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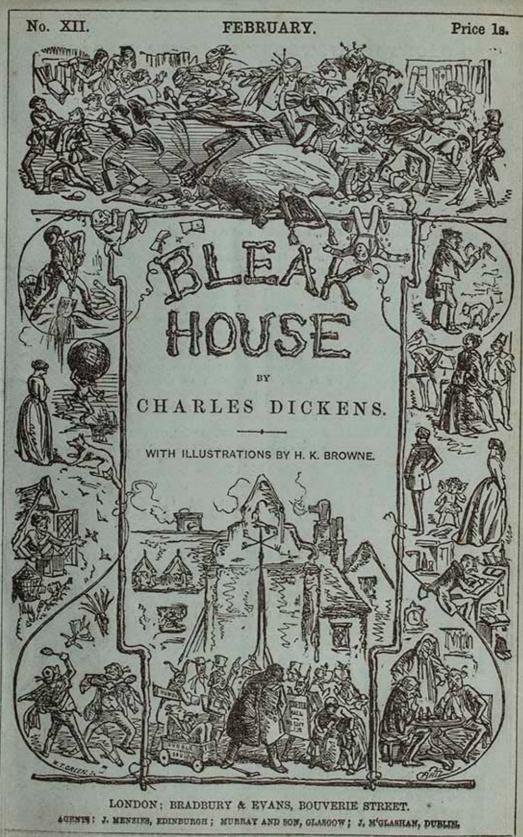
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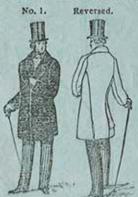
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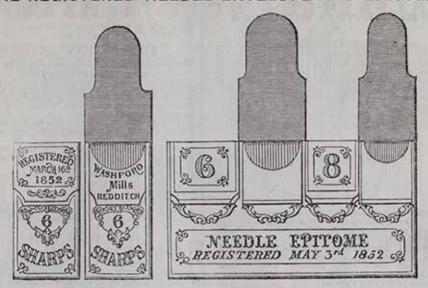
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now quite recovered.

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DATE.	No. of Policies issued.	Amount of Income.	Amount of Capital.
From 1835 to 1842, being 7 years	3,215 4,575 7,066	# s. d. 39,360 9 7 71,753 3 5 95,585 18 5	£ 8. d. 139,805 1 7 227,366 14 5 508,513 9 7
Total on November 20, 1852	14,856	£205,700 11 5	£875,686 5 7"

By a recent Act of Parliament the Directors are empowered to grant Loans to Members on the security of their Policies to the extent of their value.

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JOSEPH MARSH, Secretary.

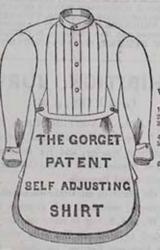
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Round the Chest, tight over the Shirt. Hound the Waist, tight over the Shirt. Hound the Neck, taken about the middle of the Throat.

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The length of Coat Sleeve, from the centre of Back, down the seam of Sleeve to bottom of cell.

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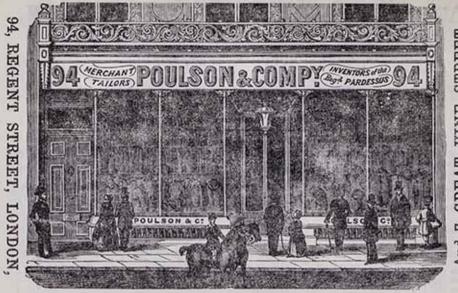
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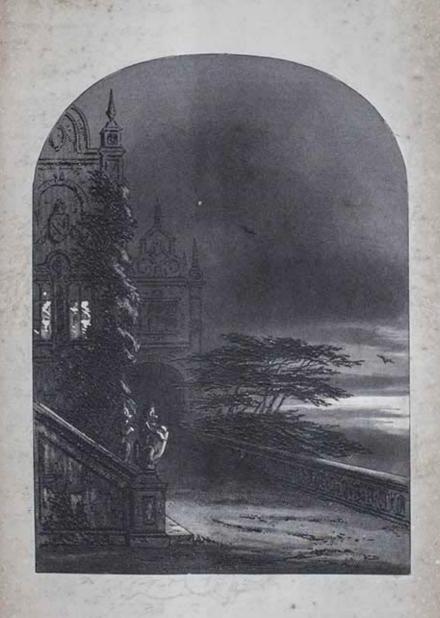
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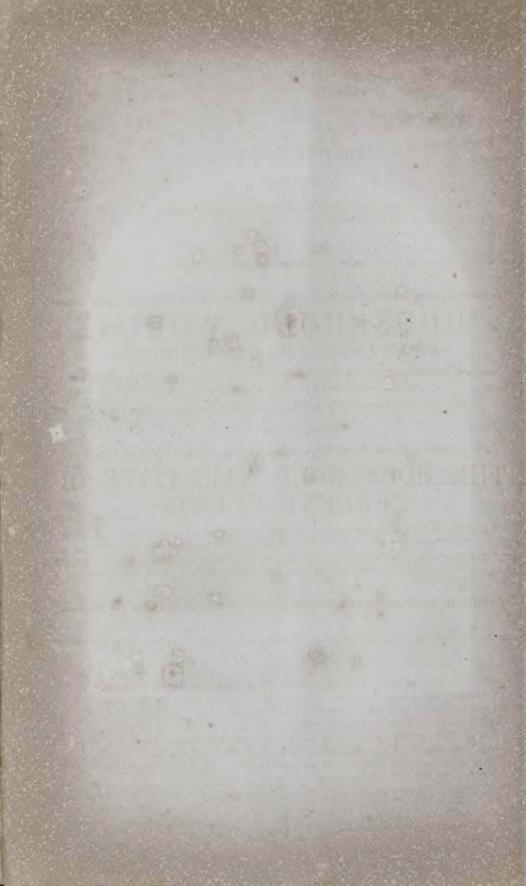
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CHAPTER XXXVI.

CHESNEY WOLD.

Charley and I did not set off alone upon our expedition into Lincolnshire. My guardian had made up his mind not to lose sight of me until I was safe in Mr. Boythorn's house; so he accompanied us, and we were two days upon the road. I found every breath of air, and every scent, and every flower and leaf and blade of grass, and every passing cloud, and everything in nature, more beautiful and wonderful to me than I had ever found it yet. This was my first gain from my illness. How little I had lost, when the wide world was so full of delight for me.

My guardian intending to go back immediately, we appointed, on our way down, a day when my dear girl should come. I wrote her a letter, of which he took charge; and he left us within half an hour of our arrival at our destination, on a delightful evening in the early summer time.

If a good fairy had built the house for me with a wave of her wand, and I had been a princess and her favored godchild, I could not have been more considered in it. So many preparations were made for me, and such an endearing remembrance was shown of all my little tastes and likings, that I could have sat down, overcome, a dozen times, before I had revisited half the rooms. I did better than that, however, by showing them all to Charley instead. Charley's delight calmed mine; and after we had had a walk in the garden, and Charley had exhausted her whole vocabulary of admiring expressions, I was as tranquilly happy as I ought to have been. It was a great comfort to be able to say to myself after tea, "Esther, my dear, I think you are quite sensible enough to sit down now, and write a note of thanks to your host." He had left a note of welcome for me, as sunny as his own face, and had confided his bird to my care, which I knew to be his highest mark of confidence. Accordingly I wrote a little note to him in London, telling him how all his favorite plants and trees were looking, and how the most astonishing of birds had chirped the honors of the house to me in the most hospitable manner, and how, after singing on my shoulder, to the inconceivable rapture of my little maid, he was then at roost in the usual corner of his cage, but whether dreaming or no I could not report. My note finished and sent off to the post, I made myself very busy in unpacking and arranging; and I sent Charley to bed in good time, and told her I should want her no more that night.

For I had not yet looked in the glass, and had never asked to have my own restored to me. I knew this to be a weakness which must be overcome; but I had always said to myself that I would begin afresh, when I got to where I now was. Therefore I had wanted to be alone, and therefore I said, now alone, in my own room, "Esther, if you are to be happy, if you are to have any right to pray to be true-hearted, you must keep your word, my dear." I was quite resolved to keep it; but I sat down for a little while first, to reflect upon all my blessings. And then I said my

prayers, and thought a little more.

My hair had not been cut off, though it had been in danger more than once. It was long and thick. I let it down, and shook it out, and went up to the glass upon the dressing-table. There was a little muslin curtain drawn across it. I drew it back; and stood for a moment looking through such a veil of my own hair, that I could see nothing else. Then I put my hair aside, and looked at the reflection in the mirror: encouraged by seeing how placidly it looked at me. I was very much changed—O very, very much. At first, my face was so strange to me, that I think I should have put my hands before it and started back, but for the encouragement I have mentioned. Very soon it became more familiar, and then I knew the extent of the alteration in it better than I had done at first. It was not like what I had expected; but I had expected nothing definite, and I dare say anything definite would have surprised me.

I had never been a beauty, and had never thought myself one; but I had been very different from this. It was all gone now. Heaven was so good to me, that I could let it go with a few not bitter tears, and could

stand there arranging my hair for the night quite thankfully.

One thing troubled me, and I considered it for a long time before I went to sleep. I had kept Mr. Woodcourt's flowers. When they were withered I had dried them, and put them in a book that I was fond of. Nobody knew this, not even Ada. I was doubtful whether I had a right to preserve what he had sent to one so different—whether it was generous towards him to do it. I wished to be generous to him, even in the secret depths of my heart, which he would never know, because I could have loved him—could have been devoted to him. At last I came to the conclusion that I might keep them; if I treasured them only as a remembrance of what was irrevocably past and gone, never to be looked back on any more, in any other light. I hope this may not seem trivial. I was very much in earnest.

I took care to be up early in the morning, and to be before the glass

when Charley came in on tiptoe.

"Dear, dear, miss!" cried Charley, starting. "Is that you?"

"Yes, Charley," said I, quietly putting up my hair. "And I am very

well indeed, and very happy."

I saw it was a weight off Charley's mind, but it was a greater weight off mine. I knew the worst now, and was composed to it. I shall not conceal, as I go on, the weaknesses I could not quite conquer; but they always passed from me soon, and the happier frame of mind stayed by me faithfully.

Wishing to be fully re-established in my strength and my good spirits before Ada came, I now laid down a little series of plans with Charley for being in the fresh air all day long. We were to be out before breakfast, and were to dine early, and were to be out again before and after dinner, and were to walk in the garden after tea, and were to go to rest betimes, and were to climb every hill and explore every road, lane, and field in the neighbourhood. As to restoratives and strengthening delicacies, Mr. Boythorn's good housekeeper was for ever trotting about with something to eat or drink in her hand; I could not even be heard of as resting in the Park, but she would come trotting after me with a basket, her cheerful face shining with a lecture on the importance

of frequent nourishment. Then there was a pony expressly for my riding, a chubby pony, with a short neck and a mane all over his eyes, who could canter-when he would-so easily and quietly, that he was a treasure. In a very few days, he would come to me in the paddock when I called him, and eat out of my hand, and follow me about. We arrived at such a capital understanding, that when he was jogging with me lazily, and rather obstinately, down some shady lane, if I patted his neck, and said, "Stubbs, I am surprised you don't canter when you know how much I like it; and I think you might oblige me, for you are only getting stupid and going to sleep," he would give his head a comical shake or two, and set off directly; while Charley would stand still and laugh with such enjoyment, that her laughter was like music. I don't know who had given Stubbs his name, but it seemed to belong to him as naturally as his rough coat. Once we put him in a little chaise, and drove him triumphantly through the green lanes for five miles; but all at once, as we were extolling him to the skies, he seemed to take it ill that he should have been accompanied so far by the circle of tantalising little gnats, that had been hovering round and round his ears the whole way without appearing to advance an inch; and stopped to think about it. I suppose he came to the decision that it was not to be borne; for he steadily refused to move, until I gave the reins to Charley and got out and walked; when he followed me with a sturdy sort of good-humour, putting his head under my arm, and rubbing his ear against my sleeve. It was in vain for me to say, "Now, Stubbs, I feel quite sure from what I know of you, that you will go on if I ride a little while;" for the moment I left him, he stood stock still again. Consequently I was obliged to lead the way, as before; and in this order we returned home, to the great delight of the village.

Charley and I had reason to call it the most friendly of villages, I am sure; for in a week's time the people were so glad to see us go by, though ever so frequently in the course of a day, that there were faces of greeting in every cottage. I had known many of the grown people before, and almost all the children; but now the very steeple began to wear a familiar and affectionate look. Among my new friends was an old old woman who lived in such a little thatched and whitewashed dwelling, that when the outside shutter was turned up on its hinges, it shut up the whole house-front. This old lady had a grandson who was a sailor; and I wrote a letter to him for her, and drew at the top of it the chimney-corner in which she had brought him up, and where his old stool yet occupied its old place. This was considered by the whole village the most wonderful achievement in the world; but when an answer came back all the way from Plymouth, in which he mentioned that he was going to take the picture all the way to America, and from America would write again, I got all the credit that ought to have been given to the Post-office, and was invested with the merit of the whole system.

Thus, what with being so much in the air, playing with so many children, gossiping with so many people, sitting on invitation in so many cottages, going on with Charley's education, and writing long letters to Ada every day, I had scarcely any time to think about that little loss of mine, and was almost always cheerful. If I did think of it at odd moments now and then, I had only to be busy and forget it. I felt

it more than I had hoped I should, once, when a child said "Mother, why is the lady not a pretty lady now, like she used to be?" But when I found the child was not less fond of me, and drew its soft hand over my face with a kind of pitving protection in its touch, that soon set me up again. There were many little occurrences which suggested to me, with great consolation, how natural it is to gentle hearts to be considerate and delicate towards any inferiority. One of these particularly touched me. I happened to stroll into the little church when a marriage was just concluded, and the young couple had to sign the register. The bridegroom, to whom the pen was handed first, made a rude cross for his mark; the bride, who came next, did the same. Now, I had known the bride when I was last there, not only as the prettiest girl in the place, but as having quite distinguished herself in the school; and I could not help looking at her with some surprise. She came aside and whispered to me, while tears of honest love and admiration stood in her bright eves, "He's a dear good fellow, miss; but he can't write, yethe's going to learn of me-and I wouldn't shame him for the world !" Why, what had I to fear, I thought, when there was this nobility in the soul of a laboring man's daughter !

The air blew as freshly and revivingly upon me as it had ever blown, and the healthy color came into my new face as it had come into my old one. Charley was wonderful to see, she was so radiant and so rosy; and we both enjoyed the whole day, and slept soundly the

whole night.

There was a favorite spot of mine in the park-woods of Chesney Wold, where a seat had been erected commanding a lovely view. The wood had been cleared and opened, to improve this point of sight; and the bright sunny landscape beyond, was so beautiful that I rested there at least once every day. A picturesque part of the Hall, called The Ghost's Walk, was seen to advantage from this higher ground; and the startling name, and the old legend in the Dedlock family which I had heard from Mr. Boythorn, accounting for it, mingled with the view and gave it something of a mysterious interest, in addition to its real charms. There was a bank here, too, which was a famous one for violets; and as it was a daily delight of Charley's to gather wild flowers, she took as much to the spot as I did.

It would be idle to enquire now why I never went close to the house, or never went inside it. The family were not there, I had heard on my arrival, and were not expected. I was far from being incurious or uninterested about the building; on the contrary, I often sat in this place, wondering how the rooms ranged, and whether any echo like a footstep really did resound at times, as the story said, upon the lonely Ghost's Walk. The indefinable feeling with which Lady Dedlock had impressed me, may have had some influence in keeping me from the house even when she was absent. I am not sure. Her face and figure were associated with it, naturally: but I cannot say that they repelled me from it, though something did. For whatever reason or no reason, I had never once gone near it, down to the day at which my story now arrives.

I was resting at my favorite point, after a long ramble, and Charley

was gathering violets at a little distance from me. I had been looking at the Ghost's Walk lying in a deep shade of masonry afar off, and picturing to myself the female shape that was said to haunt it, when I became aware of a figure approaching through the wood. The perspective was so long, and so darkened by leaves, and the shadows of the branches on the ground made it so much more intricate to the eye, that at first I could not discern what figure it was. By little and little, it revealed itself to be a woman's—a lady's—Lady Dedlock's. She was alone, and coming to where I sat with a much quicker step, I observed to my surprise, than was usual with her.

I was fluttered by her being unexpectedly so near (she was almost within speaking distance before I knew her), and would have risen to continue my walk. But I could not. I was rendered motionless. Not so much by her hurried gesture of entreaty, not so much by her quick advance and outstretched hands, not so much by the great change in her manner, and the absence of her haughty self-restraint, as by a something in her face that I had pined for and dreamed of when I was a little child; something I had never seen in any face; something I had never seen in

hers before.

A dread and faintness fell upon me, and I called to Charley. Lady Dedlock stopped, upon the instant, and changed back almost to what I had known her.

"Miss Summerson, I am afraid I have startled you," she said, now advancing slowly. "You can scarcely be strong yet. You have been

very ill, I know. I have been much concerned to hear it."

I could no more have removed my eyes from her pale face, than I could have stirred from the bench on which I sat. She gave me her hand; and its deadly coldness, so at variance with the enforced composure of her features, deepened the fascination that overpowered me. I cannot say what was in my whirling thoughts.

"You are recovering again?" she asked, kindly.

"I was quite well but a moment ago, Lady Dedlock."

" Is this your young attendant?"

"Yes."

"Will you send her on before, and walk towards your house with me?"

"Charley," said I, "take your flowers home, and I will follow you

directly."

Charley, with her best curtsey, blushingly tied on her bonnet, and went her way. When she was gone, Lady Dedlock sat down on the seat beside me.

I cannot tell in any words what the state of my mind was, when I saw in her hand my handkerchief, with which I had covered the dead baby.

I looked at her; but I could not see her, I could not hear her, I could not draw my breath. The beating of my heart was so violent and wild, that I felt as if my life were breaking from me. But when she caught me to her breast, kissed me, wept over me, compassionated me, and called me back to myself; when she fell down on her knees and cried to me, "O my child, my child, I am your wicked and unhappy mother! O try to forgive me!"—when I saw her at my feet on the bare earth in her great agony of mind, I felt, through all my tumult of emotion, a

burst of gratitude to the providence of God that I was so changed as that I never could disgrace her by any trace of likeness; as that nobody could ever now look at me, and look at her, and remotely think of any near tie between us.

I raised my mother up, praying and beseeching her not to stoop before me in such affliction and humiliation. I did so, in broken incoherent words; for, besides the trouble I was in, it frightened me to see her at my feet. I told her—or I tried to tell her—that if it were for me, her child, under any circumstances to take upon me to forgive her, I did it, and had done it, many, many years. I told her that my heart overflowed with love for her; that it was natural love, which nothing in the past had changed, or could change. That it was not for me, then resting for the first time on my mother's bosom, to take her to account for having given me life; but that my duty was to bless her and receive her, though the whole world turned from her, and that I only asked her leave to do it. I held my mother in my embrace, and she held me in hers; and among the still woods in the silence of the summer day, there seemed to be nothing but our two troubled minds that was not at peace.

"To bless and receive me," groaned my mother, "it is far too late. I must travel my dark road alone, and it will lead me where it will. From day to day, sometimes from hour to hour, I do not see the way before my guilty feet. This is the earthly punishment I have brought

upon myself. I bear it, and I hide it."

Even in the thinking of her endurance, she drew her habitual air of proud indifference about her like a veil, though she soon cast it off again. "I must keep this secret, if by any means it can be kept, not wholly for myself. I have a husband, wretched and dishonoring creature that I am!"

These words she uttered with a suppressed cry of despair, more terrible in its sound than any shriek. Covering her face with her hands, she shrunk down in my embrace as if she were unwilling that I should touch her; nor could I, by my utmost persuasions, or by any endearments I could use, prevail upon her to rise. She said, No, no, no, she could only speak to me so; she must be proud and disdainful everywhere else; she would be humbled and ashamed there, in the only natural moments of her life.

My unhappy mother told me that in my illness she had been nearly frantic. She had but then known that her child was living. She could not have suspected me to be that child before. She had followed me down here, to speak to me but once in all her life. We never could associate, never could communicate, never probably from that time forth could interchange another word, on earth. She put into my hands a letter she had written for my reading only; and said, when I had read it, and destroyed it—but not so much for her sake, since she asked nothing, as for her husband's and my own—I must evermore consider her as dead. If I could believe that she loved me, in this agony in which I saw her, with a mother's love, she asked me to do that; for then I might think of her with a greater pity, imagining what she suffered. She had put herself beyond all hope, and beyond all help. Whether she preserved her secret until death, or it came to be discovered and she brought dishonor and disgrace upon the name she had taken, it was her

solitary struggle always; and no affection could come near her, and no human creature could render her any aid.

"But is the secret safe so far?" I asked. "Is it safe now, dearest

mother?"

"No," replied my mother. "It has been very near discovery. It was saved by an accident. It may be lost by another accident-to-morrow, any day."

"Do you dread a particular person?"

"Hush! Do not tremble and cry so much for me. I am not worthy of these tears," said my mother, kissing my hands. "I dread one person very much."

"An enemy?"

"Not a friend. One who is too passionless to be either. He is Sir Leicester Dedlock's lawyer; mechanically faithful without attachment, and very jealous of the profit, privilege, and reputation of being master of the mysteries of great houses.

"Has he any suspicions?"

" Many."

"Not of you?" I said alarmed.

"Yes! He is always vigilant, and always near me. I may keep him at a stand still, but I can never shake him off."

"Has he so little pity or compunction?"

"He has none, and no anger. He is indifferent to everything but his calling. His calling is the acquisition of secrets, and the holding possession of such power as they give him, with no sharer or opponent in it." "Could you trust in him?"

"I shall never try. The dark road I have trodden for so many years will end where it will. I follow it alone to the end, whatever the end be. It may be near, it may be distant; while the road lasts, nothing turns me."

"Dear mother, are you so resolved?"

"I am resolved. I have long outbidden folly with folly, pride with pride, scorn with scorn, insolence with insolence, and have outlived many vanities with many more. I will outlive this danger, and outdie it, if I can. It has closed around me, almost as awfully as if these woods of Chesney Wold had closed around the house; but my course through it is the same. I have but one; I can have but one."

"Mr. Jarndyce-" I was beginning, when my mother hurriedly

enquired:

"Does he suspect?"

"No," said I. "No, indeed! Be assured that he does not!" And I told her what he had related to me as his knowledge of my story. "But he is so good and sensible," said I, "that perhaps if he knew -

My mother, who until this time had made no change in her position,

raised her hand up to my lips, and stopped me.

"Confide fully in him," she said, after a little while. "You have my free consent-a small gift from such a mother to her injured child !but do not tell me of it. Some pride is left in me, even yet."

I explained, as nearly as I could then, or can recal now-for my agitation and distress throughout were so great that I scarcely understood myself, though every word that was uttered in the mother's voice, so unfamiliar and so melancholy to me; which in my childhood I had never learned to love and recognise, had never been sung to sleep with, had never heard a blessing from, had never had a hope inspired by; made an enduring impression on my memory—I say I explained, or tried to do it, how I had only hoped that Mr. Jarndyce, who had been the best of fathers to me, might be able to afford some counsel and support to her. But my mother answered no, it was impossible; no one could help her.

Through the desert that lay before her, she must go alone.

"My child, my child!" she said. "For the last time! These kisses for the last time! These arms upon my neck for the last time! We shall meet no more. To hope to do what I seek to do, I must be what I have been so long. Such is my reward and doom. If you hear of Lady Dedlock, brilliant, prosperous, and flattered; think of your wretched mother, conscience-stricken, underneath that mask! Think that the reality is in her suffering, in her useless remorse, in her murdering within her breast the only love and truth of which it is capable! And then forgive her, if you can; and cry to Heaven to forgive her, which it never can!"

We held one another for a little space yet, but she was so firm, that she took my hands away, and put them back against my breast, and, with a last kiss as she held them there, released them, and went from me into the wood. I was alone; and, calm and quiet below me in the sun and shade, lay the old house, with its terraces and turrets, on which there had seemed to me to be such complete repose when I first saw it, but which now looked like the obdurate and unpitying watcher of my mother's

miserv.

Stunned as I was, as weak and helpless at first as I had ever been in my sick chamber, the necessity of guarding against the danger of discovery, or even of the remotest suspicion, did me service. I took such precautions as I could to hide from Charley that I had been crying; and I constrained myself to think of every sacred obligation that there was upon me to be careful and collected. It was not a little while before I could succeed. or could even restrain bursts of grief; but after an hour or so, I was better, and felt that I might return. I went home very slowly, and told Charley, whom I found at the gate looking for me, that I had been tempted to extend my walk after Lady Dedlock had left me, and that I was over-tired, and would lie down. Safe in my own room, I read the letter. I clearly derived from it-and that was much then-that I had not been abandoned by my mother. Her elder and only sister, the godmother of my childhood, discovering signs of life in me when I had been laid aside as dead, had, in her stern sense of duty, with no desire or willingness that I should live, reared me in rigid secrecy, and had never again beheld my mother's face from within a few hours of my birth. So strangely did I hold my place in this world, that, until within a short time back, I had never, to my own mother's knowledge, breathed—had been buried-had never been endowed with life-had never borne a name. When she had first seen me in the church, she had been startled; and had thought of what would have been like me, if it had ever lived, and had lived on; but that was all, then.

What more the letter told me, needs not to be repeated here. It has

its own times and places in my story.

My first care was to burn what my mother had written, and to consume even its ashes. I hope it may not appear very unnatural or bad in me, that I then became heavily sorrowful to think I had ever been reared. That I felt as if I knew it would have been better and happier for many people, if indeed I had never breathed. That I had a terror of myself, as the danger and the possible disgrace of my own mother, and of a proud family name. That I was so confused and shaken, as to be possessed by a belief that it was right, and had been intended, that I should die in my birth; and that it was wrong, and not intended, that I should be then alive.

These are the real feelings that I had. I fell asleep, worn out; and when I awoke, I cried afresh to think that I was back in the world, with my load of trouble for others. I was more than ever frightened of myself, thinking anew of her, against whom I was a witness; of the owner of Chesney Wold; of the new and terrible meaning of the old words, now moaning in my ear like a surge upon the shore, "Your mother. Esther, was your disgrace, and you are hers. The time will come-and soon enough-when you will understand this better, and will feel it too. as no one save a woman can." With them, those other words returned, "Pray daily that the sins of others be not visited upon your head." could not disentangle all that was about me; and I felt as if the blame and the shame were all in me, and the visitation had come down.

The day waned into a gloomy evening, overcast and sad, and I still contended with the same distress. I went out alone; and, after walking a little in the park, watching the dark shades falling on the trees, and the fitful flight of the bats, which sometimes almost touched me, was attracted to the house for the first time. Perhaps I might not have gone near it, if I had been in a stronger frame of mind. As it was, I took the path

that led close by it.

I did not dare to linger or to look up, but I passed before the terrace garden with its fragrant odors, and its broad walks, and its well-kept beds and smooth turf; and I saw how beautiful and grave it was, and how the old stone balustrades and parapets, and wide flights of shallow steps, were seamed by time and weather; and how the trained moss and ivy grew about them, and around the old stone pedestal of the sun-dial; and I heard the fountain falling. Then the way went by long lines of dark windows, diversified by turreted towers, and porches, of eccentric shapes, where old stone lions and grotesque monsters bristled outside dens of shadow, and snarled at the evening gloom over the escutcheons they held in their grip. Thence the path wound underneath a gateway, and through a court-yard where the principal entrance was (I hurried quickly on), and by the stables where none but deep voices seemed to be, whether in the murmuring of the wind through the strong mass of ivy holding to a high red wall, or in the low complaining of the weathercock, or in the barking of the dogs, or in the slow striking of a clock. So, encountering presently a sweet smell of limes whose rustling I could hear, I turned with the turning of the path, to the south front; and there, above me, were the balustrades of the Ghost's Walk, and one lighted window that might be my mother's.

The way was paved here, like the terrace overhead, and my footsteps from being noiseless made an echoing sound upon the flags. Stopping to look at nothing, but seeing all I did see as I went, I was passing quickly on, and in a few moments should have passed the lighted window, when my cchoing footsteps brought it suddenly into my mind that there was a dreadful truth in the legend of the Ghost's Walk; that it was I, who was to bring calamity upon the stately house; and that my warning feet were haunting it even then. Seized with an augmented terror of myself which turned me cold, I ran from myself and everything, retraced the way by which I had come, and never paused until I had gained the

lodge-gate, and the park lay sullen and black behind me.

Not before I was alone in my own room for the night, and had again been dejected and unhappy there, did I begin to know how wrong and thankless this state was. But, from my darling who was coming on the morrow, I found a joyful letter, full of such loving anticipation that I must have been of marble if it had not moved me; from my guardian too I found another letter, asking me to tell Dame Durden, if I should see that little woman anywhere, that they had moped most pitiably without her, that the housekeeping was going to rack and ruin, that nobody else could manage the keys, and that everybody in and about the house declared it was not the same house, and was becoming rebellious for her return. Two such letters together made me think how far beyond my deserts I was beloved, and how happy I ought to be. That made me think of all my past life; and that brought me, as it ought to have done before, into a better condition.

For, I saw very well that I could not have been intended to die, or I should never have lived: not to say should never have been reserved for such a happy life. I saw very well how many things had worked together, for my welfare; and that if the sins of the fathers were sometimes visited upon the children, the phrase did not mean what I had in the morning feared it meant. I knew I was as innocent of my birth, as a queen of hers; and that before my Heavenly Father I should not be punished for birth, nor a queen rewarded for it. I had had experience, in the shock of that very day, that I could, even thus soon, find comforting reconcilements to the change that had fallen on me. I renewed my resolutions, and prayed to be strengthened in them; pouring out my heart for myself, and for my unhappy mother, and feeling that the darkness of the morning was passing away. It was not upon my sleep; and when the next day's light awoke me, it was gone.

My dear girl was to arrive at five o'clock in the afternoon. How to help myself through the intermediate time better than by taking a long walk along the road by which she was to come, I did not know; so Charley and I and Stubbs—Stubbs, saddled, for we never drove him after the one great occasion—made a long expedition along that road, and back. On our return, we held a great review of the house and garden; and saw that everything was in its prettiest condition, and had the bird out ready as an

important part of the establishment.

There were more than two full hours yet to elapse, before she could come; and in that interval, which seemed a long one, I must confess I was nervously anxious about my altered looks. I loved my darling so well that I was more concerned for their effect on her than on any one. I was not in this slight distress because I at all repined—I am quite certain I did not, that day—but, I thought, would she be wholly

prepared? When she first saw me, might she not be a little shocked and disappointed? Might it not prove a little worse than she had expected? Might she not look for her old Esther, and not find her? Might she not have to grow used to me, and to begin all over again?

I knew the various expressions of my sweet girl's face so well, and it was such an honest face in its loveliness, that I was sure, beforehand, she could not hide that first look from me. And I considered whether, if it should signify any one of these meanings, which was so very likely, could I quite answer for myself?

Well, I thought I could. After last night, I thought I could. But to wait and wait, and expect and expect, and think and think, was such bad preparation, that I resolved to go along the road again, and meet her.

So I said to Charley, "Charley, I will go by myself and walk along the road until she comes." Charley highly approving of anything that

pleased me, I went, and left her at home.

But before I got to the second mile-stone, I had been in so many palpitations from seeing dust in the distance (though I knew it was not, and could not be, the coach yet), that I resolved to turn back and go home again. And when I had turned, I was in such fear of the coach coming up behind me (though I still knew that it neither would, nor could, do any such thing), that I ran the greater part of the way, to avoid being overtaken.

Then, I considered, when I had got safe back again, this was a nice thing to have done! Now I was hot, and had made the worst of it,

instead of the best.

At last, when I believed there was at least a quarter of an hour more yet, Charley all at once cried out to me as I was trembling in the garden,

"Here she comes, miss! Here she is!"

I did not mean to do it, but I ran up-stairs into my room, and hid myself behind the door. There I stood, trembling, even when I heard my darling calling as she came up-stairs, "Esther, my dear, my love, where are you? Little woman, dear Dame Durden!"

She ran in, and was running out again when she saw me. Ah, my angel girl! the old dear look, all love, all fondness, all affection.

Nothing else in it-no, nothing, nothing !

O how happy I was, down upon the floor, with my sweet beautiful girl down upon the floor too, holding my scarred face to her lovely cheek, bathing it with tears and kisses, rocking me to and fro like a child, ealling me by every tender name that she could think of, and pressing me to her faithful heart.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JARNDYCE AND JARNDYCE.

If the secret that I had to keep had been mine, I must have confided it to Ada before we had been long together. But it was not mine; and I did not feel that I had a right to tell it, even to my guardian, unless some great emergency arose. It was a weight to bear alone; still my present duty appeared to be plain, and, blest in the attachment of my dear, I did not want an impulse and encouragement to do it. Though often when she was asleep and all was quiet, the remembrance of my mother kept me waking, and made the night sorrowful, I did not yield to it at another time; and Ada found me what I used to be—except, of course, in that particular of which I have said enough, and which I have no intention of

mentioning any more, just now, if I can help it.

The difficulty that I felt in being quite composed that first evening, when Ada asked me, over our work, if the family were at the House, and when I was obliged to answer yes, I believed so, for Lady Dedlock had spoken to me in the woods the day before yesterday, was great. Greater still, when Ada asked me what she had said, and when I replied that she had been kind and interested; and when Ada, while admitting her beauty and elegance, remarked upon her proud manner, and her imperious chilling air. But Charley helped me through unconsciously, by telling us that Lady Dedlock had only stayed at the House two nights, on her way from London to visit at some other great house in the next county; and that she had left early on the morning after we had seen her at our view, as we called it. Charley verified the adage about little pitchers, I am sure; for she heard of more sayings and doings, in a day, than would have come to my ears in a month.

We were to stay a month at Mr. Boythorn's. My pet had scarcely been there a bright week, as I recollect the time, when one evening after we had finished helping the gardener in watering his flowers, and just as the candles were lighted, Charley, appearing with a very important air behind Ada's chair, beckoned me mysteriously out of the room.

"Oh! if you please, miss," said Charley, in a whisper, with her eyes at their roundest and largest. "You're wanted at the Dedlock Arms."

"Why, Charley," said I, "who can possibly want me at the public-house?"

"I don't know, miss," returned Charley, putting her head forward, and folding her hands tight upon the band of her little apron; which she always did, in the enjoyment of anything mysterious or confidential, "but it's a gentleman, miss, and his compliments, and will you please to come without saying anything about it."

"Whose compliments, Charley?"

"His'n, miss," returned Charley: whose grammatical education was advancing, but not very rapidly.

"And how do you come to be the messenger, Charley?"

"I am not the messenger, if you please, miss," returned my little maid. "It was W. Grubble, miss."

"And who is W. Grubble, Charley?"

"Mister Grubble, miss," returned Charley. "Don't you know, miss? The Dedlock Arms, by W. Grubble," which Charley delivered as if she were slowly spelling out the sign.

"Aye? The landlord, Charley?"

"Yes, miss. If you please, miss, his wife is a beautiful woman, but she broke her ankle and it never joined. And her brother's the sawyer, that was put in the cage, miss, and they expect he'll drink himself to death entirely on beer," said Charley.

Not knowing what might be the matter, and being easily apprehensive now, I thought it best to go to this place by myself. I bade Charley be quick with my bonnet and veil, and my shawl; and having put them on, went away down the little hilly street, where I was as much at home as in

Mr. Boythorn's garden.

Mr. Grubble was standing in his shirt sleeves at the door of his very clean little tavern, waiting for me. He lifted off his hat with both hands when he saw me coming, and carrying it so, as if it were an iron vessel (it looked as heavy), preceded me along the sanded passage to his best parlor: a neat carpeted room, with more plants in it than were quite convenient, a colored print of Queen Caroline, several shells, a good many tea-trays, two stuffed and dried fish in glass cases, and either a curious egg or a curious pumpkin (but I don't know which, and I doubt if many people did) hanging from the ceiling. I knew Mr. Grubble very well by sight, from his often standing at his door. A pleasant-looking, stoutish, middle-aged man, who never seemed to consider himself cosily dressed for his own fireside without his hat and top-boots, but who never wore a coat except at church.

He snuffed the candle, and backing away a little to see how it looked, backed out of the room—unexpectedly to me, for I was going to ask him by whom he had been sent. The door of the opposite parlor being then opened, I heard some voices, familiar in my ears I thought, which stopped. A quick light step approached the room in which I was, and who should

stand before me but Richard!

"My dear Esther!" he said, "my best friend!" and he really was so warm-hearted and earnest, that in the first surprise and pleasure of his brotherly greeting, I could scarcely find breath to tell him that Ada was well.

"Answering my very thoughts-always the same dear girl!" said

Richard, leading me to a chair, and seating himself beside me.

I put my veil up, but not quite.

"Always the same dear girl!" said Richard, just as heartily as before. I put my veil up altogether, and laying my hand on Richard's sleeve, and looking in his face, told him how much I thanked him for his kind welcome, and how greatly I rejoiced to see him; the more so, because of the determination I had made in my illness, which I now conveyed to him.

"My love," said Richard, "there is no one with whom I have a greater wish to talk, than you, for I want you to understand me."

"And I want you, Richard," said I, shaking my head, "to understand

some one else."

"Since you refer so immediately to John Jarndyce," said Richard-"I suppose you mean him?"

"Of course I do."

"Then, I may say at once that I am glad of it, because it is on that subject that I am anxious to be understood. By you, mind-you, my dear! I am not accountable to Mr. Jarndyce, or Mr. Anybody."

I was pained to find him taking this tone, and he observed it.

"Well, well, my dear," said Richard, "we won't go into that, now. I want to appear quietly in your country house here, with you under my. arm, and give my charming cousin a surprise. I suppose your lovalty to John Jarndyce will allow that?"

"My dear Richard," I returned, "you know you would be heartily welcome at his house-your home, if you will but consider it so; and you

are as heartily welcome here."

"Spoken like the best of little women!" cried Richard, gaily.

I asked him how he liked his profession?

"Oh, I like it well enough!" said Richard. "It's all right. It does as well as anything else, for a time. I don't know that I shall care about it when I come to be settled; but I can sell out then, and-however, never mind all that botheration at present."

So young and handsome, and in all respects so perfectly the opposite of Miss Flite! And yet, in the clouded, eager, seeking look that passed over

him, so dreadfully like her!

"I am in town on leave, just now," said Richard.

"Indeed?"

"Yes. I have run over to look after my-my Chancery interests, before the long vacation," said Richard, forcing a careless laugh. "We are beginning to spin along with that old suit at last, I promise vou."

No wonder that I shook my head!

"As you say, it's not a pleasant subject." Richard spoke with the same shade crossing his face as before. "Let it go to the four winds for to-night.—Puff! Gone!—Who do you suppose is with me?"
"Was it Mr. Skimpole's voice I heard?"

"That's the man! He does me more good than anybody. What a

fascinating child it is !"

I asked Richard if anyone knew of their coming down together? He answered, No, nobody. He had been to call upon the dear old infantso he called Mr. Skimpole-and the dear old infant had told him where we were, and he had told the dear old infant he was bent on coming to see us, and the dear old infant had directly wanted to come too; and so he had brought him: " And he is worth-not to say his sordid expensesbut thrice his weight in gold," said Richard. "He is such a cheery fellow. No worldliness about him. Fresh and green-hearted!"

I certainly did not see the proof of Mr. Skimpole's unworldliness in his having his expenses paid by Richard; but I made no remark about that.

Indeed, he came in, and turned our conversation. He was charmed to see me; said he had been shedding delicious tears of joy and sympathy, at intervals for six weeks, on my account; had never been so happy as in hearing of my progress; began to understand the mixture of good and evil in the world now; felt that he appreciated health the more, when somebody else was ill; didn't know but what it might be in the scheme of things that A should squint to make B happier in looking straight; or that C should carry a wooden leg, to make D better satisfied with his

flesh and blood in a silk stocking.

"My dear Miss Summerson, here is our friend Richard," said Mr. Skimpole, "full of the brightest visions of the future, which he evokes out of the darkness of Chancery. Now that's delightful, that's inspiriting, that's full of poetry! In old times, the woods and solitudes were made joyous to the shepherd by the imaginary piping and dancing of Pan and the Nymphs. This present shepherd, our pastoral Richard, brightens the dull Inns of Court by making Fortune and her train sport through them to the melodious notes of a judgment from the bench. That's very pleasant you know! Some ill-conditioned growling fellow may say to me, 'What's the use of these legal and equitable abuses? How do you defend them?' I reply, 'My growling friend, I don't defend them, but they are very agreeable to me. There is a shepherd-youth, a friend of mine, who transmutes them into something highly fascinating to my simplicity. I don't say it is for this that they exist—for I am a child among you worldly grumblers, and not called upon to account to you or myself for anything—but it may be so."

I began seriously to think that Richard could scarcely have found a worse friend than this. It made me uneasy that at such a time, when he most required some right principle and purpose, he should have this captivating looseness and putting-off of everything, this airy dispensing with all principle and purpose, at his elbow. I thought I could understand how such a nature as my guardian's, experienced in the world, and forced to contemplate the miserable evasions and contentions of the family misfortune, found an immense relief in Mr. Skimpole's avowal of his weaknesses and display of guileless candour; but I could not satisfy myself that it was as artless as it seemed; or that it did not serve Mr. Skimpole's idle turn quite as well as any other part, and with less

trouble.

They both walked back with me; and Mr. Skimpole leaving us at the gate, I walked softly in with Richard, and said, "Ada, my love, I have brought a gentleman to visit you." It was not difficult to read the blushing, startled face. She loved him dearly, and he knew it, and I knew it. It was a very transparent business, that meeting as cousins

only.

I almost mistrusted myself, as growing quite wicked in my suspicions, but I was not so sure that Richard loved her dearly. He admired her very much—any one must have done that—and I dare say, would have renewed their youthful engagement with great pride and ardor, but that he knew how she would respect her promise to my guardian. Still, I had a tormenting idea that the influence upon him extended even here: that he was postponing his best truth and earnestness, in this as in all

things, until Jarndyce and Jarndyce should be off his mind. Ah me! what Richard would have been without that blight, I never shall know now !

He told Ada, in his most ingenuous way, that he had not come to make any secret inroad on the terms she had accepted (rather too implicitly and confidingly, he thought) from Mr. Jarndyce; that he had come openly to see her, and to see me, and to justify himself for the present terms on which he stood with Mr. Jarndyce. As the dear old infant would be with us directly, he begged that I would make an appointment for the morning, when he might set himself right, through the means of an unreserved conversation with me. I proposed to walk with him in the park at seven o'clock, and this was arranged. Mr. Skimpole soon afterwards appeared, and made us merry for an hour. He particularly requested to see Little Coavinses (meaning Charley), and told her, with a patriarchal air, that he had given her late father all the business in his power; and that if one of her little brothers would make haste to get set-up in the same profession, he hoped he should still be able to put a good deal of employment in his way.

"For I am constantly being taken in these nets," said Mr. Skimpole, looking beamingly at us over a glass of wine-and-water, "and am constantly being bailed out-like a boat. Or paid off-like a ship's company. Somebody always does it for me. I can't do it, you know, for I never have any money. But Somebody does it. I get out by Somebody's means; I am not like the starling; I get out. If you were to ask me who Somebody is, upon my word, I couldn't tell you. Let us drink to Somebody. God bless him!"

Richard was a little late in the morning, but I had not to wait for him long, and we turned into the park. The air was bright and dewy, and the sky without a cloud. The birds sang delightfully; the sparkles in the fern, the grass, and trees, were exquisite to see; the richness of the woods seemed to have increased twenty-fold since yesterday, as if, in the still night when they had looked so massively hushed in sleep, Nature, through all the minute details of every wonderful leaf, had been more wakeful than usual for the glory of that day.

"This is a lovely place," said Richard, looking round. "None of the jar and discord of law-suits here!"

But there was other trouble.

"I tell you what, my dear girl," said Richard, "when I get affairs in general settled, I shall come down here, I think, and rest."
"Would it not be better to rest now?" I asked.

"Oh, as to resting now," said Richard, "or as to doing anything very definite now, that's not easy. In short, it can't be done; I can't do it, at least."

"Why not?" said I.

"You know why not, Esther. If you were living in an unfinished house, liable to have the roof put on or taken off-to be from top to bottom pulled down or built up-to-morrow, next day, next week, next month, next year-you would find it hard to rest or settle. So do I. Now? There's no now for us suitors."

I could almost have believed in the attraction on which my poor little

wandering friend had expatiated, when I saw again the darkened look of last night. Terrible to think, it had in it also, a shade of that unfortunate man who had died.

"My dear Richard," said I, "this is a bad beginning of our conver-

sation.'

"I knew you would tell me so, Dame Durden."

"And not I alone, dear Richard. It was not I who cautioned you

once, never to found a hope or expectation on the family curse."

"There you come back to John Jarndyce!" said Richard, impatiently.
"Well! We must approach him sooner or later, for he is the staple of what I have to say; and it's as well at once. My dear Esther, how can you be so blind? Don't you see that he is an interested party, and that it may be very well for him to wish me to know nothing of the suit, and care nothing about it, but that it may not be quite so well for me?"

"O Richard," I remonstrated, "is it possible that you can ever have seen him and heard him, that you can ever have lived under his roof and known him, and can yet breathe, even to me in this solitary place where

there is no one to hear us, such unworthy suspicions?"

He reddened deeply, as if his natural generosity felt a pang of reproach. He was silent for a little while, before he replied in a subdued voice:

"Esther, I am sure you know that I am not a mean fellow, and that I have some sense of suspicion and distrust being poor qualities in one of my years."

"I know it very well," said I. "I am not more sure of anything."

"That's a dear girl!" retorted Richard, "and like you, because it gives me comfort. I had need to get some scrap of comfort out of all this business, for it's a bad one at the best, as I have no occasion to tell you."

"I know perfectly," said I, "I know as well, Richard—what shall I say? as well as you do—that such misconstructions are foreign to your

nature. And I know, as well as you know, what so changes it.'

"Come, sister, come," said Richard, a little more gaily, "you will be fair with me at all events. If I have the misfortune to be under that influence, so has he. If it has a little twisted me, it may have a little twisted him, too. I don't say that he is not an honorable man, out of all this complication and uncertainty; I am sure he is. But it taints everybody. You know it taints everybody. You have heard him say so fifty times. Then why should he escape?"

"Because," said I, "his is an uncommon character, and he has

resolutely kept himself outside the circle, Richard."

"Oh, because and because!" replied Richard, in his vivacious way. "I am not sure, my dear girl, but that it may be wise and specious to preserve that outward indifference. It may cause other parties interested to become lax about their interests; and people may die off, and points may drag themselves out of memory, and many things may smoothly happen that are convenient enough."

I was so touched with pity for Richard, that I could not reproach him any more, even by a look. I remembered my guardian's gentleness towards his errors, and with what perfect freedom from resentment he

had spoken of them.

"Esther," Richard resumed, "you are not to suppose that I have come here to make under-handed charges against John Jarndyce. I have only come to justify myself. What I say is, it was all very well, and we got on very well, while I was a boy, utterly regardless of this same suit; but as soon as I began to take an interest in it, and to look into it, then it was quite another thing. Then John Jarndyce discovers that Ada and I must break off, and that if I don't amend that very objectionable course, I am not fit for her. Now, Esther, I don't mean to amend that very objectionable course: I will not hold John Jarndyce's favor on those unfair terms of compromise, which he has no right to dictate. Whether it pleases him or displeases him, I must maintain my rights, and Ada's. I have been thinking about it a good deal, and this is the conclusion I have come to."

Poor dear Richard! He had indeed been thinking about it a good

deal. His face, his voice, his manner all showed that, too plainly.

"So I tell him honorably (you are to know I have written to him about all this), that we are at issue, and that we had better be at issue openly than covertly. I thank him for his good-will and his protection, and he goes his road, and I go mine. The fact is, our roads are not the same. Under one of the wills in dispute, I should take much more than he. I don't mean to say that it is the one to be established; but there it is, and it has its chance."

"I have not to learn from you, my dear Richard," said I, "of your letter. I had heard of it already, without an offended or angry word."

"Indeed?" replied Richard, softening. "I am glad I said he was an honorable man, out of all this wretched affair. But I always say that, and have never doubted it. Now, my dear Esther, I know these views of mine appear extremely harsh to you, and will to Ada when you tell her what has passed between us. But if you had gone into the case as I have, if you had only applied yourself to the papers as I did when I was at Kenge's, if you only knew what an accumulation of charges and counter-charges, and suspicions and cross-suspicions, they involve, you would think me moderate in comparison."

"Perhaps so," said I. "But do you think that, among those many

papers, there is much truth and justice, Richard?"

"There is truth and justice somewhere in the case, Esther ---"

"Or was once, long ago," said I.

"Is—is—must be somewhere," pursued Richard, impetuously, "and must be brought out. To allow Ada to be made a bribe and hush-money of, is not the way to bring it out. You say the suit is changing me; John Jarndyce says it changes, has changed, and will change, everybody who has any share in it. Then the greater right I have on my side, when I resolve to do all I can to bring it to an end."

"All you can, Richard! Do you think that in these many years no others have done all they could? Has the difficulty grown easier because

of so many failures?"

"It can't last for ever," returned Richard, with a fierceness kindling in him which again presented to me that last sad reminder. "I am young and earnest; and energy and determination have done wonders many a time. Others have only half thrown themselves into it. I devote myself to it. I make it the object of my life."

"O, Richard, my dear, so much the worse, so much the worse!"

"No, no, no, don't you be afraid for me," he returned, affectionately. "You're a dear, good, wise, quiet, blessed girl; but you have your prepossessions. So I come round to John Jarndyce. I tell you, my good Esther, when he and I were on those terms which he found so convenient, we were not on natural terms."

"Are division and animosity your natural terms, Richard?"

"No, I don't say that. I mean that all this business puts us on unnatural terms, with which natural relations are incompatible. See another reason for urging it on! I may find out, when it's over, that I have been mistaken in John Jarndyce. My head may be clearer when I am free of it, and I may then agree with what you say to-day. Very well. Then I shall acknowledge it, and make him reparation."

Everything postponed to that imaginary time! Everything held in confusion and indecision until then!

"Now, my best of confidantes," said Richard, "I want my cousin, Ada, to understand that I am not captious, fickle, and wilful, about John Jarndyce; but that I have this purpose and reason at my back. I wish to represent myself to her through you, because she has a great esteem and respect for her cousin John; and I know you will soften the course I take, even though you disapprove of it; and-and in short," said Richard, who had been hesitating through these words, "I-I don't like to represent myself in this litigious, contentious, doubting character, to a confiding girl like Ada."

I told him that he was more like himself in those latter words,

than in anything he had said yet.

"Why," acknowledged Richard, "that may be true enough, my I rather feel it to be so. But I shall be able to give myself fair-play by and by. I shall come all right again, then, don't you be afraid."

I asked him if this were all he wished me to tell Ada?

"Not quite," said Richard. "I am bound not to withhold from her that John Jarndyce answered my letter in his usual manner, addressing me as 'My dear Rick,' trying to argue me out of my opinions, and telling me that they should make no difference in him. (All very well of course, but not altering the case.) I also want Ada to know, that if I see her seldom just now, I am looking after her interests as well as my own-we two being in the same boat exactly-and that I hope she will not suppose, from any flying rumours she may hear, that I am at all light-headed or imprudent: on the contrary, I am always looking forward to the termination of the suit, and always planning in that direction. Being of age now, and having taken the step I have taken, I consider myself free from any accountability to John Jarndyce; but Ada being still a ward of the Court, I don't yet ask her to renew our engagement. When she is free to act for herself, I shall be myself once more, and we shall both be in very different worldly circumstances, I believe. If you will tell her all this with the advantage of your considerate way, you will do me a very great and a very kind service, my dear Esther; and I shall knock Jarndyce and Jarndyce on the head with greater vigor. Of course I ask for no secresy at Bleak House." B B 2

"Richard," said I, "vou place great confidence in me, but I fear you will not take advice from me?

"It's impossible that I can on this subject, my dear girl. On any other,

readily."

As if there were any other in his life! As if his whole career and character were not being dyed one color !

"But I may ask you a question, Richard?"

"I think so," said he, laughing. "I don't know who may not, if you may not."

"You say, yourself, you are not leading a very setted life?"

"How can I, my dear Esther, with nothing settled!"

"Are you in debt again?"

"Why of course I am," said Richard, astonished at my simplicity.

"Is it of course?"

"My dear child, certainly. I can't throw myself into an object so completely, without expense. You forget, or perhaps you don't know, that under either of the wills Ada and I take something. It's only a question between the larger sum and the smaller. I shall be within the mark any way. Bless your heart, my excellent girl," said Richard, quite amused with me, "I shall be all right! I shall pull through, my dear!"

I felt so deeply sensible of the danger in which he stood, that I tried, in Ada's name, in my guardian's, in my own, by every fervent means that I could think of, to warn him of it, and to show him some of his mistakes. He received everything I said with patience and gentleness, but it all rebounded from him without taking the least effect. I could not wonder at this, after the reception his pre-occupied mind had given to my guardian's letter; but I determined to try Ada's influence yet.

So, when our walk brought us round to the village again, and I went home to breakfast, I prepared Ada for the account I was going to give her, and told her exactly what reason we had to dread that Richard was losing himself, and scattering his whole life to the winds. It made her very unhappy, of course; though she had a far, far greater reliance on his correcting his errors than I could have-which was so natural and loving in my dear !- and she presently wrote him this little letter :

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Esther has told me all you said to her this morning. I write this, to repeat most earnestly for myself all that she said to you, and to let you know how sure I am that you will sooner or later find our cousin John a pattern of truth, sincerity and goodness, when you will deeply deeply grieve to have done

him (without intending it) so much wrong.

I do not quite know how to write what I wish to say next, but I trust you will understand it as I mean it. I have some fears, my dearest cousin, that it may be partly for my sake you are now laying up so much unhappiness for yourself—and, if for yourself, for me. In case this should be so, or in case you should entertain much thought of me in what you are doing, I most earnestly entreat and beg you to desist. You can do nothing for my sake that will make me half so happy, as for ever turning your back upon the shadow in which we both the product of the shadow in which we both the shadow in the shadow in which we both the shadow in the shadow in the shadow in which we both the shadow in the shadow were born. Do not be angry with me for saying this. Pray, pray, dear Richard, for my sake, and for your own, and in a natural repugnance for that source of trouble which had its share in making us both orphans when we were very young, pray, pray, let it go for ever. We have reason to know, by this time, that there is no good in it, and no hope; that there is nothing to be got from it but sorrow.

My dearest cousin, it is needless for me to say that you are quite free, and that it is very likely you may find some one whom you will love much better than your first fancy. I am quite sure, if you will let me say so, that the object of your choice would greatly prefer to follow your fortunes far and wide, however moderate or poor, and see you happy, doing your duty and pursuing your chosen way; than to have the hope of being, or even to be, very rich with you (if such a thing were possible), at the cost of dragging years of procrastination and anxiety, and of your indifference to other aims. You may wonder at my saying this so confidently with so little knowledge or experience, but I know it for a certainty from my own heart.

Ever, my dearest cousin,

Your most affectionate.

ADA.

This note brought Richard to us very soon; but it made little change in him, if any. We would fairly try, he said, who was right and who was wrong—he would show us—we should see! He was animated and glowing, as if Ada's tenderness had gratified him; but I could only hope, with a sigh, that the letter might have some stronger effect upon his mind on re-perusal, than it assuredly had then.

As they were to remain with us that day, and had taken their places to return by the coach next morning, I sought an opportunity of speaking to Mr. Skimpole. Our out-of-door life easily threw one in my way; and I delicately said, that there was a responsibility in encouraging Richard.

I delicately said, that there was a responsibility in encouraging Richard.

"Responsibility, my dear Miss Summerson?" he repeated, catching at the word with the pleasantest smile, "I am the last man in the world for such a thing. I never was responsible in my life—I can't be."

"I am afraid everybody is obliged to be," said I, timidly enough: he

being so much older and more clever than I.

"No, really?" said Mr. Skimpole, receiving this new light with a most agreeable jocularity of surprise. "But every man's not obliged to be solvent? I am not. I never was. See, my dear Miss Summerson," he took a handful of loose silver and halfpence from his pocket, "there's so much money. I have not an idea how much. I have not the power of counting. Call it four and ninepence—call it four pound nine. They tell me I owe more than that. I dare say I do. I dare say I owe as much as good-natured people will let me owe. If they don't stop, why should I? There you have Harold Skimpole in little. If that's responsibility, I am responsible."

The perfect ease of manner with which he put the money up again, and looked at me with a smile on his refined face, as if he had been mentioning a curious little fact about somebody else, almost made me

feel as if he really had nothing to do with it.

"Now when you mention responsibility," he resumed, "I am disposed to say, that I never had the happiness of knowing any one whom I should consider so refreshingly responsible as yourself. You appear to me to be the very touchstone of responsibility. When I see you, my dear Miss Summerson, intent upon the perfect working of the whole little orderly system of which you are the centre, I feel inclined to say to myself—in fact I do say to myself, very often—that's responsibility!"

It was difficult, after this, to explain what I meant; but I persisted so far as to say, that we all hoped he would check and not confirm Richard

in the sanguine views he entertained just then.

"Most willingly," he retorted, "if I could. But, my dear Miss Summerson, I have no art, no disguise. If he takes me by the hand, and leads me through Westminster Hall in an airy procession after Fortune, I must go. If he says, 'Skimpole, join the dance!' I must join it. Common sense wouldn't, I know; but I have no common sense."

"It was very unfortunate for Richard," I said.

"Do you think so?" returned Mr. Skimpole. "Don't say that, don't say that. Let us suppose him keeping company with Common Sense—an excellent man—a good deal wrinkled—dreadfully practical—change for a ten-pound note in every pocket—ruled account-book in his hand—say, upon the whole, resembling a tax-gatherer. Our dear Richard, sanguine, ardent, overleaping obstacles, bursting with poetry like a young bud, says to this highly respectable companion, 'I see a golden prospect before me; it's very bright, it's very beautiful, it's very joyous; here I go, bounding over the landscape to come at it!" The respectable companion instantly knocks him down with the ruled account-book; tells him, in a literal prosaic way, that he sees no such thing; shows him it's nothing but fees, fraud, horsehair wigs, and black gowns. Now you know that's a painful change;—sensible in the last degree, I have no doubt, but disagreeable. I can't do it. I haven't got the ruled account-book, I have none of the tax-gathering elements in my composition, I am not at all respectable, and I don't want to be. Odd perhaps, but so it is!"

It was idle to say more; so I proposed that we should join Ada and

It was idle to say more; so I proposed that we should join Ada and Richard, who were a little in advance, and I gave up Mr. Skimpole in despair. He had been over the Hall in the course of the morning, and whimsically described the family pictures as we walked. There were such portentous shepherdesses among the Ladies Dedlock dead and gone, he told us, that peaceful crooks became weapons of assault in their hands. They tended their flocks severely in buckram and powder, and put their sticking-plaster patches on to terrify commoners, as the chiefs of some other tribes put on their war-paint. There was a Sir Somebody Dedlock, with a battle, a sprung-mine, volumes of smoke, flashes of lightning, a town on fire, and a stormed fort, all in full action between his horse's two hind legs: showing, he supposed, how little a Dedlock made of such trifles. The whole race he represented as having evidently been, in life, what he called "stuffed people,"—a large collection, glassy eyed, set up in the most approved manner on their various twigs and perches, very correct, perfectly free from animation, and always in glass

I was not so easy now, during any reference to the name, but that I felt it a relief when Richard, with an exclamation of surprise, hurried away to meet a stranger, whom he first descried coming slowly towards us.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Skimpole. "Vholes!" We asked if that were a friend of Richard's?

"Friend and legal adviser," said Mr. Skimpole. "Now, my dear Miss Summerson, if you want common sense, responsibility, and respectability, all united—if you want an exemplary man—Vholes is the man."

We had not known, we said, that Richard was assisted by any gentle-

man of that name.

"When he emerged from legal infancy," returned Mr. Skimpole, "he

parted from our conversational friend Kenge, and took up, I believe, with Vholes. Indeed, I know he did, because I introduced him to Vholes."

"Had you known him long?" asked Ada.

"Vholes? My dear Miss Clare, I had had that kind of acquaintance with him, which I have had with several gentlemen of his profession. He had done something or other, in a very agreeable, civil manner—taken proceedings, I think, is the expression—which ended in the proceeding of his taking me. Somebody was so good as to step in and pay the money—something and fourpence was the amount; I forget the pounds and shillings, but I know it ended with fourpence, because it struck me at the time as being so odd that I could owe anybody fourpence—and after that, I brought them together. Vholes asked me for the introduction, and I gave it. Now I come to think of it," he looked enquiringly at us with his frankest smile as he made the discovery, "Vholes bribed me, perhaps? He gave me something, and called it commission. Was it a five-pound note? Do you know, I think it must have been a five-pound note!"

His further consideration of the point was prevented by Richard's coming back to us in an excited state, and hastily presenting Mr. Vholes—a sallow man with pinched lips that looked as if they were cold, a red eruption here and there upon his face, tall and thin, about fifty years of age, high-shouldered, and stooping. Dressed in black, black-gloved, and buttoned to the chin, there was nothing so remarkable in him as a lifeless manner, and a slow fixed way he had of looking at Richard.

"I hope I don't disturb you, ladies," said Mr. Vholes; and now I observed that he was further remarkable for an inward manner of speaking. "I arranged with Mr. Carstone that he should always know when his cause was in the Chancellor's paper, and being informed by one of my clerks last night after post time that it stood, rather unexpectedly, in the paper for to-morrow, I put myself into the coach early this morning and came

down to confer with him."

"Yes!" said Richard, flushed, and looking triumphantly at Ada and me, "we don't do these things in the old slow way, now. We spin along, now! Mr. Vholes, we must hire something to get over to the post town in, and catch the mail to-night, and go up by it!"

"Anything you please, sir," returned Mr. Vholes. "I am quite at

your service.'

"Let me see!" said Richard, looking at his watch. "If I run down to the Dedlock, and get my portmanteau fastened up, and order a gig, or a chaise, or whatever's to be got, we shall have an hour then before starting. I'll come back to tea. Cousin Ada, will you and Esther take care of Mr. Vholes while I am gone?"

He was away directly, in his heat and hurry, and was soon lost in the dusk of evening. We who were left walked on towards the

house.

"Is Mr. Carstone's presence necessary to-morrow, sir?" said I. "Can it do any good?"

"No, miss," Mr. Vholes replied. "I am not aware that it can."

Both Ada and I expressed our regret that he should go, then, only to
be disappointed.

"Mr. Carstone has laid down the principle of watching his own interests," said Mr. Vholes, "and when a client lays down his own principle, and it is not immoral, it devolves upon me to carry it out. I wish in business to be exact and open. I am a widower with three daughters—Emma, Jane, and Caroline—and my desire is so to discharge the duties of life as to leave them a good name. This appears to be a pleasant spot, miss."

The remark being made to me, in consequence of my being next him

as we walked, I assented, and enumerated its chief attractions.

"Indeed?" said Mr. Vholes. "I have the privilege of supporting an aged father in the Vale of Taunton—his native place—and I admire that country very much. I had no idea there was anything so attractive here."

To keep up the conversation, I asked Mr. Vholes if he would like to

live altogether in the country?

"There, miss," said he, "you touch me on a tender string. My health is not good, (my digestion being much impaired,) and if I had only myself to consider, I should take refuge in rural habits; especially as the cares of business have prevented me from ever coming much into contact with general society, and particularly with ladies' society, which I have most wished to mix in. But with my three daughters, Emma, Jane, and Caroline—and my aged father—I cannot afford to be selfish. It is true, I have no longer to maintain a dear grandmother who died in her hundred-and-second year; but enough remains to render it indispensable that the mill should be always going."

It required some attention to hear him, on account of his inward

speaking and his lifeless manner.

"You will excuse my having mentioned my daughters," he said.
"They are my weak point. I wish to leave the poor girls some little

independence, as well as a good name."

We now arrived at Mr. Boythorn's house, where the tea-table, all prepared, was awaiting us. Richard came in, restless and hurried, shortly afterwards, and leaning over Mr. Vholes's chair, whispered something in his ear. Mr. Vholes replied aloud—or as nearly aloud I suppose as he ever replied to anything—"You will drive me, will you, sir? It is all the same to me, sir. Anything you please. I am quite at your service."

We understood from what followed that Mr. Skimpole was to be left until the morning to occupy the two places which had been already paid for. As Ada and I were both in low spirits concerning Richard, and very sorry so to part with him, we made it as plain as we politely could that we should leave Mr. Skimpole to the Dedlock Arms, and retire when the night-travellers were gone.

Richard's high spirits carrying everything before them, we all went out together to the top of the hill above the village, where he had ordered a gig to wait; and where we found a man with a lantern standing at the head of the gaunt pale horse that had been harnessed to it.

I never shall forget those two seated side by side in the lantern's light; Richard, all flush and fire and laughter, with the reins in his hand; Mr. Vholes, quite still, black-gloved, and buttoned up, looking at him as if he were looking at his prey and charming it. I have before me the whole picture of the warm dark night, the summer lightning, the dusty

track of road closed in by hedgerows and high trees, the gaunt pale horse with his ears pricked up, and the driving away at speed to Jarndyce and

Jarndyce.

My dear girl told me, that night, how Richard's being thereafter prosperous or ruined, befriended or deserted, could only make this difference to her, that the more he needed love from one unchanging heart, the more love that unchanging heart would have to give him; how he thought of her through his present errors, and she would think of him at all times: never of herself, if she could devote herself to him: never of her own delights, if she could minister to his.

And she kept her word?

I look along the road before me, where the distance already shortens and the journey's end is growing visible; and, true and good above the dead sea of the Chancery suit, and all the ashey fruit it casts ashore, I think I see my darling.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A STRUGGLE.

When our time came for returning to Bleak House again, we were punctual to the day, and were received with an overpowering welcome. I was perfectly restored to health and strength; and finding my house-keeping keys laid ready for me in my room, rang myself in as if I had been a new year, with a merry little peal. "Once more, duty, duty, Esther," said I; "and if you are not overjoyed to do it, more than cheerfully and contentedly, through anything and everything, you ought to be. That's all I have to say to you, my dear!"

The first few mornings were mornings of so much bustle and business, devoted to such settlements of accounts, such repeated journeys to and fro between the Growlery and all other parts of the house, so many re-arrangements of drawers and presses, and such a general new beginning altogether, that I had not a moment's leisure. But when these arrangements were completed, and everything was in order, I paid a visit of a few hours to London, which something in the letter I had destroyed at Chesney Wold had induced me to decide upon in my own mind.

I made Caddy Jellyby—her maiden name was so natural to me that I always called her by it—the pretext for this visit; and wrote her a note previously, asking the favor of her company on a little business expedition. Leaving home very early in the morning, I got to London by stage-coach in such good time, that I walked to Newman Street with the day before me.

Caddy, who had not seen me since her wedding-day, was so glad and so affectionate that I was half inclined to fear I should make her husband jealous. But he was, in his way, just as bad—I mean as good; and in short it was the old story, and nobody would leave me any possibility of doing anything meritorious.

The elder Mr. Turveydrop was in bed, I found, and Caddy was milling

his chocolate, which a melancholy little boy who was an apprentice-it seemed such a curious thing to be apprenticed to the trade of dancingwas waiting to carry up-stairs. Her father-in-law was extremely kind and considerate, Caddy told me, and they lived most happily together. (When she spoke of their living together, she meant that the old gentleman had all the good things and all the good lodging, while she and her husband had what they could get, and were poked into two corner rooms over the Mews.)

"And how is your mama, Caddy?" said I.

"Why, I hear of her, Esther," replied Caddy, "through Pa; but I see very little of her. We are good friends, I am glad to say; but Ma thinks there is something absurd in my having married a dancing-master, and

she is rather afraid of its extending to her."

It struck me that if Mrs. Jellyby had discharged her own natural duties and obligations, before she swept the horizon with a telescope in search of others, she would have taken the best precautions against becoming absurd; but I need scarcely observe that I kept this to myself.

"And your papa, Caddy?"

"He comes here every evening," returned Caddy, "and is so fond of

sitting in the corner there, that it's a treat to see him."

Looking at the corner, I plainly perceived the mark of Mr. Jellyby's head against the wall. It was consolatory to know that he had found such a resting-place for it.

"And you, Caddy," said I, "you are always busy, I'll be bound?"
"Well, my dear," returned Caddy, "I am indeed; for to tell you a grand secret, I am qualifying myself to give lessons. Prince's health is not strong, and I want to be able to assist him. What with schools, and classes here, and private pupils, and the apprentices, he really has too much to do, poor fellow ! "

The notion of the apprentices was still so odd to me, that I asked

Caddy if there were many of them?

"Four," said Caddy. "One in-door, and three out. They are very good children; only when they get together they will play-children-like -instead of attending to their work. So the little boy you saw just now waltzes by himself in the empty kitchen, and we distribute the others over the house as well as we can."

"That is only for their steps, of course?" said I.

"Only for their steps," said Caddy. "In that way they practise, so many hours at a time, whatever steps they happen to be upon. They dance in the academy; and at this time of year we do Figures at five every morning."

"Why, what a laborious life!" I exclaimed.

"I assure you, my dear," returned Caddy, smiling, "when the outdoor apprentices ring us up in the morning (the bell rings into our room, not to disturb old Mr. Turveydrop), and when I put up the window, and see them standing on the door-step with their little pumps under their arms, I am actually reminded of the Sweeps."

All this presented the art to me in a singular light, to be sure. Caddy enjoyed the effect of her communication, and cheerfully recounted the

particulars of her own studies.

"You see, my dear, to save expense, I ought to know something of the

Piano, and I ought to know something of the Kit too, and consequently I have to practise those two instruments as well as the details of our profession. If Ma had been like anybody else, I might have had some little musical knowledge to begin upon. However, I hadn't any; and that part of the work is, at first, a little discouraging, I must allow. But I have a very good ear, and I am used to drudgery—I have to thank Ma for that, at all events—and where there's a will there's a way, you know, Esther, the world over." Saying these words, Caddy laughingly sat down at a little jingling square piano, and really rattled off a quadrille with great spirit. Then she good-humoredly and blushingly got up again, and while she still laughed herself, said, "Don't laugh at me, please; that's a dear girl!"

I would sooner have cried, but I did neither. I encouraged her, and praised her with all my heart. For I conscientiously believed, dancing-master's wife though she was, and dancing-mistress though in her limited ambition she aspired to be, she had struck out a natural, wholesome, loving course of industry and perseverance that was quite as

good as a Mission.

"My dear," said Caddy, delighted, "you can't think how you cheer me. I shall owe you, you don't know how much. What changes, Esther, even in my small world! You recollect that first night, when I was so unpolite and inky? Who would have thought, then, of my ever teaching

people to dance, of all other possibilities and impossibilities!"

Her husband, who had left us while we had this chat, now coming back, preparatory to exercising the apprentices in the ball-room, Caddy informed me she was quite at my disposal. But it was not my time yet, I was glad to tell her; for I should have been vexed to take her away then. Therefore we three adjourned to the apprentices together, and I made one in the dance.

The apprentices were the queerest little people. Besides the melancholy boy, who I hoped had not been made so by waltzing alone in the empty kitchen, there were two other boys, and one dirty little limp girl in a gauzy dress. Such a precocious little girl, with such a dowdy bonnet on (that, too, of a gauzy texture), who brought her sandalled shoes in an old threadbare velvet reticule. Such mean little boys, when they were not dancing, with string, and marbles, and cramp-bones in their pockets, and the most untidy legs and feet—and heels particularly. I asked Caddy what had made their parents choose this profession for them? Caddy said she didn't know; perhaps they were designed for teachers; perhaps for the stage. They were all people in humble circumstances, and the melancholy boy's mother kept a ginger-beer shop.

We danced for an hour with great gravity; the melancholy child doing wonders with his lower extremities, in which there appeared to be some sense of enjoyment though it never rose above his waist. Caddy, while she was observant of her husband, and was evidently founded upon him, had acquired a grace and self-possession of her own, which, united to her pretty face and figure, was uncommonly agreeable. She already relieved him of much of the instruction of these young people; and he seldom interfered, except to walk his part in the figure if he had anything to do in it. He always played the tune. The affectation of the gauzy child.

and her condescension to the boys, was a sight. 'And thus we danced an

hour by the clock.

When the practice was concluded, Caddy's husband made himself ready to go out of town to a school, and Caddy ran away to get ready to go out with me. I sat in the ball-room in the interval, contemplating the apprentices. The two out-door boys went upon the staircase to put on their half-boots, and pull the in-door boy's hair: as I judged from the nature of his objections. Returning with their jackets buttoned, and their pumps stuck in them, they then produced packets of cold bread and meat, and bivouacked under a painted lyre on the wall. The little gauzy child, having whisked her sandals into the reticule and put on a trodden down pair of shoes, shook her head into the dowdy bonnet at one shake; and answering my inquiry whether she liked dancing, by replying, "not with boys," tied it across her chin and went home contemptuous.

"Old Mr. Turveydrop is so sorry," said Caddy, "that he has not finished dressing yet, and cannot have the pleasure of seeing you before

you go. You are such a favourite of his, Esther."

I expressed myself much obliged to him, but did not think it

necessary to add that I readily dispensed with this attention.

"It takes him a long time to dress," said Caddy, "because he is very much looked up to in such things, you know, and has a reputation to support. You can't think how kind he is to Pa. He talks to Pa, of an evening, about the Prince Regent, and I never saw Pa so interested."

There was something in the picture of Mr. Turveydrop bestowing his Deportment on Mr. Jellyby, that quite took my fancy. I asked Caddy if

he brought her papa out much?

"No," said Caddy, "I don't know that he does that; but he talks to Pa, and Pa greatly admires him, and listens, and likes it. Of course I am aware that Pa has hardly any claims to Deportment, but they get on together delightfully. You can't think what good companions they make. I never saw Pa take snuff before in my life; but he takes one pinch out of Mr. Turveydrop's box regularly, and keeps putting it to his nose and taking it away again, all the evening."

That old Mr. Turveydrop should ever, in the chances and changes of life, have come to the rescue of Mr. Jellyby from Borrioboola Gha,

appeared to me to be one of the pleasantest of oddities.

"As to Peepy," said Caddy, with a little hesitation, "whom I was most afraid of—next to having any family of my own, Esther—as an inconvenience to Mr. Turveydrop, the kindness of the old gentleman to that child is beyond everything. He asks to see him, my dear! He lets him take the newspaper up to him in bed; he gives him the crusts of his toast to eat; he sends him on little errands about the house; he tells him to come to me for sixpences. In short," said Caddy, cheerily, "and not to prose, I am a very fortunate girl, and ought to be very grateful. Where are we going, Esther?"

"To the Old Street Road," said I; "where I have a few words to say to the solicitor's clerk, who was sent to meet me at the coach-office on the very day when I came to London, and first saw you, my dear. Now

I think of it, the gentleman who brought us to your house.'

"Then, indeed, I seem to be naturally the person to go with you,"

returned Caddy.

To the Old Street Road we went, and there inquired at Mrs. Guppy's residence for Mrs. Guppy. Mrs. Guppy, occupying the parlors, and having indeed been visibly in danger of cracking herself like a nut in the front parlor door by peeping out before she was asked for, immediately presented herself, and requested us to walk in. She was an old lady in a large cap, with rather a red nose and rather an unsteady eye, but smiling all over. Her close little sitting-room was prepared for a visit; and there was a portrait of her son in it, which, I had almost written here, was more like than life: it insisted upon him with such obstinacy, and was so determined not to let him off.

Not only was the portrait there, but we found the original there too. He was dressed in a great many colors, and was discovered at a table

reading law-papers with his forefinger to his forehead.

"Miss Summerson," said Mr. Guppy, rising, "this is indeed an Oasis. Mother, will you be so good as to put a chair for the other lady, and

get out of the gang-way."

Mrs. Guppy, whose incessant smiling gave her quite a waggish appearance, did as her son requested; and then sat down in a corner, holding her pocket-handkerchief to her chest, like a fomentation, with both hands.

I presented Caddy, and Mr. Guppy said that any friend of mine was

more than welcome. I then proceeded to the object of my visit.

"I took the liberty of sending you a note, sir," said I.

Mr. Guppy acknowledged its receipt by taking it out of his breast pocket, putting it to his lips, and returning it to his pocket with a bow. Mr. Guppy's mother was so diverted that she rolled her head as she smiled, and made a silent appeal to Caddy with her elbow.

"Could I speak to you alone for a moment?" said I.

Anything like the jocoseness of Mr. Guppy's mother now, I think I never saw. She made no sound of laughter; but she rolled her head, and shook it, and put her handkerchief to her mouth, and appealed to Caddy with her elbow, and her hand, and her shoulder, and was so unspeakably entertained altogether that it was with some difficulty she could marshal Caddy through the little folding-door into her bed-room adjoining.

"Miss Summerson," said Mr. Guppy, "you will excuse the waywardness of a parent ever mindful of a son's appiness. My mother, though highly exasperating to the feelings, is actuated by maternal dictates."

I could hardly have believed that anybody could in a moment have turned so red, or changed so much, as Mr. Guppy did when I now put

up my veil.

"I asked the favor of seeing you for a few moments here," said I, "in preference to calling at Mr. Kenge's, because, remembering what you said on an occasion when you spoke to me in confidence, I feared I might otherwise cause you some embarrassment, Mr. Guppy."

I caused him embarrassment enough as it was, I am sure. I never saw

such faltering, such confusion, such amazement and apprehension.

"Miss Summerson," stammered Mr. Guppy, "I—I—beg your pardon, but in our profession—we—we—find it necessary to be explicit. You have referred to an occasion, miss, when I—when I did myself the honor of making a declaration which ——"

Something seemed to rise in his throat that he could not possibly swallow. He put his hand there, coughed, made faces, tried again to swallow it, coughed again, made faces again, looked all round the room, and fluttered his papers.

"A kind of a giddy sensation has come upon me, miss," he explained, "which rather knocks me over. I—er—a little subject to this sort of

thing-er-By George !"

I gave him a little time to recover. He consumed it in putting his hand to his forehead and taking it away again, and in backing his chair

into the corner behind him.

"My intention was to remark, miss," said Mr. Guppy, "—dear me—something bronchial, I think—hem!—to remark that you was so good on that occasion as to repel and repudiate that declaration. You—you wouldn't perhaps object to admit that? Though no witnesses are present, it might be a satisfaction to—to your mind—if you was to put in that admission."

"There can be no doubt," said I, "that I declined your proposal

without any reservation or qualification whatever, Mr. Guppy."

"Thank you miss," he returned, measuring the table with his troubled hands. "So far that's satisfactory, and it does you credit. Er—this is certainly bronchial!—must be in the tubes—er—you wouldn't perhaps be offended if I was to mention—not that it's necessary, for your own good sense or any person's sense must shew 'em that—if I was to mention that such declaration on my part was final, and there terminated?"

"I quite understand that," said I.

"Perhaps—er—it may not be worth the form, but it might be a satisfaction to your mind—perhaps you wouldn't object to admit that, miss?" said Mr. Guppy.

"I admit it most fully and freely," said I.

"Thank you," returned Mr. Guppy. "Very honorable, I am sure. I regret that my arrangements in life, combined with circumstances over which I have no control, will put it out of my power ever to fall back upon that offer, or to renew it in any shape or form whatever; but it will ever be a retrospect entwined—er—with friendship's bowers." Mr. Guppy's bronchitis came to his relief, and stopped his measurement of the table.

"I may now perhaps mention what I wished to say to you?" I began.

"I shall be honored, I am sure," said Mr. Guppy. "I am so persuaded that your own good sense and right feeling, miss, will—will keep you as square as possible—that I can have nothing but pleasure, I am sure, in hearing any observations you may wish to offer.

"You were so good as to imply, on that occasion ----"

"Excuse me, miss," said Mr. Guppy, "but we had better not travel out of the record into implication. I cannot admit that I implied

anything."

"You said on that occasion," I recommenced, "that you might possibly have the means of advancing my interests, and promoting my fortunes, by making discoveries of which I should be the subject. I presume that you founded that belief upon your general knowledge of my being an orphan girl, indebted for everything to the benevolence of Mr. Jarndyce. Now, the beginning and the end of what I have come to beg of you is, Mr. Guppy, that you will have the kindness to relinquish all idea of so serving me. I have thought of this sometimes, and I have

thought of it most, lately—since I have been ill. At length I have decided, in case you should at any time recal that purpose, and act upon it in any way, to come to you, and assure you that you are altogether mistaken. You could make no discovery in reference to me that would do me the least service, or give me the least pleasure. I am acquainted with my personal history; and I have it in my power to assure you that you never can advance my welfare by such means. You may, perhaps, have abandoned this project a long time. If so, excuse my giving you unnecessary trouble. If not, I entreat you, on the assurance I have given you, henceforth to lay it aside. I beg you to do this, for my peace."

"I am bound to confess," said Mr. Guppy, "that you express yourself, miss, with that good sense and right feeling for which I gave you credit. Nothing can be more satisfactory than such right feeling, and if I mistook any intentions on your part just now, I am prepared to tender a full apology. I should wish to be understood, miss, as hereby offering that apology—limiting it, as your own good sense and right feeling will

point out the necessity of, to the present proceedings."

I must say for Mr. Guppy that the shuffling manner he had had upon him improved very much. He seemed truly glad to be able to do some-

thing I asked, and he looked ashamed.

"If you will allow me to finish what I have to say at once, so that I may have no occasion to resume," I went on, seeing him about to speak, "you will do me a kindness sir. I come to you as privately as possible, because you announced this impression of yours to me in a confidence which I have really wished to respect—and which I always have respected, as you remember. I have mentioned my illness. There really is no reason why I should hesitate to say that I know very well that any little delicacy I might have had in making a request to you, is quite removed. Therefore I make the entreaty I have now preferred; and I hope you will have sufficient consideration for me, to accede to it."

I must do Mr. Guppy the further justice of saying that he had looked more and more ashamed, and that he looked most ashamed, and very

earnest, when he now replied with a burning face :

"Upon my word and honor, upon my life, upon my soul, Miss Summerson, as I am a living man, I'll act according to your wish! I'll never go another step in opposition to it. I'll take my oath to it, if it will be any satisfaction to you. In what I promise at this present time touching the matters now in question," continued Mr. Guppy, rapidly, as if he were repeating a familiar form of words, "I speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so—"

"I am quite satisfied," said I, rising at this point, "and I thank you

very much. Caddy, my dear, I am ready!"

Mr. Guppy's mother returned with Caddy (now making me the recipient of her silent laughter and her nudges), and we took our leave. Mr. Guppy saw us to the door with the air of one who was either imperfectly awake or walking in his sleep; and we left him there, staring.

But in a minute he came after us down the street without any hat, and with his long hair all blown about, and stopped us, saying fervently:

"Miss Summerson, upon my honor and soul, you may depend upon me!"

"I do," said I, "quite confidently."

"I beg your pardon, miss," said Mr. Guppy, going with one leg and staying with the other, "but this lady being present—your own witness—it might be a satisfaction to your mind (which I should wish to set at rest) if you was to repeat those admissions."

"Well, Caddy," said I, turning to her, "perhaps you will not be surprised when I tell you, my dear, that there never has been any

engagement-"

"No proposal or promise of marriage whatsoever," suggested Mr. Guppy.

"No proposal or promise of marriage whatsoever," said I, "between this gentleman—"

"William Guppy of Penton Place, Pentonville, in the county of

Middlesex," he murmured.

"Between this gentleman, Mr. William Guppy of Penton Place, Pentonville, in the county of Middlesex, and myself."

"Thank you, miss," said Mr. Guppy. "Very full,-er-excuse me

-lady's name, christian and surname both ?"

I gave them.

"Married woman, I believe?" said Mr. Guppy. "Married woman. Thank you. Formerly Caroline Jellyby, spinster, then of Thavies Inn, within the city of London, but extra-parochial; now of Newman-street, Oxford-street. Much obliged."

He ran home and came running back again.

"Touching that matter, you know, I really and truly am very sorry that my arrangements in life, combined with circumstances over which I have no control, should prevent a renewal of what was wholly terminated some time back," said Mr. Guppy to me, forlornly and despondently, "but it couldn't be. Now could it, you know! I only put it to you."

I replied it certainly could not. The subject did not admit of a doubt.

He thanked me, and ran to his mother's again—and back again.

"It's very honorable of you, miss, I am sure," said Mr. Guppy. "If an altar could be erected in the bowers of friendship—but, upon my soul, you may rely upon me in every respect, save and except the tender

passion only!"

The struggle in Mr. Guppy's breast, and the numerous oscillations it occasioned him between his mother's door and us, were sufficiently conspicuous in the windy street (particularly as his hair wanted cutting), to make us hurry away. I did so with a lightened heart; but when we last looked back, Mr. Guppy was still oscillating in the same troubled state of mind.

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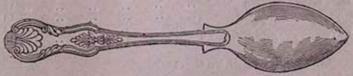
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	ity and Disnoteh market and Copie	ed in a	Very Superior Manner. Correctness, Pun	ctual
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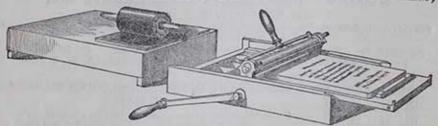
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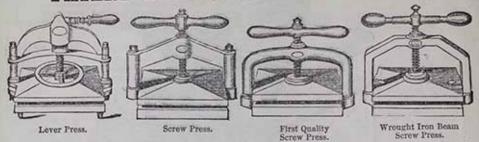
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discovered.	Lever	Screw	1st quality,	Screw Press,	Mahogany	Damping
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Large 4to Foolscap Folio Post Folio	£1 10 2 0	£2 10 3 3 4 4	£3 3 4 10 6 0	£3 15 5 5 6 6	£1 5 2 2 3 10	11s. 12s. 14s.



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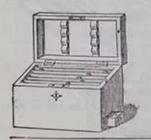
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MARSLAND, SON, and Co., having brought their SIX CORD COTTON to the high degree of perfection of their Crochet Cotton, so as to render it peculiarly suitable for GUIPURE and LACET WORK, beg to call the attention of Ladles, who are engaged in this branch of Crochet Work, and request they will give their Cotton a TRIAL, if they have not hitherto done so, in order to prove that the OBJECTIONS, so important as regards other Cottons, ARE NOW COMPLETELY OVERCOME.

TO PUBLISHERS OF CROCHET BOOKS.

MARSLAND, SON, and Co.'s Crochet Cotton has now so fully established its character, that all the leading publishers of the present day are bringing out their books to suit the numbers of their Cottons.

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FEW CLAIMS.

SOMETIMES both claims and claimant require a little consideration, and all claims want some arrangement. There are claims reasonable and claims unreasonable, but most people settle such matters to their own satisfaction. There are claims at home, and claims abroad—claims immediate, and claims remote; these severally pressing on our attention, make claims rather constant visitors—but they are very agreeable when they are profitable. It is a beautiful thing to be able to claim a good fortune, a good estate, and exemption from losses and inconveniences. Such are some claims which we briefly mention; thousands convinced of the claims of Australia on their attention, are claiming an immediate passage to the Land of Golden Realities, but let them first claim a suitable Octylt at the Establishment of E. Morra & Son, who claim the honour of more patronage than any House in the kingdom, yet they claim the lowest price for the Bust and most suitable Goods. Every one justly claims attention to their commands, and no House can more promptly and efficiently attend to Emigrants' claims than E. Morra & Son's.

The Atter required for comfort, the Drass which associates novality, elecance, and neathers, E. Mosra & Son justly claim as productions of their East and West Establishments, and their Branches, Brafford and Sheffield, Yorkshire.

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The New BEQUEME Over-Coat, designed by	n		***
E. MOSES & SON from 25s to	6	10	0
Pea Coats	0	8	6
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Overcoat from 25s. to	2	10	0
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The Bulwer, in cloth of all colours, and			
the new Melton Mowbray material, a	ı.		
neat gentlemanly style of Coat 10s. 6d. to	A)	0	0
WALKING, FISHING & SHOOTING CO	0	AT	S.
Plaid Shooting Coats from	0	6	6
Plaid Shooting Coats from The Melton Mowbray Cambridge Coat, quite			
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Fishing Coats in endless variety, suited either			
for Sporting, Gardening, or House Coat,			
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AUTUMNIAND WINTER WAISTOO	3/	VT:	S.
White Quilting (for Dress) 4s, 6d, to	0	9	6
Black Kerseymere	0	13	6
Doeskins, Tweeds, &c4s. to			6
Embroidered Clothfrom	0	10	6
A large assortment of Fancy Thibets, and a	^	19	6
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MAD MADE OF TACTORIO.				
AUTUMN AND WINTER TROUS	E	RS.		
Tweeds from 4s. 6d. to	-	33	6	
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Dress Coat	0	17	: 0	
Best quality	2	15	0.	
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Tunic and Hussar Suit from 15s, 6d, to	4	10	0	
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