, he had to be washed and tended, and remedies were applied, and though those offices were far, far more skilfully and lightly done than ever anything had been done for him in his little life, so rough and short, they would have hurt and tired him but for an amazing circumstance which laid hold of his attention. This was no less than the appearance on his own little platform in pairs, of All Creation, on its way into his own particular ark: the elephant leading, and the fly, with a diffident sense of his size, politely bringing up the rear. A very little brother lying in the next bed with a broken leg, was so enchanted by this spectacle that his delight exalted its enthralling interest; and so came rest and sleep.

"I see you are not afraid to leave the dear child here, Betty," whispered Mrs. Boffin.

"No, ma'am. Most willingly, most thankfully, with all my heart and soul."

So, they kissed him, and left him there, and old Betty was to come back early in the morning, and nobody but Rokesmith knew for certain how that the doctor had said, "This should have been days ago. Too late!"

But, Rokesmith knowing it, and knowing that his bearing it in mind would be acceptable thereafter to that good woman who had been the only light in the childhood of desolate John Harmon dead and gone, resolved that late at night he would go back to the bedside of John Harmon's namesake, and see how it fared with him.

The family whom God had brought together were not all asleep, but were all quiet. From bed to bed, a light womanly tread and a pleasant fresh face passed in the silence of the night. A little head would lift itself up into the softened light here and there, to be kissed as the face went by—for these little patients are very loving—and would then submit itself to be composed to rest again. The mite with the broken leg was restless, and moaned; but after a while turned his face towards Johnny's bed, to fortify himself with a view of the ark, and fell asleep. Over most of the beds, the toys were yet grouped as the children had left them when they last laid themselves down, and, in their innocent grotesqueness and incongruity, they might have stood for the children's dreams.

The doctor came in too, to see how it fared with Johnny. And he and Rokesmith stood together, looking down with compassion on him.

"What is it, Johnny?" Rokesmith was the questioner, and put an arm round the poor baby as he made a struggle.

"Him!" said the little fellow. "Those!"

The doctor was quick to understand children, and, taking the horse, the ark, the yellow bird, and the man in the Guards, from

Johnny's bed, softly placed them on that of his next neighbour, the mite with the broken leg.

With a weary and yet a pleased smile, and with an action as if he stretched his little figure out to rest, the child heaved his body on the sustaining arm, and seeking Rokesmith's face with his lips, said:

"A kiss for the boofer lady."

Having now bequeathed all he had to dispose of, and arranged his affairs in this world. Johnny, thus speaking, left it.

CHAPTER X.

A SUCCESSOR.

SOME of the Reverend Frank Milvey's brethren had found themselves exceedingly uncomfortable in their minds, because they were required to bury the dead too hopefully. But, the Reverend Frank, inclining to the belief that they were required to do one or two other things (say out of nine-and-thirty) calculated to trouble their consciences rather more if they would think as much about them, held his peace.

Indeed, the Reverend Frank Milvey was a forbearing man, who noticed many sad warps and blights in the vineyard wherein he worked, and did not profess that they made him savagely wise. He only learned that the more he himself knew, in his little limited human way, the better he could distantly imagine what Omniscience might know.

Wherefore, if the Reverend Frank had had to read the words that troubled some of his brethren, and profitably touched innumerable hearts, in a worse case than Johnny's, he would have done so out of the pity and humility of his soul. Reading them over Johnny, he thought of his own six children, but not of his poverty, and read them with dimmed eyes. And very seriously did he and his bright little wife, who had been listening, look down into the small grave and walk home arm-in-arm.

There was grief in the aristocratic house, and there was joy in the Bower. Mr. Wegg argued, if an orphan were wanted, was he not an orphan himself, and could a better be desired? And why go beating about Brentford bushes, seeking orphans forsooth who had established no claims upon you and made no sacrifices for you, when here was an orphan ready to your hand who had given up in your cause, Miss Elizabeth, Master George, Aunt Jane, and Uncle Parker?

Mr. Wegg chuckled, consequently, when he heard the tidings. Nay, it was afterwards affirmed by a witness who shall at present be nameless, that in the seclusion of the Bower he poked out his wooden leg, in the stage-ballet manner, and executed a taunting or triumphant pirouette on the genuine leg remaining to him.

John Rokesmith's manner towards Mrs. Boffin at this time, was more the manner of a young man towards a mother, than that of a Secretary towards his employer's wife. It had always been marked by a subdued affectionate deference that seemed to have sprung up on the very day

of his engagement; whatever was odd in her dress or her ways had seemed to have no oddity for him; he had sometimes borne a quietly-amused face in her company, but still it had seemed as if the pleasure her genial temper and radiant nature yielded him, could have been quite as naturally expressed in a tear as in a smile. The completeness of his sympathy with her fancy for having a little John Harmon to protect and rear, he had shown in every act and word, and now that the kind fancy was disappointed, he treated it with a manly tenderness and respect for which she could hardly thank him enough.

"But I do thank you, Mr. Rokesmith," said Mrs. Boffin, "and I thank you most kindly. You love children."

"I hope everybody does."

"They ought," said Mrs. Boffin; "but we don't all of us do what we ought; do us?"

John Rokesmith replied, "Some among us supply the shortcomings of the rest. You have loved children well, Mr. Boffin has told me."

"Not a bit better than he has, but that's his way; he puts all the good upon me. You speak rather sadly, Mr. Rokesmith."

"Do I?"

"It sounds to me so. Were you one of many children?"

He shook his head.

"An only child?"

"No, there was another. Dead long ago."

"Father or mother alive?"

"Dead."

"And the rest of your relations?"

"Dead—if I ever had any living. I never heard of any."

At this point of the dialogue Bella came in with a light step. She paused at the door a moment, hesitating whether to remain or retire; perplexed by finding that she was not observed.

"Now, don't mind an old lady's talk," said Mrs. Boffin, "but tell me. Are you quite sure, Mr. Rokesmith, that you have never had a disappointment in love?"

"Quite sure. Why do you ask me?"

"Why, for this reason. Sometimes you have a kind of kept-down manner with you, which is not like your age. You can't be thirty?"

"I am not yet thirty."

Deeming it high time to make her presence known, Bella coughed here to attract attention, begged pardon, and said she would go, fearing that she interrupted some matter of business.

"No, don't go," rejoined Mrs. Boffin, "because we are coming to business, instead of having begun it, and you belong to it as much now, my dear Bella, as I do. But I want my Noddy to consult with us. Would somebody be so good as find my Noddy for me?"

Rokesmith departed on that errand, and presently returned accompanied by Mr. Boffin at his jog-trot. Bella felt a little vague trepidation as to the subject-matter of this same consultation, until Mrs. Boffin announced it.

"Now, you come and sit by me, my dear," said that worthy soul, taking her comfortable place on a large ottoman in the centre of the room, and drawing her arm through Bella's; "and Noddy, you sit

here, and Mr. Rokesmith you sit there. Now, you see, what I want to talk about, is this. Mr. and Mrs. Milvey have sent me the kindest note possible (which Mr. Rokesmith just now read to me out loud, for I ain't good at handwritings), offering to find me another little child to name and educate and bring up. Well. This has set me thinking."

("And she is a steam-ingein at it," murmured Mr. Boffin, in an admiring parenthesis, "when she once begins. It mayn't be so easy to start her; but once started, she's a ingein.")

"—This has set me thinking, I say," repeated Mrs. Boffin, cordially beaming under the influence of her husband's compliment, "and I have thought two things. First of all, that I have grown timid of reviving John Harmon's name. It's an unfortunate name, and I fancy I should reproach myself if I gave it to another dear child, and it proved again unlucky."

"Now, whether," said Mr. Boffin, gravely propounding a case for his Secretary's opinion; "whether one might call that a superstition?"

"It is a matter of feeling with Mrs. Boffin," said Rokesmith, gently. "The name has always been unfortunate. It has now this new unfortunate association connected with it. The name has died out. Why revive it? Might I ask Miss Wilfer what she thinks?"

"It has not been a fortunate name for me," said Bella, colouring—"or at least it was not, until it led to my being here—but that is not the point in my thoughts. As we had given the name to the poor child, and as the poor child took so lovingly to me, I think I should feel jealous of calling another child by it. I think I should feel as if the name had become endeared to me, and I had no right to use it so."

"And that's your opinion?" remarked Mr. Boffin, observant of the Secretary's face and again addressing him.

"I say again, it is a matter of feeling," returned the Secretary. "I think Miss Wilfer's feeling very womanly and pretty."

"Now, give us your opinion, Noddy," said Mrs. Boffin.

"My opinion, old lady," returned the Golden Dustman, "is your opinion."

"Then," said Mrs. Boffin, "we agree not to revive John Harmon's name, but to let it rest in the grave. It is, as Mr. Rokesmith says, a matter of feeling, but Lor how many matters *are* matters of feeling! Well; and so I come to the second thing I have thought of. You must know, Bella, my dear, and Mr. Rokesmith, that when I first named to my husband my thoughts of adopting a little orphan boy in remembrance of John Harmon, I further named to my husband that it was comforting to think that how the poor boy would be benefited by John's own money, and protected from John's own forlornness."

"Hear, hear!" cried Mr. Boffin. "So she did. Ancoar!"

"No, not Ancoar, Noddy, my dear," returned Mrs. Boffin, "because I am going to say something else. I meant that, I am sure, as much as I still mean it. But this little death has made me ask myself the question, seriously, whether I wasn't too bent upon pleasing myself. Else why did I seek out so much for a pretty child, and a child quite to my liking? Wanting to do good, why not do it for its own sake, and put my tastes and likings by?"

"Perhaps," said Bella; and perhaps she said it with some little sensitiveness arising out of those old curious relations of hers towards the murdered man; "perhaps, in reviving the name, you would not have liked to give it to a less interesting child than the original. He interested you very much."

"Well, my dear," returned Mrs. Boffin, giving her a squeeze, "it's kind of you to find that reason out, and I hope it may have been so, and indeed to a certain extent I believe it was so, but I am afraid not to the whole extent. However, that don't come in question now, because we have done with the name."

"Laid it up as a remembrance," suggested Bella, musingly.

"Much better said, my dear; laid it up as a remembrance. Well then; I have been thinking if I take any orphan to provide for, let it not be a pet and a plaything for me, but a creature to be helped for its own sake."

"Not pretty then?" said Bella.

"No," returned Mrs. Boffin, stoutly.

"Nor prepossessing then?" said Bella.

"No," returned Mrs. Boffin. "Not necessarily so. That's as it may happen. A well-disposed boy comes in my way who may be even a little wanting in such advantages for getting on in life, but is honest and industrious and requires a helping hand and deserves it. If I am very much in earnest and quite determined to be unselfish, let me take care of *him*."

Here the footman whose feelings had been hurt on the former occasion, appeared, and crossing to Rokesmith apologetically announced the objectionable Sloppy.

The four members of Council looked at one another, and paused. "Shall he be brought here, ma'am?" asked Rokesmith.

"Yes," said Mrs. Boffin. Whereupon the footman disappeared, reappeared presenting Sloppy, and retired much disgusted.

The consideration of Mrs. Boffin had clothed Mr. Sloppy in a suit of black, on which the tailor had received personal directions from Rokesmith to expend the utmost cunning of his art, with a view to the concealment of the cohering and sustaining buttons. But, so much more powerful were the frailties of Sloppy's form than the strongest resources of tailoring science, that he now stood before the Council, a perfect Argus in the way of buttons: shining and winking and gleaming and twinkling out of a hundred of those eyes of bright metal, at the dazzled spectators. The artistic taste of some unknown hatter had furnished him with a hatband of wholesale capacity which was fluted behind, from the crown of his hat to the brim, and terminated in a black bunch, from which the imagination shrunk discomfited and the reason revolted. Some special powers with which his legs were endowed, had already hitched up his glossy trousers at the ankles, and bagged them at the knees; while similar gifts in his arms had raised his coat-sleeves from his wrists and accumulated them at his elbows. Thus set forth, with the additional embellishments of a very little tail to his coat, and a yawning gulf at his waistband, Sloppy stood confessed.

"And how is Betty, my good fellow?" Mrs. Boffin asked him.

"Thankee, mum," said Sloppy, "she do pretty nicely, and sending

her dooty and many thanks for the tea and all faviours and wishing to know the family's healths."

"Have you just come, Sloppy?"

"Yes, mum."

"Then you have not had your dinner yet?"

"No, mum. But I mean to it. For I ain't forgotten your handsome orders that I was never to go away without having had a good 'un off of meat and beer and pudding—no: there was four of 'em, for I reckoned 'em up when I had 'em; meat one, beer two, vegetables three, and which was four?—Why, pudding, *he* was four!" Here Sloppy threw his head back, opened his mouth wide, and laughed rapturously.

"How are the two poor little Minders?" asked Mrs. Boffin.

"Striking right out, mum, and coming round beautiful."

Mrs. Boffin looked on the other three members of Council, and then said, beckoning with her finger:

"Sloppy."

"Yes, mum."

"Come forward, Sloppy. Should you like to dine here every day?"

"Off of all four on 'em, mum? O mum!" Sloppy's feelings obliged him to squeeze his hat, and contract one leg at the knee.

"Yes. And should you like to be always taken care of here, if you were industrious and deserving?"

"Oh, mum!—But there's Mrs. Higden," said Sloppy, checking himself in his raptures, drawing back, and shaking his head with very serious meaning. "There's Mrs. Higden. Mrs. Higden goes before all. None can ever be better friends to me than Mrs. Higden's been. And she must be turned for, must Mrs. Higden. Where would Mrs. Higden be if she warn't turned for!" At the mere thought of Mrs. Higden in this inconceivable affliction, Mr. Sloppy's countenance became pale, and manifested the most distressful emotions.

"You are as right as right can be, Sloppy," said Mrs. Boffin "and far be it from me to tell you otherwise. It shall be seen to. If Betty Higden can be turned for all the same, you shall come here and be taken care of for life, and be made able to keep her in other ways than the turning."

"Even as to that, mum," answered the ecstatic Sloppy, "the turning might be done in the night, don't you see? I could be here in the day, and turn in the night. I don't want no sleep, *I* don't. Or even if I any ways should want a wink or two," added Sloppy, after a moment's apologetic reflection, "I could take 'em turning. I've took 'em turning many a time, and enjoyed 'em wonderful!"

On the grateful impulse of the moment, Mr. Sloppy kissed Mrs. Boffin's hand, and then detaching himself from that good creature that he might have room enough for his feelings, threw back his head, opened his mouth wide, and uttered a dismal howl. It was creditable to his tenderness of heart, but suggested that he might on occasion give some offence to the neighbours: the rather, as the footman looked in, and begged pardon, finding he was not wanted, but excused himself, on the ground "that he thought it was Cats."

great, indeed only, objection to its use has been the large quantity of water which it takes to dissolve a small part of the flowers, and which must be taken with it into the stomach. It requires a quarter of a pint of boiling water to dissolve the soluble portion of one drachm of Camomile Flowers; and, when one or even two ounces may be taken with advantage, it must at once be seen how impossible it is to take a proper dose of this wholesome herb in the form of tea; and the only reason why it has not long since been placed the very first in rank of all restorative medicines is, that in taking it the stomach has always been loaded with water, which tends in a great measure to counteract, and very frequently wholly to destroy the effect. It must be evident that loading a weak stomach with a large quantity of water, merely for the purpose of conveying into it a small quantity of medicine must be injurious; and that the medicine must possess powerful renovating properties only to counteract the bad effects likely to be produced by the water. Generally speaking, this has been the case with Camomile Flowers, a herb possessing the highest restorative qualities, and when properly taken, decidedly the most speedy restorer, and the most certain preserver of health.

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS are prepared by a peculiar process, accidentally discovered, and known only to the proprietor, and which he firmly believes to be one of the most valuable modern discoveries in medicine, by which all the essential and extractive matter of more than an ounce of the flowers is concentrated in four moderate-sized pills. Experience has afforded the most ample proof that they possess all the fine aromatic and stomachic properties for which the herb has been esteemed; and, as they are taken into the stomach unencumbered by any diluting or indigestible substance, in the same degree has their benefit been more immediate and decided. Mild in their operation and pleasant in their effect, they may be taken at any age, and under any circumstance, without danger or inconvenience. A person exposed to cold and wet a whole day or night could not possibly receive any injury from taking them, but, on the contrary, they would effectually prevent a cold being taken. After a long acquaintance with and strict observance of the medicinal properties of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, it is only doing them justice to say, that they are really the most valuable of all TONIC MEDICINES. By the word tonic is meant a medicine which gives strength to the stomach sufficient to digest in proper quantities all wholesome food, which increases the power of every nerve and muscle of the human body, or, in other words, invigorates the nervous and muscular systems. The solidity or firmness of the whole tissue of the body which so quickly follows the use of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, their certain and speedy effects in repairing the partial dilapidations from time or intemperance, and their lasting salutary influence on the whole frame, is most convincing, that in the smallest compass is contained the largest quantity of the tonic principle, of so peculiar a nature as to pervade the whole system, through which it diffuses health and strength sufficient to resist the formation of disease, and also to fortify the constitution against contagion; as such, their general use is strongly recommended as a preventative during the prevalence of malignant fever or other infectious diseases, and to persons attending sick rooms they are invaluable, as in no one instance have they ever failed in preventing the taking of illness even under the most trying circumstances.

As *Norton's Camomile Pills* are particularly recommended for all stomach complaints or indigestion, it will probably be expected that some advice should be given respecting diet, though after all that has been written upon the subject, after the publication of volume upon volume, after the country has, as it were, been inundated with practical essays on diet, as a means of prolonging life, it would be unnecessary to say more did we not feel it our duty to make the humble endeavour of inducing the public to regard them not, but to adopt that course which is dictated by nature, by reason, and by common sense. Those persons who study the wholesomes, and are governed by the opinion of writers on diet, are uniformly both unhealthy in body and weak in mind. There can be no doubt that the palate is designed to inform us what is proper for the stomach, and of course that must best instruct us what food to take and what to avoid: we want no other adviser. Nothing can be more clear than that those articles which are agreeable to the taste were by nature intended for our food and sustenance, whether liquid or solid, foreign or of native

production: if they are pure and unadulterated, no harm need be dreaded by their use; they will only injure by abuse. Consequently, whatever the palate approves, eat and drink always in moderation, but never in excess; keeping in mind that the first process of digestion is performed in the mouth, the second in the stomach; and that, in order that the stomach may be able to do its work properly, it is requisite the first process should be well performed; this consists in masticating or chewing the solid food, so as to break down and separate the fibres and small substances of meat and vegetable, mixing them well, and blending the whole together before they are swallowed; and it is particularly urged upon all to take plenty of time to their meals and never eat in haste. If you conform to this short and simple, but comprehensive advice, and find that there are various things which others eat and drink with pleasure and without inconvenience, and which would be pleasant to yourself only that they disagree, you may at once conclude that the fault is in the stomach, that it does not possess the power which it ought to do, that it wants assistance, and the sooner that assistance is afforded the better. A very short trial of this medicine will best prove how soon it will put the stomach in a condition to perform with ease all the work which nature intended for it. By its use you will soon be able to enjoy, in moderation, whatever is agreeable to the taste, and unable to name one individual article of food which disagrees with or sits unpleasantly on the stomach. Never forget that a small meal well digested affords more nourishment to the system than a large one, even of the same food, when digested imperfectly. Let the dish be ever so delicious, ever so enticing a variety offered, the bottle ever so enchanting, never forget that temperance tends to preserve health, and that health is the soul of enjoyment. But should an impropriety be at any time, or ever often committed, by which the stomach becomes overloaded or disordered, render it immediate aid by taking a dose of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, which will so promptly assist in carrying off the burden thus imposed upon it that all will soon be right again.

It is most certainly true that every person in his lifetime consumes a quantity of noxious matter, which if taken at one meal would be fatal: it is these small quantities of noxious matter, which are introduced into our food, either by accident or wilful adulteration, which we find so often upset the stomach, and not unfrequently lay the foundation of illness, and perhaps final ruination to health. To preserve the constitution, it should be our constant care, if possible, to counteract the effect of these small quantities of unwholesome matter; and whenever, in that way, an enemy to the constitution finds its way into the stomach, a friend should be immediately sent after it, which would prevent its mischievous effects, and expel it altogether; no better friend can be found, nor one which will perform the task with greater certainty than NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS. And let it be observed that the longer this medicine is taken the less it will be wanted; it can in no case become habitual, as its entire action is to give energy and force to the stomach, which is the spring of life, the source from which the whole frame draws its succour and support. After an excess of eating or drinking, and upon every occasion of the general health being at all disturbed, these PILLS should be immediately taken, as they will stop and eradicate disease at its commencement. Indeed, it is most confidently asserted, that by the timely use of this medicine only, and a common degree of caution, any person may enjoy all the comforts within his reach, may pass through life without an illness, and with the certainty of attaining a healthy OLD AGE.

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