

YELLOW BRICK NEXUS

VOLUME
FOUR



Adrift in New York
by Horatio Alger

Great Expectations
by Charles Dickens

Tony the Tramp
by Horatio Alger

Nexus

Volume Four

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Transcriber's Foreward

Righteous, Roguish, and Rebellious are three main traits that often come to mind when thinking about maturity. These traits represent different aspects of adulthood and how individuals navigate the complexities of life and society. These traits manifest in individuals as they mature, and they contribute to one's development as a well-rounded and responsible adult.

To begin with, righteousness is often associated with individuals who uphold exceptional moral values and principles. Righteous individuals adhere to a code of ethics and strive to do what is good and just. They are honest, trustworthy, and show integrity in their actions. This trait is essential for maturity, as it demonstrates a level of moral and ethical responsibility that is necessary for navigating the challenges of adulthood.

On the other hand, roguishness is often associated with individuals who are adventurous, daring, and unafraid to take risks. These individuals often push boundaries and challenge the status quo. While roguishness may seem like a rebellious trait, it also shows a level of confidence and independence that is important for personal growth and maturity. Roguish individuals are not afraid to step outside their comfort zones and try new things, which can lead to personal growth and development.

Rebelliousness, on the other hand, is often associated with individuals who resist authority and challenge social norms. These individuals may push back against societal expectations and question the status quo. While rebelliousness can be a negative trait, it can also be a sign of maturity as it demonstrates a willingness to stand up for what is right and to challenge injustices. Rebellious individuals are not content to simply go along with the crowd; they are willing to speak out against injustice and fight for what they believe in.

When considering these three traits together, it becomes clear that maturity is not a one-size-fits-all concept. Each individual may demonstrate varying degrees of righteousness, roguishness, and rebelliousness, depending on their personal experiences and values. However, it is the balance of these traits that ultimately leads to a well-rounded and mature individual.

A mature individual is able to uphold moral values and principles while also being willing to take risks and challenge the status quo. They are confident in their beliefs and unafraid to stand up for what is right. They are able to navigate the complexities of life and society with grace and integrity, while also remaining true to themselves and their values.

Righteousness, roguishness, and rebelliousness play crucial roles in shaping maturity. These traits represent different aspects of adulthood and how individuals navigate the complexities of life and society. By embracing these traits in a balanced way, individuals can develop into well-rounded and responsible adults who are able to make a positive impact on the world around them.

“Great Expectations,” “Adrift in New York” and “Tony the Tramp” showcase both positive and negative examples of *Righteous, Roguish Rebels* in “old school” situations that mirror those faced by everyone in the Twenty-First Century.

Please Note: Both authors, Charles Dickens and Horatio Alger, frequently use phonetic spellings to reflect the accents and social status of each character. That, out-dated spellings, including many hyphenated words, and the use of British spellings account for the frequent use of words that will appear, especially to American readers, to be misspelled.

Great Expectations

by Charles Dickens

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens is a classic coming-of-age novel set in 19th-century England. It follows the life of Pip, an orphan raised by his sister and her husband, Joe. Pip's journey from a simple village boy to a gentleman in London involves challenges, romance, and manipulation, exploring themes of ambition, social class, and moral development. The story begins with Pip encountering an escaped convict, Magwitch, in a graveyard, leading him on an adventure. Pip's life takes a turn when he is offered sponsorship for education by an unknown benefactor, whom he suspects to be Miss Havisham. Pip moves to London and becomes a gentleman, meeting influential characters along the way. Despite his social status, Pip remains disillusioned and deeply in love with Estella, Miss Havisham's adopted daughter. However, his world is shattered when he discovers who his true benefactor is. This revelation forces Pip to question his ambition and the importance of social class. Overall, Great Expectations is a powerful novel that explores human psychology, ambition, love, and the true meaning of success and happiness.

Chapter I

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister,—Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "*Also Georgiana Wife of the Above*," I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine,—who gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle,—I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence.

Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dikes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been

soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.

"Oh! Don't cut my throat, sir," I pleaded in terror. "Pray don't do it, sir."

"Tell us your name!" said the man. "Quick!"

"Pip, sir."

"Once more," said the man, staring at me. "Give it mouth!"

"Pip. Pip, sir."

"Show us where you live," said the man. "Pint out the place!"

I pointed to where our village lay, on the flat in-shore among the alder-trees and pollards, a mile or more from the church.

The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside down, and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread. When the church came to itself,—for he was so sudden and strong that he made it go head over heels before me, and I saw the steeple under my feet,—when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated on a high tombstone, trembling while he ate the bread ravenously.

"You young dog," said the man, licking his lips, "what fat cheeks you ha' got."

I believe they were fat, though I was at that time undersized for my years, and not strong.

"Darn me if I couldn't eat 'em," said the man, with a threatening shake of his head, "and if I han't half a mind to't!"

I earnestly expressed my hope that he wouldn't, and held tighter to the tombstone on which he had put me; partly, to keep myself upon it; partly, to keep myself from crying.

"Now lookee here!" said the man. "Where's your mother?"

"There, sir!" said I.

He started, made a short run, and stopped and looked over his shoulder.

"There, sir!" I timidly explained. "Also Georgiana. That's my mother."

"Oh!" said he, coming back. "And is that your father alonger your mother?"

"Yes, sir," said I; "him too; late of this parish."

"Ha!" he muttered then, considering. "Who d'ye live with,—supposin' you're kindly let to live, which I han't made up my mind about?"

"My sister, sir,—Mrs. Joe Gargery,—wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith, sir."

"Blacksmith, eh?" said he. And looked down at his leg.

After darkly looking at his leg and me several times, he came closer to my tombstone, took me by both arms, and tilted me back as far as he could hold me; so that his eyes looked most powerfully down into mine, and mine looked most helplessly up into his.

"Now lookee here," he said, "the question being whether you're to be let to live. You know what a file is?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you know what wittles is?"

"Yes, sir."

After each question he tilted me over a little more, so as to give me a greater sense of helplessness and danger.

"You get me a file." He tilted me again. "And you get me wittles." He tilted me again. "You bring 'em both to me." He tilted me again. "Or I'll have your heart and liver out." He tilted me again.

I was dreadfully frightened, and so giddy that I clung to him with both hands, and said, "If you would kindly please to let me keep upright, sir, perhaps I shouldn't be sick, and perhaps I could attend more."

He gave me a most tremendous dip and roll, so that the church jumped over its own weathercock. Then, he held me by the arms, in an upright position on the top of the stone, and went on in these fearful terms:—

"You bring me, tomorrow morning early, that file and them wittles. You bring the lot to me, at that old Battery over yonder. You do it, and you never dare to say a word or dare to make a sign concerning your having seen such a person as me, or any person sumever, and you shall be let to live. You fail, or you go from my words in any partickler, no matter how small it is, and your heart and your liver shall be tore out, roasted, and ate. Now, I ain't alone, as you may think I am. There's a young man hid with me, in comparison with which young man I am a Angel. That young man hears the words I speak. That young man has a secret way pecooliar to himself, of getting at a boy, and at his heart, and at his liver. It is in wain for a boy to attempt to hide himself from that young man. A boy may lock his door, may be warm in bed, may tuck himself up, may draw the clothes over his head, may think himself comfortable and safe, but that young man will softly creep and creep his way to him and tear him open. I am a keeping that young man from harming of you at the present moment, with great difficulty. I find it very hard to hold that young man off of your inside. Now, what do you say?"

I said that I would get him the file, and I would get him what broken bits of food I could, and I would come to him at the Battery, early in the morning.

"Say Lord strike you dead if you don't!" said the man.

I said so, and he took me down.

"Now," he pursued, "you remember what you've undertook, and you remember that young man, and you get home!"

"Goo-good night, sir," I faltered.

"Much of that!" said he, glancing about him over the cold wet flat. "I wish I was a frog. Or a eel!"

At the same time, he hugged his shuddering body in both his arms,—clasping himself, as if to hold himself together,—and limped towards the low church wall. As I saw him go, picking his way among the nettles, and among the brambles that bound the green mounds, he looked in my young eyes as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in.

When he came to the low church wall, he got over it, like a man whose legs were numbed and stiff, and then turned round to look for me. When I saw him turning, I set my face towards home, and made the best use of my legs. But presently I looked over my shoulder, and saw him going on again towards the river, still hugging himself in both arms, and picking his way with his sore feet among the great stones dropped into the marshes here and there, for stepping-places when the rains were heavy or the tide was in.

The marshes were just a long black horizontal line then, as I stopped to look after him; and the river was just another horizontal line, not nearly so broad nor yet so black; and the sky was just a row of long angry red lines and dense black lines intermixed. On the edge of the river I could faintly make out the only two black things in all the prospect that seemed to be standing upright; one of these was the beacon by which the sailors steered,—like an unhooped cask upon a pole,—an ugly thing when you were near it; the other, a gibbet, with some chains hanging to it which had once held a pirate. The man was limping on towards this latter, as if he were the pirate come to life, and come down, and going back to hook himself up again. It gave me a terrible turn when I thought so; and as I saw the cattle lifting their heads to gaze after him, I wondered whether they thought so too. I looked all round for the horrible young man, and could see no signs of him. But now I was frightened again, and ran home without stopping.



Chapter II

My sister, Mrs. Joe Gargery, was more than twenty years older than I, and had established a great reputation with herself and the neighbours because she had brought me up “by hand.” Having at that time to find out for myself what the expression meant, and knowing her to have a hard and heavy hand, and to be much in the habit of laying it upon her husband as well as upon me, I supposed that Joe Gargery and I were both brought up by hand.

She was not a good-looking woman, my sister; and I had a general impression that she must have made Joe Gargery marry her by hand. Joe was a fair man, with curls of flaxen hair on each side of his smooth face, and with eyes of such a very undecided blue that they seemed to have somehow got mixed with their own whites. He was a mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, dear fellow,—a sort of Hercules in strength, and also in weakness.

My sister, Mrs. Joe, with black hair and eyes, had such a prevailing redness of skin that I sometimes used to wonder whether it was possible she washed herself with a nutmeg-grater instead of soap. She was tall and bony, and almost always wore a coarse apron, fastened over her figure behind with two loops, and having a square impregnable bib in front, that was stuck full of pins and needles. She made it a powerful merit in herself, and a strong reproach against Joe, that she wore this apron so much. Though I really see no reason why she should have worn it at all; or why, if she did wear it at all, she should not have taken it off, every day of her life.

Joe’s forge adjoined our house, which was a wooden house, as many of the dwellings in our country were,—most of them, at that time. When I ran home from the churchyard, the forge was shut up, and Joe was sitting alone in the kitchen. Joe and I being fellow-sufferers, and having confidences as such, Joe imparted a confidence to me, the moment I raised the latch of the door and peeped in at him opposite to it, sitting in the chimney corner.

“Mrs. Joe has been out a dozen times, looking for you, Pip. And she’s out now, making it a baker’s dozen.”

“Is she?”

“Yes, Pip,” said Joe; “and what’s worse, she’s got Tickler with her.”

At this dismal intelligence, I twisted the only button on my waistcoat round and round, and looked in great depression at the fire. Tickler was a wax-ended piece of cane, worn smooth by collision with my tickled frame.

“She sot down,” said Joe, “and she got up, and she made a grab at Tickler, and she Ram-paged out. That’s what she did,” said Joe, slowly clearing the fire between the lower bars with the poker, and looking at it; “she Ram-paged out, Pip.”

“Has she been gone long, Joe?” I always treated him as a larger species of child, and as no more than my equal.

“Well,” said Joe, glancing up at the Dutch clock, “she’s been on the Ram-page, this last spell, about five minutes, Pip. She’s a-coming! Get behind the door, old chap, and have the jack-towel betwixt you.”

I took the advice. My sister, Mrs. Joe, throwing the door wide open, and finding an obstruction behind it, immediately divined the cause, and applied Tickler to its further investigation. She concluded by throwing me—I often served as a connubial missile—at Joe, who, glad to get hold of me on any terms, passed me on into the chimney and quietly fenced me up there with his great leg.

“Where have you been, you young monkey?” said Mrs. Joe, stamping her foot. “Tell me directly what you’ve been doing to wear me away with fret and fright and worrit, or I’d have you out of that corner if you was fifty Pips, and he was five hundred Gargerys.”

“I have only been to the churchyard,” said I, from my stool, crying and rubbing myself.

“Churchyard!” repeated my sister. “If it warn’t for me you’d have been to the churchyard long ago, and stayed there. Who brought you up by hand?”

“You did,” said I.

“And why did I do it, I should like to know?” exclaimed my sister.

I whimpered, “I don’t know.”

“I don’t!” said my sister. “I’d never do it again! I know that. I may truly say I’ve never had this apron of mine off since born you were. It’s bad enough to be a blacksmith’s wife (and him a Gargery) without being your mother.”

My thoughts strayed from that question as I looked disconsolately at the fire. For the fugitive out on the marshes with the ironed leg, the mysterious young man, the file, the food, and the dreadful pledge I was under to commit a larceny on those sheltering premises, rose before me in the avenging coals.

“Hah!” said Mrs. Joe, restoring Tickler to his station. “Churchyard, indeed! You may well say churchyard, you two.” One of us, by the by, had not said it at all. “You’ll drive *me* to the churchyard betwixt you, one of these days, and O, a pr-r-recious pair you’d be without me!”

As she applied herself to set the tea-things, Joe peeped down at me over his leg, as if he were mentally casting me and himself up, and calculating what kind of pair we practically should make, under the grievous circumstances foreshadowed. After that, he sat feeling his right-side flaxen curls and whisker, and following Mrs. Joe about with his blue eyes, as his manner always was at squally times.

My sister had a trenchant way of cutting our bread and butter for us, that never varied. First, with her left hand

she jammed the loaf hard and fast against her bib,—where it sometimes got a pin into it, and sometimes a needle, which we afterwards got into our mouths. Then she took some butter (not too much) on a knife and spread it on the loaf, in an apothecary kind of way, as if she were making a plaster,—using both sides of the knife with a slapping dexterity, and trimming and moulding the butter off round the crust. Then, she gave the knife a final smart wipe on the edge of the plaster, and then sawed a very thick round off the loaf: which she finally, before separating from the loaf, hewed into two halves, of which Joe got one, and I the other.

On the present occasion, though I was hungry, I dared not eat my slice. I felt that I must have something in reserve for my dreadful acquaintance, and his ally the still more dreadful young man. I knew Mrs. Joe's housekeeping to be of the strictest kind, and that my larcenous researches might find nothing available in the safe. Therefore I resolved to put my hunk of bread and butter down the leg of my trousers.

The effort of resolution necessary to the achievement of this purpose I found to be quite awful. It was as if I had to make up my mind to leap from the top of a high house, or plunge into a great depth of water. And it was made the more difficult by the unconscious Joe. In our already-mentioned free-masonry as fellow-sufferers, and in his good-natured companionship with me, it was our evening habit to compare the way we bit through our slices, by silently holding them up to each other's admiration now and then,—which stimulated us to new exertions. Tonight, Joe several times invited me, by the display of his fast diminishing slice, to enter upon our usual friendly competition; but he found me, each time, with my yellow mug of tea on one knee, and my untouched bread and butter on the other. At last, I desperately considered that the thing I contemplated must be done, and that it had best be done in the least improbable manner consistent with the circumstances. I took advantage of a moment when Joe had just looked at me, and got my bread and butter down my leg.

Joe was evidently made uncomfortable by what he supposed to be my loss of appetite, and took a thoughtful bite out of his slice, which he didn't seem to enjoy. He turned it about in his mouth much longer than usual, pondering over it a good deal, and after all gulped it down like a pill. He was about to take another bite, and had just got his head on one side for a good purchase on it, when his eye fell on me, and he saw that my bread and butter was gone.

The wonder and consternation with which Joe stopped on the threshold of his bite and stared at me, were too evident to escape my sister's observation.

"What's the matter *now*?" said she, smartly, as she put down her cup.

"I say, you know!" muttered Joe, shaking his head at me in very serious remonstrance. "Pip, old chap! You'll do yourself a mischief. It'll stick somewhere. You can't have chawed it, Pip."

"What's the matter now?" repeated my sister, more sharply than before.

"If you can cough any trifle on it up, Pip, I'd recommend you to do it," said Joe, all aghast. "Manners is manners, but still your elth's your elth."

By this time, my sister was quite desperate, so she pounced on Joe, and, taking him by the two whiskers, knocked his head for a little while against the wall behind him, while I sat in the corner, looking guiltily on.

"Now, perhaps you'll mention what's the matter," said my sister, out of breath, "you staring great stuck pig."

Joe looked at her in a helpless way, then took a helpless bite, and looked at me again.

"You know, Pip," said Joe, solemnly, with his last bite in his cheek, and speaking in a confidential voice, as if we two were quite alone, "you and me is always friends, and I'd be the last to tell upon you, any time. But such a—" he moved his chair and looked about the floor between us, and then again at me—"such a most uncommon Bolt as that!"

"Been bolting his food, has he?" cried my sister.

"You know, old chap," said Joe, looking at me, and not at Mrs. Joe, with his bite still in his cheek, "I Bolted, myself, when I was your age—frequent—and as a boy I've been among a many Bolters; but I never see your Bolting equal yet, Pip, and it's a mercy you ain't Bolted dead."

My sister made a dive at me, and fished me up by the hair, saying nothing more than the awful words, "You come along and be dosed."

Some medical beast had revived Tar-water in those days as a fine medicine, and Mrs. Joe always kept a supply of it in the cupboard; having a belief in its virtues correspondent to its nastiness. At the best of times, so much of this elixir was administered to me as a choice restorative, that I was conscious of going about, smelling like a new fence. On this particular evening the urgency of my case demanded a pint of this mixture, which was poured down my throat, for my greater comfort, while Mrs. Joe held my head under her arm, as a boot would be held in a bootjack. Joe got off with half a pint; but was made to swallow that (much to his disturbance, as he sat slowly munching and meditating before the fire), "because he had had a turn." Judging from myself, I should say he certainly had a turn afterwards, if he had had none before.

Conscience is a dreadful thing when it accuses man or boy; but when, in the case of a boy, that secret burden co-operates with another secret burden down the leg of his

trousers, it is (as I can testify) a great punishment. The guilty knowledge that I was going to rob Mrs. Joe—I never thought I was going to rob Joe, for I never thought of any of the housekeeping property as his—united to the necessity of always keeping one hand on my bread and butter as I sat, or when I was ordered about the kitchen on any small errand, almost drove me out of my mind. Then, as the marsh winds made the fire glow and flare, I thought I heard the voice outside, of the man with the iron on his leg who had sworn me to secrecy, declaring that he couldn't and wouldn't starve until to-morrow, but must be fed now. At other times, I thought, What if the young man who was with so much difficulty restrained from imbruining his hands in me should yield to a constitutional impatience, or should mistake the time, and should think himself accredited to my heart and liver to-night, instead of tomorrow! If ever anybody's hair stood on end with terror, mine must have done so then. But, perhaps, nobody's ever did?

It was Christmas Eve, and I had to stir the pudding for next day, with a copper-stick, from seven to eight by the Dutch clock. I tried it with the load upon my leg (and that made me think afresh of the man with the load on *his* leg), and found the tendency of exercise to bring the bread and butter out at my ankle, quite unmanageable. Happily I slipped away, and deposited that part of my conscience in my garret bedroom.

"Hark!" said I, when I had done my stirring, and was taking a final warm in the chimney corner before being sent up to bed; "was that great guns, Joe?"

"Ah!" said Joe. "There's another convict off."

"What does that mean, Joe?" said I.

Mrs. Joe, who always took explanations upon herself, said, snappishly, "Escaped. Escaped." Admin-istering the definition like Tar-water.

While Mrs. Joe sat with her head bending over her needlework, I put my mouth into the forms of saying to Joe, "What's a convict?" Joe put *his* mouth into the forms of returning such a highly elaborate answer, that I could make out nothing of it but the single word "Pip."

"There was a convict off last night," said Joe, aloud, "after sunset-gun. And they fired warning of him. And now it appears they're firing warning of another."

"*Who's* firing?" said I.

"Drat that boy," interposed my sister, frowning at me over her work, "what a questioner he is. Ask no questions, and you'll be told no lies."

It was not very polite to herself, I thought, to imply that I should be told lies by her even if I did ask questions. But she never was polite unless there was company.

At this point Joe greatly augmented my curiosity by taking the utmost pains to open his mouth very wide, and to put it into the form of a word that looked to me like

"sulks." Therefore, I naturally pointed to Mrs. Joe, and put my mouth into the form of saying, "her?" But Joe wouldn't hear of that, at all, and again opened his mouth very wide, and shook the form of a most emphatic word out of it. But I could make nothing of the word.

"Mrs. Joe," said I, as a last resort, "I should like to know—if you wouldn't much mind—where the firing comes from?"

"Lord bless the boy!" exclaimed my sister, as if she didn't quite mean that but rather the contrary. "From the Hulks!"

"Oh-h!" said I, looking at Joe. "Hulks!"

Joe gave a reproachful cough, as much as to say, "Well, I told you so."

"And please, what's Hulks?" said I.

"That's the way with this boy!" exclaimed my sister, pointing me out with her needle and thread, and shaking her head at me. "Answer him one question, and he'll ask you a dozen directly. Hulks are prison-ships, right 'cross th' meshes." We always used that name for marshes, in our country.

"I wonder who's put into prison-ships, and why they're put there?" said I, in a general way, and with quiet desperation.

It was too much for Mrs. Joe, who immediately rose. "I tell you what, young fellow," said she, "I didn't bring you up by hand to badger people's lives out. It would be blame to me and not praise, if I had. People are put in the Hulks because they murder, and because they rob, and forge, and do all sorts of bad; and they always begin by asking questions. Now, you get along to bed!"

I was never allowed a candle to light me to bed, and, as I went upstairs in the dark, with my head tingling,—from Mrs. Joe's thimble having played the tambourine upon it, to accompany her last words,—I felt fearfully sensible of the great convenience that the hulks were handy for me. I was clearly on my way there. I had begun by asking questions, and I was going to rob Mrs. Joe.

Since that time, which is far enough away now, I have often thought that few people know what secrecy there is in the young under terror. No matter how unreasonable the terror, so that it be terror. I was in mortal terror of the young man who wanted my heart and liver; I was in mortal terror of my interlocutor with the iron leg; I was in mortal terror of myself, from whom an awful promise had been extracted; I had no hope of deliverance through my all-powerful sister, who repulsed me at every turn; I am afraid to think of what I might have done on requirement, in the secrecy of my terror.

If I slept at all that night, it was only to imagine myself drifting down the river on a strong spring-tide, to the Hulks; a ghostly pirate calling out to me through a speaking-trumpet, as I passed the gibbet-station, that I

had better come ashore and be hanged there at once, and not put it off. I was afraid to sleep, even if I had been inclined, for I knew that at the first faint dawn of morning I must rob the pantry. There was no doing it in the night, for there was no getting a light by easy friction then; to have got one I must have struck it out of flint and steel, and have made a noise like the very pirate himself rattling his chains.

As soon as the great black velvet pall outside my little window was shot with grey, I got up and went downstairs; every board upon the way, and every crack in every board calling after me, "Stop thief!" and "Get up, Mrs. Joe!" In the pantry, which was far more abundantly supplied than usual, owing to the season, I was very much alarmed by a hare hanging up by the heels, whom I rather thought I caught, when my back was half turned, winking. I had no time for verification, no time for selection, no time for anything, for I had no time to spare. I stole some bread, some rind of cheese, about half a jar of mincemeat (which I tied up in my pocket-handkerchief with my last night's slice), some brandy from a stone bottle (which I decanted into a glass bottle I had secretly used for making that intoxicating fluid, Spanish-liquorice-water, up in my room: diluting the stone bottle from a jug in the kitchen cupboard), a meat bone with very little on it, and a beautiful round compact pork pie. I was nearly going away without the pie, but I was tempted to mount upon a shelf, to look what it was that was put away so carefully in a covered earthenware dish in a corner, and I found it was the pie, and I took it in the hope that it was not intended for early use, and would not be missed for some time.

There was a door in the kitchen, communicating with the forge; I unlocked and unbolted that door, and got a file from among Joe's tools. Then I put the fastenings as I had found them, opened the door at which I had entered when I ran home last night, shut it, and ran for the misty marshes.

Chapter III

It was a rimy morning, and very damp. I had seen the damp lying on the outside of my little window, as if some goblin had been crying there all night, and using the window for a pocket-handkerchief. Now, I saw the damp lying on the bare hedges and spare grass, like a coarser sort of spiders' webs; hanging itself from twig to twig and blade to blade. On every rail and gate,

wet lay clammy, and the marsh mist was so thick, that the wooden finger on the post directing people to our village—a direction which they never accepted, for they never came there—was invisible to me until I was quite close under it. Then, as I looked up at it, while it dripped, it seemed to my oppressed conscience like a phantom devoting me to the Hulks.

The mist was heavier yet when I got out upon the

marshes, so that instead of my running at everything, everything seemed to run at me. This was very disagreeable to a guilty mind. The gates and dikes and banks came bursting at me through the mist, as if they cried as plainly as could be, "A boy with somebody else's pork pie! Stop him!" The cattle came upon me with like suddenness, staring out of their eyes, and steaming out of their nostrils, "Halloa, young thief!" One black ox, with a white cravat on,—who even had to my awakened conscience something of a clerical air,—fixed me so obstinately with his eyes, and moved his blunt head round in such an accusatory manner as I moved round, that I blubbered out to him, "I couldn't help it, sir! It wasn't for myself I took it!" Upon which he put down his head, blew a cloud of smoke out of his nose, and vanished with a kick-up of his hind-legs and a flourish of his tail.

All this time, I was getting on towards the river; but however fast I went, I couldn't warm my feet, to which the damp cold seemed riveted, as the iron was riveted to the leg of the man I was running to meet. I knew my way to the Battery, pretty straight, for I had been down there on a Sunday with Joe, and Joe, sitting on an old gun, had told me that when I was 'prentice to him, regularly bound, we would have such Larks there! However, in the confusion of the mist, I found myself at last too far to the right, and consequently had to try back along the river-side, on the bank of loose stones above the mud and the stakes that staked the tide out. Making my way along here with all despatch, I had just crossed a ditch which I knew to be very near the Battery, and had just scrambled up the mound beyond the ditch, when I saw the man sitting before me. His back was towards me, and he had his arms folded, and was nodding forward, heavy with sleep.

I thought he would be more glad if I came upon him with his breakfast, in that unexpected manner, so I went forward softly and touched him on the shoulder. He instantly jumped up, and it was not the same man, but another man!

And yet this man was dressed in coarse grey, too, and had a great iron on his leg, and was lame, and hoarse, and cold, and was everything that the other man was; except that he had not the same face, and had a flat broad-brimmed low-crowned felt hat on. All this I saw in a moment, for I had only a moment to see it in: he swore an oath at me, made a hit at me,—it was a round weak blow that missed me and almost knocked himself down, for it made him stumble,—and then he ran into the mist, stumbling twice as he went, and I lost him.

"It's the young man!" I thought, feeling my heart shoot as I identified him. I dare say I should have felt a pain in my liver, too, if I had known where it was.

I was soon at the Battery after that, and there was the right man,—hugging himself and limping to and fro, as if he had never all night left off hugging and limping,—waiting for me. He was awfully cold, to be sure. I half

expected to see him drop down before my face and die of deadly cold. His eyes looked so awfully hungry too, that when I handed him the file and he laid it down on the grass, it occurred to me he would have tried to eat it, if he had not seen my bundle. He did not turn me upside down this time to get at what I had, but left me right side upwards while I opened the bundle and emptied my pockets.

"What's in the bottle, boy?" said he.

"Brandy," said I.

He was already handing mincemeat down his throat in the most curious manner,—more like a man who was putting it away somewhere in a violent hurry, than a man who was eating it,—but he left off to take some of the liquor. He shivered all the while so violently, that it was quite as much as he could do to keep the neck of the bottle between his teeth, without biting it off.

"I think you have got the ague," said I.

"I'm much of your opinion, boy," said he.

"It's bad about here," I told him. "You've been lying out on the meshes, and they're dreadful aguish. Rheumatic too."

"I'll eat my breakfast afore they're the death of me," said he. "I'd do that, if I was going to be strung up to that there gallows as there is over there, directly afterwards. I'll beat the shivers so far, I'll bet you."

He was gobbling mincemeat, meatbone, bread, cheese, and pork pie, all at once: staring distrustfully while he did so at the mist all round us, and often stopping—even stopping his jaws—to listen. Some real or fancied sound, some clink upon the river or breathing of beast upon the marsh, now gave him a start, and he said, suddenly,—

"You're not a deceiving imp? You brought no one with you?"

"No, sir! No!"

"Nor giv' no one the office to follow you?"

"No!"

"Well," said he, "I believe you. You'd be but a fierce young hound indeed, if at your time of life you could help to hunt a wretched warmint hunted as near death and dunghill as this poor wretched warmint is!"

Something clicked in his throat as if he had works in him like a clock, and was going to strike. And he smeared his ragged rough sleeve over his eyes.

Pitying his desolation, and watching him as he gradually settled down upon the pie, I made bold to say, "I am glad you enjoy it."

"Did you speak?"

"I said I was glad you enjoyed it."

"Thankee, my boy. I do."

I had often watched a large dog of ours eating his food; and I now noticed a decided similarity between the dog's way of eating, and the man's. The man took strong sharp sudden bites, just like the dog. He swallowed, or rather snapped up, every mouthful, too soon and too fast; and he looked sideways here and there while he ate, as if he thought there was danger in every direction of somebody's coming to take the pie away. He was altogether too unsettled in his mind over it, to appreciate it comfortably I thought, or to have anybody to dine with him, without making a chop with his jaws at the visitor. In all of which particulars he was very like the dog.

"I am afraid you won't leave any of it for him," said I, timidly; after a silence during which I had hesitated as to the politeness of making the remark. "There's no more to be got where that came from." It was the certainty of this fact that impelled me to offer the hint.

"Leave any for him? Who's him?" said my friend, stopping in his crunching of pie-crust.

"The young man. That you spoke of. That was hid with you."

"Oh ah!" he returned, with something like a gruff laugh. "Him? Yes, yes! *He* don't want no wittles."

"I thought he looked as if he did," said I.

The man stopped eating, and regarded me with the keenest scrutiny and the greatest surprise.

"Looked? When?"

"Just now."

"Where?"

"Yonder," said I, pointing; "over there, where I found him nodding asleep, and thought it was you."

He held me by the collar and stared at me so, that I began to think his first idea about cutting my throat had revived.

"Dressed like you, you know, only with a hat," I explained, trembling; "and—and"—I was very anxious to put this delicately—"and with—the same reason for wanting to borrow a file. Didn't you hear the cannon last night?"

"Then there *was* firing!" he said to himself.

"I wonder you shouldn't have been sure of that," I returned, "for we heard it up at home, and that's farther away, and we were shut in besides."

"Why, see now?" said he. "When a man's alone on these flats, with a light head and a light stomach, perishing of cold and want, he hears nothin' all night, but guns firing, and voices calling. Hears? He sees the soldiers, with their red coats lighted up by the torches carried afore, closing in round him. Hears his number called, hears himself challenged, hears the rattle of the muskets, hears the orders 'Make ready! Present! Cover him steady, men!' and

is laid hands on—and there's nothin'! Why, if I see one pursuing party last night—coming up in order, Damn 'em, with their tramp, tramp—I see a hundred. And as to firing! Why, I see the mist shake with the cannon, arter it was broad day,—But this man"; he had said all the rest, as if he had forgotten my being there; "did you notice anything in him?"

"He had a badly bruised face," said I, recalling what I hardly knew I knew.

"Not here?" exclaimed the man, striking his left cheek mercilessly, with the flat of his hand.

"Yes, there!"

"Where is he?" He crammed what little food was left, into the breast of his grey jacket. "Show me the way he went. I'll pull him down, like a bloodhound. Curse this iron on my sore leg! Give us hold of the file, boy."

I indicated in what direction the mist had shrouded the other man, and he looked up at it for an instant. But he was down on the rank wet grass, filing at his iron like a madman, and not minding me or minding his own leg, which had an old chafe upon it and was bloody, but which he handled as roughly as if it had no more feeling in it than the file. I was very much afraid of him again, now that he had worked himself into this fierce hurry, and I was likewise very much afraid of keeping away from home any longer. I told him I must go, but he took no notice, so I thought the best thing I could do was to slip off. The last I saw of him, his head was bent over his knee and he was working hard at his fetter, muttering impatient imprecations at it and at his leg. The last I heard of him, I stopped in the mist to listen, and the file was still going.

Chapter IV

I fully expected to find a Constable in the kitchen, waiting to take me up. But not only was there no Constable there, but no discovery had yet been made of the robbery. Mrs. Joe was prodigiously busy in getting the house ready for the festivities of the day, and Joe had been put upon the kitchen doorstep to keep him out of the dust-pan,—an article into which his destiny always led him, sooner or later, when my sister was vigorously reaping the floors of her establishment.

"And where the deuce ha' *you* been?" was Mrs. Joe's Christmas salutation, when I and my conscience showed ourselves.

I said I had been down to hear the Carols. "Ah! well!" observed Mrs. Joe. "You might ha' done worse." Not a doubt of that I thought.

"Perhaps if I warn't a blacksmith's wife, and (what's the same thing) a slave with her apron never off, I should have been to hear the Carols," said Mrs. Joe. "I'm rather partial to Carols, myself, and that's the best of reasons for my never hearing any."

Joe, who had ventured into the kitchen after me as the dustpan had retired before us, drew the back of his hand across his nose with a conciliatory air, when Mrs. Joe darted a look at him, and, when her eyes were withdrawn, secretly crossed his two forefingers, and exhibited them to me, as our token that Mrs. Joe was in a cross temper. This was so much her normal state, that Joe and I would often, for weeks together, be, as to our fingers, like monumental Crusaders as to their legs.

We were to have a superb dinner, consisting of a leg of pickled pork and greens, and a pair of roast stuffed fowls. A handsome mince-pie had been made yesterday morning (which accounted for the mincemeat not being missed), and the pudding was already on the boil. These extensive arrangements occasioned us to be cut off unceremoniously in respect of breakfast; "for I ain't," said Mrs. Joe,—“I ain't a-going to have no formal cramming and busting and washing up now, with what I've got before me, I promise you!"

So, we had our slices served out, as if we were two thousand troops on a forced march instead of a man and boy at home; and we took gulps of milk and water, with apologetic countenances, from a jug on the dresser. In the meantime, Mrs. Joe put clean white curtains up, and tacked a new flowered flounce across the wide chimney to replace the old one, and uncovered the little state parlour across the passage, which was never uncovered at any other time, but passed the rest of the year in a cool haze of silver paper, which even extended to the four little white crockery poodles on the mantel-shelf, each with a black nose and a basket of flowers in his mouth, and each the counterpart of the other. Mrs. Joe was a very clean housekeeper, but had an exquisite art of making her cleanliness more uncomfortable and unacceptable than dirt itself. Cleanliness is next to Godliness, and some people do the same by their religion.

My sister, having so much to do, was going to church vicariously, that is to say, Joe and I were going. In his working-clothes, Joe was a well-knit characteristic-looking blacksmith; in his holiday clothes, he was more like a scarecrow in good circumstances, than anything else. Nothing that he wore then fitted him or seemed to belong to him; and everything that he wore then grazed him. On the present festive occasion he emerged from his room, when the blithe bells were going, the picture of misery, in a full suit of Sunday penitentials. As to me, I think my sister must have had some general idea that I was a young offender whom an Accoucheur Policeman had taken up (on my birthday) and delivered over to her, to be dealt with according to the outraged majesty of the law. I was always treated as if I had insisted on being born in opposition to the dictates of reason, religion, and morality, and against the dissuading arguments of my best friends. Even when I was taken to have a new suit of clothes, the tailor had orders to make them like a kind of

Reformatory, and on no account to let me have the free use of my limbs.

Joe and I going to church, therefore, must have been a moving spectacle for compassionate minds. Yet, what I suffered outside was nothing to what I underwent within. The terrors that had assailed me whenever Mrs. Joe had gone near the pantry, or out of the room, were only to be equalled by the remorse with which my mind dwelt on what my hands had done. Under the weight of my wicked secret, I pondered whether the Church would be powerful enough to shield me from the vengeance of the terrible young man, if I divulged to that establishment. I conceived the idea that the time when the banns were read and when the clergyman said, "Ye are now to declare it!" would be the time for me to rise and propose a private conference in the vestry. I am far from being sure that I might not have astonished our small congregation by resorting to this extreme measure, but for its being Christmas Day and no Sunday.

Mr. Wopsle, the clerk at church, was to dine with us; and Mr. Hubble the wheelwright and Mrs. Hubble; and Uncle Pumblechook (Joe's uncle, but Mrs. Joe appropriated him), who was a well-to-do cornchandler in the nearest town, and drove his own chaise-cart. The dinner hour was half-past one. When Joe and I got home, we found the table laid, and Mrs. Joe dressed, and the dinner dressing, and the front door unlocked (it never was at any other time) for the company to enter by, and everything most splendid. And still, not a word of the robbery.

The time came, without bringing with it any relief to my feelings, and the company came. Mr. Wopsle, united to a Roman nose and a large shining bald forehead, had a deep voice which he was uncommonly proud of; indeed it was understood among his acquaintance that if you could only give him his head, he would read the clergyman into fits; he himself confessed that if the Church was "thrown open," meaning to competition, he would not despair of making his mark in it. The Church not being "thrown open," he was, as I have said, our clerk. But he punished the Amens tremendously; and when he gave out the psalm,—always giving the whole verse,—he looked all round the congregation first, as much as to say, "You have heard my friend overhead; oblige me with your opinion of this style!"

I opened the door to the company,—making believe that it was a habit of ours to open that door,—and I opened it first to Mr. Wopsle, next to Mr. and Mrs. Hubble, and last of all to Uncle Pumblechook. N.B. *I* was not allowed to call him uncle, under the severest penalties.

"Mrs. Joe," said Uncle Pumblechook, a large hard-breathing middle-aged slow man, with a mouth like a fish, dull staring eyes, and sandy hair standing upright on his head, so that he looked as if he had just been all but choked, and had that moment come to, "I have brought

you as the compliments of the season—I have brought you, Mum, a bottle of sherry wine—and I have brought you, Mum, a bottle of port wine."

Every Christmas Day he presented himself, as a profound novelty, with exactly the same words, and carrying the two bottles like dumb-bells. Every Christmas Day, Mrs. Joe replied, as she now replied, "O, Un—cle Pum—ble—chook! This *is* kind!" Every Christmas Day, he retorted, as he now retorted, "It's no more than your merits. And now are you all bobbish, and how's Sixpennorth of halfpence?" meaning me.

We dined on these occasions in the kitchen, and adjourned, for the nuts and oranges and apples to the parlour; which was a change very like Joe's change from his working-clothes to his Sunday dress. My sister was uncommonly lively on the present occasion, and indeed was generally more gracious in the society of Mrs. Hubble than in other company. I remember Mrs. Hubble as a little curly sharp-edged person in sky-blue, who held a conventionally juvenile position, because she had married Mr. Hubble,—I don't know at what remote period,—when she was much younger than he. I remember Mr. Hubble as a tough, high-shouldered, stooping old man, of a sawdusty fragrance, with his legs extraordinarily wide apart: so that in my short days I always saw some miles of open country between them when I met him coming up the lane.

Among this good company I should have felt myself, even if I hadn't robbed the pantry, in a false position. Not because I was squeezed in at an acute angle of the tablecloth, with the table in my chest, and the Pumblechookian elbow in my eye, nor because I was not allowed to speak (I didn't want to speak), nor because I was regaled with the scaly tips of the drumsticks of the fowls, and with those obscure corners of pork of which the pig, when living, had had the least reason to be vain. No; I should not have minded that, if they would only have left me alone. But they wouldn't leave me alone. They seemed to think the opportunity lost, if they failed to point the conversation at me, every now and then, and stick the point into me. I might have been an unfortunate little bull in a Spanish arena, I got so smartingly touched up by these moral goads.

It began the moment we sat down to dinner. Mr. Wopsle said grace with theatrical declamation,—as it now appears to me, something like a religious cross of the Ghost in Hamlet with Richard the Third,—and ended with the very proper aspiration that we might be truly grateful. Upon which my sister fixed me with her eye, and said, in a low reproachful voice, "Do you hear that? Be grateful."

"Especially," said Mr. Pumblechook, "be grateful, boy, to them which brought you up by hand."

Mrs. Hubble shook her head, and contemplating me

with a mournful presentiment that I should come to no good, asked, "Why is it that the young are never grateful?" This moral mystery seemed too much for the company until Mr. Hubble tersely solved it by saying, "Naterally wicious." Everybody then murmured "True!" and looked at me in a particularly unpleasant and personal manner.

Joe's station and influence were something feebler (if possible) when there was company than when there was none. But he always aided and comforted me when he could, in some way of his own, and he always did so at dinner-time by giving me gravy, if there were any. There being plenty of gravy to-day, Joe spooned into my plate, at this point, about half a pint.

A little later on in the dinner, Mr. Wopsle reviewed the sermon with some severity, and intimated—in the usual hypothetical case of the Church being "thrown open"—what kind of sermon *he* would have given them. After favouring them with some heads of that discourse, he remarked that he considered the subject of the day's homily, ill chosen; which was the less excusable, he added, when there were so many subjects "going about."

"True again," said Uncle Pumblechook. "You've hit it, sir! Plenty of subjects going about, for them that know how to put salt upon their tails. That's what's wanted. A man needn't go far to find a subject, if he's ready with his salt-box." Mr. Pumblechook added, after a short interval of reflection, "Look at Pork alone. There's a subject! If you want a subject, look at Pork!"

"True, sir. Many a moral for the young," returned Mr. Wopsle,—and I knew he was going to lug me in, before he said it; "might be deduced from that text."

("You listen to this,") said my sister to me, in a severe parenthesis.

Joe gave me some more gravy.

"Swine," pursued Mr. Wopsle, in his deepest voice, and pointing his fork at my blushes, as if he were mentioning my Christian name,—"*swine* were the companions of the prodigal. The gluttony of *Swine* is put before us, as an example to the young." (I thought this pretty well in him who had been praising up the pork for being so plump and juicy.) "What is detestable in a pig is more detestable in a boy."

"Or girl," suggested Mr. Hubble.

"Of course, or girl, Mr. Hubble," assented Mr. Wopsle, rather irritably, "but there is no girl present."

"Besides," said Mr. Pumblechook, turning sharp on me, "think what you've got to be grateful for. If you'd been born a Squeaker—"

"He *was*, if ever a child was," said my sister, most emphatically.

Joe gave me some more gravy.

"Well, but I mean a four-footed Squeaker," said Mr.

Pumblechook. "If you had been born such, would you have been here now? Not you—"

"Unless in that form," said Mr. Wopsle, nodding towards the dish.

"But I don't mean in that form, sir," returned Mr. Pumblechook, who had an objection to being interrupted; "I mean, enjoying himself with his elders and betters, and improving himself with their conversation, and rolling in the lap of luxury. Would he have been doing that? No, he wouldn't. And what would have been your destination?" turning on me again. "You would have been disposed of for so many shillings according to the market price of the article, and Dunstable the butcher would have come up to you as you lay in your straw, and he would have whipped you under his left arm, and with his right he would have tucked up his frock to get a penknife from out of his waistcoat-pocket, and he would have shed your blood and had your life. No bringing up by hand then. Not a bit of it!"

Joe offered me more gravy, which I was afraid to take.

"He was a world of trouble to you, ma'am," said Mrs. Hubble, commiserating my sister.

"Trouble?" echoed my sister; "trouble?" and then entered on a fearful catalogue of all the illnesses I had been guilty of, and all the acts of sleeplessness I had committed, and all the high places I had tumbled from, and all the low places I had tumbled into, and all the injuries I had done myself, and all the times she had wished me in my grave, and I had contumaciously refused to go there.

I think the Romans must have aggravated one another very much, with their noses. Perhaps, they became the restless people they were, in consequence. Anyhow, Mr. Wopsle's Roman nose so aggravated me, during the recital of my misdemeanours, that I should have liked to pull it until he howled. But, all I had endured up to this time was nothing in comparison with the awful feelings that took possession of me when the pause was broken which ensued upon my sister's recital, and in which pause everybody had looked at me (as I felt painfully conscious) with indignation and abhorrence.

"Yet," said Mr. Pumblechook, leading the company gently back to the theme from which they had strayed, "Pork—regarded as biled—is rich, too; ain't it?"

"Have a little brandy, uncle," said my sister.

O Heavens, it had come at last! He would find it was weak, he would say it was weak, and I was lost! I held tight to the leg of the table under the cloth, with both hands, and awaited my fate.

My sister went for the stone bottle, came back with the stone bottle, and poured his brandy out: no one else taking any. The wretched man trifled with his glass,—took it up, looked at it through the light, put it down,—

prolonged my misery. All this time Mrs. Joe and Joe were briskly clearing the table for the pie and pudding.

I couldn't keep my eyes off him. Always holding tight by the leg of the table with my hands and feet, I saw the miserable creature finger his glass playfully, take it up, smile, throw his head back, and drink the brandy off. Instantly afterwards, the company were seized with unspeakable consternation, owing to his springing to his feet, turning round several times in an appalling spasmodic whooping-cough dance, and rushing out at the door; he then became visible through the window, violently plunging and expectorating, making the most hideous faces, and apparently out of his mind.

I held on tight, while Mrs. Joe and Joe ran to him. I didn't know how I had done it, but I had no doubt I had murdered him somehow. In my dreadful situation, it was a relief when he was brought back, and surveying the company all round as if *they* had disagreed with him, sank down into his chair with the one significant gasp, "Tar!"

I had filled up the bottle from the tar-water jug. I knew he would be worse by and by. I moved the table, like a Medium of the present day, by the vigor of my unseen hold upon it.

"Tar!" cried my sister, in amazement. "Why, how ever could Tar come there?"

But, Uncle Pumblechook, who was omnipotent in that kitchen, wouldn't hear the word, wouldn't hear of the subject, imperiously waved it all away with his hand, and asked for hot gin and water. My sister, who had begun to be alarmingly meditative, had to employ herself actively in getting the gin, the hot water, the sugar, and the lemon-peel, and mixing them. For the time being at least, I was saved. I still held on to the leg of the table, but clutched it now with the fervor of gratitude.

By degrees, I became calm enough to release my grasp and partake of pudding. Mr. Pumblechook partook of pudding. All partook of pudding. The course terminated, and Mr. Pumblechook had begun to beam under the genial influence of gin and water. I began to think I should get over the day, when my sister said to Joe, "Clean plates,—cold."

I clutched the leg of the table again immediately, and pressed it to my bosom as if it had been the companion of my youth and friend of my soul. I foresaw what was coming, and I felt that this time I really was gone.

"You must taste," said my sister, addressing the guests with her best grace—"you must taste, to finish with, such a delightful and delicious present of Uncle Pumblechook's!"

Must they! Let them not hope to taste it!

"You must know," said my sister, rising, "it's a pie; a savory pork pie."

The company murmured their compliments. Uncle

Pumblechook, sensible of having deserved well of his fellow-creatures, said,—quite vivaciously, all things considered,—“Well, Mrs. Joe, we'll do our best endeavours; let us have a cut at this same pie.”

My sister went out to get it. I heard her steps proceed to the pantry. I saw Mr. Pumblechook balance his knife. I saw reawakening appetite in the Roman nostrils of Mr. Wopsle. I heard Mr. Hubble remark

that “a bit of savory pork pie would lay atop of anything you could mention, and do no harm,” and I heard Joe say, “You shall have some, Pip.” I have never been absolutely certain whether I uttered a shrill yell of terror, merely in spirit, or in the bodily hearing of the company. I felt that I could bear no more, and that I must run away. I released the leg of the table, and ran for my life.

But I ran no farther than the house door, for there I ran head-foremost into a party of soldiers with their muskets, one of whom held out a pair of handcuffs to me, saying, “Here you are, look sharp, come on!”

Chapter V

The apparition of a file of soldiers ringing down the but-ends of their loaded muskets on our door-step, caused the dinner-party to rise from table in confusion, and caused Mrs. Joe re-entering the kitchen empty-handed, to stop short and stare, in her wondering lament of “Gracious goodness gracious me, what's gone—with the —pie!”

The sergeant and I were in the kitchen when Mrs. Joe stood staring; at which crisis I partially recovered the use of my senses. It was the sergeant who had spoken to me, and he was now looking round at the company, with his handcuffs invitingly extended towards them in his right hand, and his left on my shoulder.

“Excuse me, ladies and gentleman,” said the sergeant, “but as I have mentioned at the door to this smart young shaver,” (which he hadn't), “I am on a chase in the name of the king, and I want the blacksmith.”

“And pray what might you want with *him*?” retorted my sister, quick to resent his being wanted at all.

“Missis,” returned the gallant sergeant, “speaking for myself, I should reply, the honour and pleasure of his fine wife's acquaintance; speaking for the king, I answer, a little job done.”

This was received as rather neat in the sergeant; insomuch that Mr. Pumblechook cried audibly, “Good again!”

“You see, blacksmith,” said the sergeant, who had by this time picked out Joe with his eye, “we have had an accident with these, and I find the lock of one of 'em goes wrong, and the coupling don't act pretty. As they are wanted for immediate service, will you throw your eye over them?”

Joe threw his eye over them, and pronounced that the job would necessitate the lighting of his forge fire, and

would take nearer two hours than one. "Will it? Then will you set about it at once, blacksmith?" said the off-hand sergeant, "as it's on his Majesty's service. And if my men can bear a hand anywhere, they'll make themselves useful." With that, he called to his men, who came trooping into the kitchen one after another, and piled their arms in a corner. And then they stood about, as soldiers do; now, with their hands loosely clasped before them; now, resting a knee or a shoulder; now, easing a belt or a pouch; now, opening the door to spit stiffly over their high stocks, out into the yard.

All these things I saw without then knowing that I saw them, for I was in an agony of apprehension. But beginning to perceive that the handcuffs were not for me, and that the military had so far got the better of the pie as to put it in the background, I collected a little more of my scattered wits.

"Would you give me the time?" said the sergeant, addressing himself to Mr. Pumblechook, as to a man whose appreciative powers justified the inference that he was equal to the time.

"It's just gone half past two."

"That's not so bad," said the sergeant, reflecting; "even if I was forced to halt here nigh two hours, that'll do. How far might you call yourselves from the marshes, hereabouts? Not above a mile, I reckon?"

"Just a mile," said Mrs. Joe.

"That'll do. We begin to close in upon 'em about dusk. A little before dusk, my orders are. That'll do."

"Convicts, sergeant?" asked Mr. Wopsle, in a matter-of-course way.

"Ay!" returned the sergeant, "two. They're pretty well known to be out on the marshes still, and they won't try to get clear of 'em before dusk. Anybody here seen anything of any such game?"

Everybody, myself excepted, said no, with confidence. Nobody thought of me.

"Well!" said the sergeant, "they'll find themselves trapped in a circle, I expect, sooner than they count on. Now, blacksmith! If you're ready, his Majesty the King is."

Joe had got his coat and waistcoat and cravat off, and his leather apron on, and passed into the forge. One of the soldiers opened its wooden windows, another lighted the fire, another turned to at the bellows, the rest stood round the blaze, which was soon roaring. Then Joe began to hammer and clink, hammer and clink, and we all looked on.

The interest of the impending pursuit not only absorbed the general attention, but even made my sister liberal. She drew a pitcher of beer from the cask for the soldiers, and invited the sergeant to take a glass of brandy. But Mr. Pumblechook said, sharply, "Give him wine,

Mum. I'll engage there's no tar in that:" so, the sergeant thanked him and said that as he preferred his drink without tar, he would take wine, if it was equally convenient. When it was given him, he drank his Majesty's health and compliments of the season, and took it all at a mouthful and smacked his lips.

"Good stuff, eh, sergeant?" said Mr. Pumblechook.

"I'll tell you something," returned the sergeant; "I suspect that stuff's of *your* providing."

Mr. Pumblechook, with a fat sort of laugh, said, "Ay, ay? Why?"

"Because," returned the sergeant, clapping him on the shoulder, "you're a man that knows what's what."

"D'ye think so?" said Mr. Pumblechook, with his former laugh. "Have another glass!"

"With you. Hob and nob," returned the sergeant. "The top of mine to the foot of yours,—the foot of yours to the top of mine,—Ring once, ring twice,—the best tune on the Musical Glasses! Your health. May you live a thousand years, and never be a worse judge of the right sort than you are at the present moment of your life!"

The sergeant tossed off his glass again and seemed quite ready for another glass. I noticed that Mr. Pumblechook in his hospitality appeared to forget that he had made a present of the wine, but took the bottle from Mrs. Joe and had all the credit of handing it about in a gush of joviality. Even I got some. And he was so very free of the wine that he even called for the other bottle, and handed that about with the same liberality, when the first was gone.

As I watched them while they all stood clustering about the forge, enjoying themselves so much, I thought what terrible good sauce for a dinner my fugitive friend on the marshes was. They had not enjoyed themselves a quarter so much, before the entertainment was brightened with the excitement he furnished. And now, when they were all in lively anticipation of "the two villains" being taken, and when the bellows seemed to roar for the fugitives, the fire to flare for them, the smoke to hurry away in pursuit of them, Joe to hammer and clink for them, and all the murky shadows on the wall to shake at them in menace as the blaze rose and sank, and the red-hot sparks dropped and died, the pale afternoon outside almost seemed in my pitying young fancy to have turned pale on their account, poor wretches.

At last, Joe's job was done, and the ringing and roaring stopped. As Joe got on his coat, he mustered courage to propose that some of us should go down with the soldiers and see what came of the hunt. Mr. Pumblechook and Mr. Hubble declined, on the plea of a pipe and ladies' society; but Mr. Wopsle said he would go, if Joe would. Joe said he was agreeable, and would take me, if Mrs. Joe approved. We never should have got leave to go, I am sure, but for Mrs. Joe's curiosity to know all about it and how it ended.

As it was, she merely stipulated, "If you bring the boy back with his head blown to bits by a musket, don't look to me to put it together again."

The sergeant took a polite leave of the ladies, and parted from Mr. Pumblechook as from a comrade; though I doubt if he were quite as fully sensible of that gentleman's merits under arid conditions, as when something moist was going. His men resumed their muskets and fell in. Mr. Wopsle, Joe, and I, received strict charge to keep in the rear, and to speak no word after we reached the marshes. When we were all out in the raw air and were steadily moving towards our business, I treasonably whispered to Joe, "I hope, Joe, we shan't find them." and Joe whispered to me, "I'd give a shilling if they had cut and run, Pip."

We were joined by no stragglers from the village, for the weather was cold and threatening, the way dreary, the footing bad, darkness coming on, and the people had good fires in-doors and were keeping the day. A few faces hurried to glowing windows and looked after us, but none came out. We passed the finger-post, and held straight on to the churchyard. There we were stopped a few minutes by a signal from the sergeant's hand, while two or three of his men dispersed themselves among the graves, and also examined the porch. They came in again without finding anything, and then we struck out on the open marshes, through the gate at the side of the churchyard. A bitter sleet came rattling against us here on the east wind, and Joe took me on his back.

Now that we were out upon the dismal wilderness where they little thought I had been within eight or nine hours and had seen both men hiding, I considered for the first time, with great dread, if we should come upon them, would my particular convict suppose that it was I who had brought the soldiers there? He had asked me if I was a deceiving imp, and he had said I should be a fierce young hound if I joined the hunt against him. Would he believe that I was both imp and hound in treacherous earnest, and had betrayed him?

It was of no use asking myself this question now. There I was, on Joe's back, and there was Joe beneath me, charging at the ditches like a hunter, and stimulating Mr. Wopsle not to tumble on his Roman nose, and to keep up with us. The soldiers were in front of us, extending into a pretty wide line with an interval between man and man. We were taking the course I had begun with, and from which I had diverged in the mist. Either the mist was not out again yet, or the wind had dispelled it. Under the low red glare of sunset, the beacon, and the gibbet, and the mound of the Battery, and the opposite shore of the river, were plain, though all of a watery lead colour.

With my heart thumping like a blacksmith at Joe's broad shoulder, I looked all about for any sign of the convicts. I could see none, I could hear none. Mr. Wopsle had greatly alarmed me more than once, by his blowing and hard breathing; but I knew the sounds by this time,

and could dissociate them from the object of pursuit. I got a dreadful start, when I thought I heard the file still going; but it was only a sheep-bell. The sheep stopped in their eating and looked timidly at us; and the cattle, their heads turned from the wind and sleet, stared angrily as if they held us responsible for both annoyances; but, except these things, and the shudder of the dying day in every blade of grass, there was no break in the bleak stillness of the marshes.

The soldiers were moving on in the direction of the old Battery, and we were moving on a little way behind them, when, all of a sudden, we all stopped. For there had reached us on the wings of the wind and rain, a long shout. It was repeated. It was at a distance towards the east, but it was long and loud. Nay, there seemed to be two or more shouts raised together,—if one might judge from a confusion in the sound.

To this effect the sergeant and the nearest men were speaking under their breath, when Joe and I came up. After another moment's listening, Joe (who was a good judge) agreed, and Mr. Wopsle (who was a bad judge) agreed. The sergeant, a decisive man, ordered that the sound should not be answered, but that the course should be changed, and that his men should make towards it "at the double." So we slanted to the right (where the East was), and Joe pounded away so wonderfully, that I had to hold on tight to keep my seat.

It was a run indeed now, and what Joe called, in the only two words he spoke all the time, "a Winder." Down banks and up banks, and over gates, and splashing into dikes, and breaking among coarse rushes: no man cared where he went. As we came nearer to the shouting, it became more and more apparent that it was made by more than one voice. Sometimes, it seemed to stop altogether, and then the soldiers stopped. When it broke out again, the soldiers made for it at a greater rate than ever, and we after them. After a while, we had so run it down, that we could hear one voice calling "Murder!" and another voice, "Convicts! Runaways! Guard! This way for the runaway convicts!" Then both voices would seem to be stifled in a struggle, and then would break out again. And when it had come to this, the soldiers ran like deer, and Joe too.

The sergeant ran in first, when we had run the noise quite down, and two of his men ran in close upon him. Their pieces were cocked and levelled when we all ran in.

"Here are both men!" panted the sergeant, struggling at the bottom of a ditch. "Surrender, you two! and confound you for two wild beasts! Come asunder!"

Water was splashing, and mud was flying, and oaths were being sworn, and blows were being struck, when some more men went down into the ditch to help the sergeant, and dragged out, separately, my convict and the other one. Both were bleeding and panting and execrating and struggling; but of course I knew them both directly.

"Mind!" said my convict, wiping blood from his face with his ragged sleeves, and shaking torn hair from his fingers: "I took him! I give him up to you! Mind that!"

"It's not much to be particular about," said the sergeant; "it'll do you small good, my man, being in the same plight yourself. Handcuffs there!"

"I don't expect it to do me any good. I don't want it to do me more good than it does now," said my convict, with a greedy laugh. "I took him. He knows it. That's enough for me."

The other convict was livid to look at, and, in addition to the old bruised left side of his face, seemed to be bruised and torn all over. He could not so much as get his breath to speak, until they were both separately handcuffed, but leaned upon a soldier to keep himself from falling.

"Take notice, guard,—he tried to murder me," were his first words.

"Tried to murder him?" said my convict, disdainfully. "Try, and not do it? I took him, and giv' him up; that's what I done. I not only prevented him getting off the marshes, but I dragged him here,—dragged him this far on his way back. He's a gentleman, if you please, this villain. Now, the Hulks has got its gentleman again, through me. Murder him? Worth my while, too, to murder him, when I could do worse and drag him back!"

The other one still gasped, "He tried—he tried—to—murder me. Bear—bear witness."

"Lookee here!" said my convict to the sergeant. "Single-handed I got clear of the prison-ship; I made a dash and I done it. I could ha' got clear of these death-cold flats likewise—look at my leg: you won't find much iron on it—if I hadn't made the discovery that *he* was here. Let *him* go free? Let *him* profit by the means as I found out? Let *him* make a tool of me afresh and again? Once more? No, no, no. If I had died at the bottom there," and he made an emphatic swing at the ditch with his manacled hands, "I'd have held to him with that grip, that you should have been safe to find him in my hold."

The other fugitive, who was evidently in extreme horror of his companion, repeated, "He tried to murder me. I should have been a dead man if you had not come up."

"He lies!" said my convict, with fierce energy. "He's a liar born, and he'll die a liar. Look at his face; ain't it written there? Let him turn those eyes of his on me. I defy him to do it."

The other, with an effort at a scornful smile, which could not, however, collect the nervous working of his mouth into any set expression, looked at the soldiers, and looked about at the marshes and at the sky, but certainly did not look at the speaker.

"Do you see him?" pursued my convict. "Do you see what a villain he is? Do you see those grovelling and

wandering eyes? That's how he looked when we were tried together. He never looked at me."

The other, always working and working his dry lips and turning his eyes restlessly about him far and near, did at last turn them for a moment on the speaker, with the words, "You are not much to look at," and with a half-taunting glance at the bound hands. At that point, my convict became so frantically exasperated, that he would have rushed upon him but for the interposition of the soldiers. "Didn't I tell you," said the other convict then, "that he would murder me, if he could?" And any one could see that he shook with fear, and that there broke out upon his lips curious white flakes, like thin snow.

"Enough of this parley," said the sergeant. "Light those torches."

As one of the soldiers, who carried a basket in lieu of a gun, went down on his knee to open it, my convict looked round him for the first time, and saw me. I had alighted from Joe's back on the brink of the ditch when we came up, and had not moved since. I looked at him eagerly when he looked at me, and slightly moved my hands and shook my head. I had been waiting for him to see me that I might try to assure him of my innocence. It was not at all expressed to me that he even comprehended my intention, for he gave me a look that I did not understand, and it all passed in a moment. But if he had looked at me for an hour or for a day, I could not have remembered his face ever afterwards, as having been more attentive.

The soldier with the basket soon got a light, and lighted three or four torches, and took one himself and distributed the others. It had been almost dark before, but now it seemed quite dark, and soon afterwards very dark. Before we departed from that spot, four soldiers standing in a ring, fired twice into the air. Presently we saw other torches kindled at some distance behind us, and others on the marshes on the opposite bank of the river. "All right," said the sergeant. "March."

We had not gone far when three cannon were fired ahead of us with a sound that seemed to burst something inside my ear. "You are expected on board," said the sergeant to my convict; "they know you are coming. Don't straggle, my man. Close up here."

The two were kept apart, and each walked surrounded by a separate guard. I had hold of Joe's hand now, and Joe carried one of the torches. Mr. Wopsle had been for going back, but Joe was resolved to see it out, so we went on with the party. There was a reasonably good path now, mostly on the edge of the river, with a divergence here and there where a dike came, with a miniature windmill on it and a muddy sluice-gate. When I looked round, I could see the other lights coming in after us. The torches we carried dropped great blotches of fire upon the track, and I could see those, too, lying smoking and flaring. I could see

nothing else but black darkness. Our lights warmed the air about us with their pitchy blaze, and the two prisoners seemed rather to like that, as they limped along in the midst of the muskets. We could not go fast, because of their lameness; and they were so spent, that two or three times we had to halt while they rested.

After an hour or so of this travelling, we came to a rough wooden hut and a landing-place. There was a guard in the hut, and they challenged, and the sergeant answered. Then, we went into the hut, where there was a smell of tobacco and whitewash, and a bright fire, and a lamp, and a stand of muskets, and a drum, and a low wooden bedstead, like an overgrown mangle without the machinery, capable of holding about a dozen soldiers all at once. Three or four soldiers who lay upon it in their great-coats were not much interested in us, but just lifted their heads and took a sleepy stare, and then lay down again. The sergeant made some kind of report, and some entry in a book, and then the convict whom I call the other convict was drafted off with his guard, to go on board first.

My convict never looked at me, except that once. While we stood in the hut, he stood before the fire looking thoughtfully at it, or putting up his feet by turns upon the hob, and looking thoughtfully at them as if he pitied them for their recent adventures. Suddenly, he turned to the sergeant, and remarked,—

“I wish to say something respecting this escape. It may prevent some persons laying under suspicion alonger me.”

“You can say what you like,” returned the sergeant, standing coolly looking at him with his arms folded, “but you have no call to say it here. You’ll have opportunity enough to say about it, and hear about it, before it’s done with, you know.”

“I know, but this is another pint, a separate matter. A man can’t starve; at least *I* can’t. I took some wittles, up at the willage over yonder,—where the church stands a’most out on the marshes.”

“You mean stole,” said the sergeant.

“And I’ll tell you where from. From the blacksmith’s.”

“Halloa!” said the sergeant, staring at Joe.

“Halloa, Pip!” said Joe, staring at me.

“It was some broken wittles—that’s what it was—and a dram of liquor, and a pie.”

“Have you happened to miss such an article as a pie, blacksmith?” asked the sergeant, confidentially.

“My wife did, at the very moment when you came in. Don’t you know, Pip?”

“So,” said my convict, turning his eyes on Joe in a moody manner, and without the least glance at me,—“so you’re the blacksmith, are you? Than I’m sorry to say, I’ve eat your pie.”

“God knows you’re welcome to it,—so far as it was ever mine,” returned Joe, with a saving remembrance of Mrs. Joe. “We don’t know what you have done, but we wouldn’t have you starved to death for it, poor miserable fellow-creatur.—Would us, Pip?”

The something that I had noticed before, clicked in the man’s throat again, and he turned his back. The boat had returned, and his guard were ready, so we followed him to the landing-place made of rough stakes and stones, and saw him put into the boat, which was rowed by a crew of convicts like himself. No one seemed surprised to see him, or interested in seeing him, or glad to see him, or sorry to see him, or spoke a word, except that somebody in the boat growled as if to dogs, “Give way, you!” which was the signal for the dip of the oars. By the light of the torches, we saw the black Hulk lying out a little way from the mud of the shore, like a wicked Noah’s ark.

Cribbed and barred and moored by massive rusty chains, the prison-ship seemed in my young eyes to be ironed like the prisoners. We saw the boat go alongside, and we saw him taken up the side and disappear. Then, the ends of the torches were flung hissing into the water, and went out, as if it were all over with him.

Chapter VI

My state of mind regarding the pilfering from which I had been so unexpectedly exonerated did not impel me to frank disclosure; but I hope it had some dregs of good at the bottom of it.

I do not recall that I felt any tenderness of conscience in reference to Mrs. Joe, when the fear of being found out was lifted off me. But I loved Joe,—perhaps for no better reason in those early days than because the dear fellow let me love him,—and, as to

him, my inner self was not so easily composed. It was much upon my mind (particularly when I first saw him looking about for his file) that I ought to tell Joe the whole truth. Yet I did not, and for the reason that I mistrusted that if I did, he would think me worse than I was. The fear of losing Joe’s confidence, and of thenceforth sitting in the chimney corner at night staring drearily at my forever lost companion and friend, tied up my tongue. I morbidly represented to myself that if Joe knew it, I never afterwards could see him at the fireside feeling his fair whisker, without thinking that he was meditating on it. That, if Joe knew it, I never afterwards could see him glance, however casually, at yesterday’s meat or pudding when it came on to-day’s table, without thinking that he was debating whether I had been in the pantry. That, if Joe knew it, and at any subsequent period of our joint domestic life remarked that his beer was flat or thick, the conviction that he suspected tar in it, would bring a rush of blood to my face. In a word, I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, as I had been too

cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong. I had had no intercourse with the world at that time, and I imitated none of its many inhabitants who act in this manner. Quite an untaught genius, I made the discovery of the line of action for myself.

As I was sleepy before we were far away from the prison-ship, Joe took me on his back again and carried me home. He must have had a tiresome journey of it, for Mr. Wopsle, being knocked up, was in such a very bad temper that if the Church had been thrown open, he would probably have excommunicated the whole expedition, beginning with Joe and myself. In his lay capacity, he persisted in sitting down in the damp to such an insane extent, that when his coat was taken off to be dried at the kitchen fire, the circumstantial evidence on his trousers would have hanged him, if it had been a capital offence.

By that time, I was staggering on the kitchen floor like a little drunkard, through having been newly set upon my feet, and through having been fast asleep, and through waking in the heat and lights and noise of tongues. As I came to myself (with the aid of a heavy thump between the shoulders, and the restorative exclamation "Yah! Was there ever such a boy as this!" from my sister,) I found Joe telling them about the convict's confession, and all the visitors suggesting different ways by which he had got into the pantry. Mr. Pumblechook made out, after carefully surveying

the premises, that he had first got upon the roof of the forge, and had then got upon the roof of the house, and had then let himself down the kitchen chimney by a rope made of his bedding cut into strips; and as Mr. Pumblechook was very positive and drove his own chaise-cart—over everybody—it was agreed that it must be so. Mr. Wopsle, indeed, wildly cried out, "No!" with the feeble malice of a tired man; but, as he had no theory, and no coat on, he was unanimously set at naught,—not to mention his smoking hard behind, as he stood with his back to the kitchen fire to draw the damp out: which was not calculated to inspire confidence.

This was all I heard that night before my sister clutched me, as a slumberous offence to the company's eyesight, and assisted me up to bed with such a strong hand that I seemed to have fifty boots on, and to be dangling them all against the edges of the stairs. My state of mind, as I have described it, began before I was up in the morning, and lasted long after the subject had died out, and had ceased to be mentioned saving on exceptional occasions.



Chapter VII

At the time when I stood in the churchyard reading the family tombstones, I had just enough learning to be able to spell them out. My construction even of their simple meaning was not very correct, for I read "wife of the above" as a complimentary reference to my father's exaltation to a better world; and if any one of my deceased relations had been referred to as "Below," I have no doubt I should have formed the worst opinions of that member of the family. Neither were my notions of the theological positions to which my Catechism bound me, at all accurate; for, I have a lively remembrance that I supposed my declaration that I was to "walk in the same all the days of my life," laid me under an obligation always to go through the village from our house in one particular direction, and never to vary it by turning down by the wheelwright's or up by the mill.

When I was old enough, I was to be apprenticed to Joe, and until I could assume that dignity I was not to be what Mrs. Joe called "Pompeyed," or (as I render it) pampered. Therefore, I was not only odd-boy about the forge, but if any neighbour happened to want an extra boy to frighten birds, or pick up stones, or do any such job, I was favoured with the employment. In order, however, that our superior position might not be compromised thereby, a money-box was kept on the kitchen mantel-shelf, into which it was publicly made known that all my earnings were dropped. I have an impression that they were to be contributed eventually towards the liquidation of the National Debt, but I know I had no hope of any personal participation in the treasure.

Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt kept an evening school in the village; that is to say, she was a ridiculous old woman of limited means and unlimited infirmity, who used to go to sleep from six to seven every evening, in the society of youth who paid two pence per week each, for the improving opportunity of seeing her do it. She rented a small cottage, and Mr. Wopsle had the room upstairs, where we students used to overhear him reading aloud in a most dignified and terrific manner, and occasionally bumping on the ceiling. There was a fiction that Mr. Wopsle "examined" the scholars once a quarter. What he did on those occasions was to turn up his cuffs, stick up his hair, and give us Mark Antony's oration over the body of Caesar. This was always followed by Collins's Ode on the Passions, wherein I particularly venerated Mr. Wopsle as Revenge throwing his blood-stained sword in thunder down, and taking the War-denouncing trumpet with a withering look. It was not with me then, as it was in later life, when I fell into the society of the Passions, and compared them with Collins and Wopsle, rather to the disadvantage of both gentlemen.

Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt, besides keeping this Educational Institution, kept in the same room—a little general shop. She had no idea what stock she had, or what the price of anything in it was; but there was a little greasy memorandum-book kept in a drawer, which served as a Catalogue of Prices, and by this oracle Biddy arranged all the shop transactions. Biddy was Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt's granddaughter; I confess myself quite unequal to the working out of the problem, what relation she was to Mr. Wopsle. She was an orphan like myself; like me, too, had been brought up by hand. She was most noticeable, I thought, in respect of her extremities; for, her hair always wanted brushing, her hands always wanted washing, and her shoes always wanted mending and pulling up at heel. This description must be received with a week-day limitation. On Sundays, she went to church elaborated.

Much of my unassisted self, and more by the help of Biddy than of Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt, I struggled through the alphabet as if it had been a bramble-bush; getting considerably worried and scratched by every letter. After that I fell among those thieves, the nine figures, who seemed every evening to do something new to disguise themselves and baffle recognition. But, at last I began, in a purblind groping way, to read, write, and cipher, on the very smallest scale.

One night I was sitting in the chimney corner with my slate, expending great efforts on the production of a letter to Joe. I think it must have been a full year

after our hunt upon the marshes, for it was a long time after, and it was winter and a hard frost. With an alphabet on the hearth at my feet for reference, I contrived in an hour or two to print and smear this epistle:

*"MI DEER JO i OPE U R KRWITE WELL i OPE i
SHAL
SON B HABELL 4 2 TEEDGE U JO AN THEN WE
SHORL B
SO GLODD AN WEN i M PRENGTD 2 U JO WOT
LARX AN
BLEVE ME INF XN PIP."*

There was no indispensable necessity for my communicating with Joe by letter, inasmuch as he sat beside me and we were alone. But I delivered this written communication (slate and all) with my own hand, and Joe received it as a miracle of erudition.

"I say, Pip, old chap!" cried Joe, opening his blue eyes wide, "what a scholar you are! An't you?"

"I should like to be," said I, glancing at the slate as he held it; with a misgiving that the writing was rather hilly.

"Why, here's a J," said Joe, "and a O equal to anything! Here's a J and a O, Joe, and a J-O, Joe."

I had never heard Joe read aloud to any greater extent than this monosyllable, and I had observed at church last

Sunday, when I accidentally held our Prayer-Book upside down, that it seemed to suit his convenience quite as well as if it had been all right. Wishing to embrace the present occasion of finding out whether in teaching Joe, I should have to begin quite at the beginning, I said, "Ah! But read the rest, Jo."

"The rest, eh, Pip?" said Joe, looking at it with a slow, searching eye, "One, two, three. Why, here's three Js, and three Os, and three J-O, Joes in it, Pip!"

I leaned over Joe, and, with the aid of my forefinger read him the whole letter.

"Astonishing!" said Joe, when I had finished. "You ARE a scholar."

"How do you spell Gargery, Joe?" I asked him, with a modest patronage.

"I don't spell it at all," said Joe.

"But supposing you did?"

"It *can't* be supposed," said Joe. "Tho' I'm uncommon fond of reading, too."

"Are you, Joe?"

"On-common. Give me," said Joe, "a good book, or a good newspaper, and sit me down afore a good fire, and I ask no better. Lord!" he continued, after rubbing his knees a little, "when you *do* come to a J and a O, and says you, 'Here, at last, is a J-O, Joe,' how interesting reading is!"

I derived from this, that Joe's education, like Steam, was yet in its infancy. Pursuing the subject, I inquired:

"Didn't you ever go to school, Joe, when you were as little as me?"

"No, Pip."

"Why didn't you ever go to school, Joe, when you were as little as me?"

"Well, Pip," said Joe, taking up the poker, and settling himself to his usual occupation when he was thoughtful, of slowly raking the fire between the lower bars; "I'll tell you. My father, Pip, he were given to drink, and when he were overtook with drink, he hammered away at my mother, most onmerciful. It were a'most the only hammering he did, indeed, 'xcepting at myself. And he hammered at me with a wigor only to be equalled by the wigor with which he didn't hammer at his anwil.—You're a listening and understanding, Pip?"

"Yes, Joe."

"Consequence, my mother and me we ran away from my father several times; and then my mother she'd go out to work, and she'd say, "Joe," she'd say, "now, please God, you shall have some schooling, child," and she'd put me to school. But my father were that good in his hart that he couldn't abear to be without us. So, he'd come with a most tremenjous crowd and make such a row at the doors of the

houses where we was, that they used to be obligated to have no more to do with us and to give us up to him. And then he took us home and hammered us. Which, you see, Pip," said Joe, pausing in his meditative raking of the fire, and looking at me, "were a drawback on my learning."

"Certainly, poor Joe!"

"Though mind you, Pip," said Joe, with a judicial touch or two of the poker on the top bar, "rendering unto all their doo, and maintaining equal justice betwixt man and man, my father were that good in his hart, don't you see?"

I didn't see; but I didn't say so.

"Well!" Joe pursued, "somebody must keep the pot a-biling, Pip, or the pot won't bile, don't you know?"

I saw that, and said so.

"Consequence, my father didn't make objections to my going to work; so I went to work at my present calling, which were his too, if he would have followed it, and I worked tolerable hard, I assure *you*, Pip. In time I were able to keep him, and I kep him till he went off in a purple leptic fit. And it were my intentions to have had put upon his tombstone that, Whatsume'er the failings on his part, Remember reader he were that good in his heart."

Joe recited this couplet with such manifest pride and careful perspicuity, that I asked him if he had made it himself.

"I made it," said Joe, "my own self. I made it in a moment. It was like striking out a horseshoe complete, in a single blow. I never was so much surprised in all my life, —couldn't credit my own ed,—to tell you the truth, hardly believed it *were* my own ed. As I was saying, Pip, it were my intentions to have had it cut over him; but poetry costs money, cut it how you will, small or large, and it were not done. Not to mention bearers, all the money that could be spared were wanted for my mother. She were in poor elth, and quite broke. She weren't long of following, poor soul, and her share of peace come round at last."

Joe's blue eyes turned a little watery; he rubbed first one of them, and then the other, in a most uncongenial and uncomfortable manner, with the round knob on the top of the poker.

"It were but lonesome then," said Joe, "living here alone, and I got acquainted with your sister. Now, Pip,"—Joe looked firmly at me as if he knew I was not going to agree with him;—"your sister is a fine figure of a woman."

I could not help looking at the fire, in an obvious state of doubt.

"Whatever family opinions, or whatever the world's opinions, on that subject may be, Pip, your sister is," Joe tapped the top bar with the poker after every word following, "a-fine-figure—of—a—woman!"

I could think of nothing better to say than "I am glad you think so, Joe."

"So am I," returned Joe, catching me up. "I am glad I think so, Pip. A little redness or a little matter of Bone, here or there, what does it signify to Me?"

I sagaciously observed, if it didn't signify to him, to whom did it signify?

"Certainly!" assented Joe. "That's it. You're right, old chap! When I got acquainted with your sister, it were the talk how she was bringing you up by hand. Very kind of her too, all the folks said, and I said, along with all the folks. As to you," Joe pursued with a countenance expressive of seeing something very nasty indeed, "if you could have been aware how small and flabby and mean you was, dear me, you'd have formed the most contemptible opinion of yourself!"

Not exactly relishing this, I said, "Never mind me, Joe."

"But I did mind you, Pip," he returned with tender simplicity. "When I offered to your sister to keep company, and to be asked in church at such times as she was willing and ready to come to the forge, I said to her, 'And bring the poor little child. God bless the poor little child,' I said to your sister, 'there's room for *him* at the forge!'"

I broke out crying and begging pardon, and hugged Joe round the neck: who dropped the poker to hug me, and to say, "Ever the best of friends; an't us, Pip? Don't cry, old chap!"

When this little interruption was over, Joe resumed:

"Well, you see, Pip, and here we are! That's about where it lights; here we are! Now, when you take me in hand in my learning, Pip (and I tell you beforehand I am awful dull, most awful dull), Mrs. Joe mustn't see too much of what we're up to. It must be done, as I may say, on the sly. And why on the sly? I'll tell you why, Pip."

He had taken up the poker again; without which, I doubt if he could have proceeded in his demon-stration.

"Your sister is given to government."

"Given to government, Joe?" I was startled, for I had some shadowy idea (and I am afraid I must add, hope) that Joe had divorced her in a favour of the Lords of the Admiralty, or Treasury.

"Given to government," said Joe. "Which I mean to say the government of you and myself."

"Oh!"

"And she an't over partial to having scholars on the premises," Joe continued, "and in partickler would not be over partial to my being a scholar, for fear as I might rise. Like a sort of rebel, don't you see?"

I was going to retort with an inquiry, and had got as far as "Why—" when Joe stopped me.

"Stay a bit. I know what you're a-going to say, Pip; stay a bit! I don't deny that your sister comes the Mo-gul over

us, now and again. I don't deny that she do throw us back-falls, and that she do drop down upon us heavy. At such times as when your sister is on the Ram-page, Pip," Joe sank his voice to a whisper and glanced at the door, "candour compels fur to admit that she is a Buster."

Joe pronounced this word, as if it began with at least twelve capital Bs.

"Why don't I rise? That were your observation when I broke it off, Pip?"

"Yes, Joe."

"Well," said Joe, passing the poker into his left hand, that he might feel his whisker; and I had no hope of him whenever he took to that placid occupation; "your sister's a master-mind. A master-mind."

"What's that?" I asked, in some hope of bringing him to a stand. But Joe was readier with his definition than I had expected, and completely stopped me by arguing circularly, and answering with a fixed look, "Her."

"And I ain't a master-mind," Joe resumed, when he had unfixed his look, and got back to his whisker. "And last of all, Pip,—and this I want to say very serious to you, old chap,—I see so much in my poor mother, of a woman drudging and slaving and breaking her honest hart and never getting no peace in her mortal days, that I'm dead afeerd of going wrong in the way of not doing what's right by a woman, and I'd fur rather of the two go wrong the t'other way, and be a little ill-convenienced myself. I wish it was only me that got put out, Pip; I wish there warn't no Tickler for you, old chap; I wish I could take it all on myself; but this is the up-and-down-and-straight on it, Pip, and I hope you'll overlook shortcomings."

Young as I was, I believe that I dated a new admiration of Joe from that night. We were equals afterwards, as we had been before; but, afterwards at quiet times when I sat looking at Joe and thinking about him, I had a new sensation of feeling conscious that I was looking up to Joe in my heart.

"However," said Joe, rising to replenish the fire; "here's the Dutch-clock a-working himself up to being equal to strike Eight of 'em, and she's not come home yet! I hope Uncle Pumblechook's mare mayn't have set a forefoot on a piece o' ice, and gone down."

Mrs. Joe made occasional trips with Uncle Pumblechook on market-days, to assist him in buying such household stuffs and goods as required a woman's judgment; Uncle Pumblechook being a bachelor and reposing no confidences in his domestic servant. This was market-day, and Mrs. Joe was out on one of these expeditions.

Joe made the fire and swept the hearth, and then we went to the door to listen for the chaise-cart. It was a dry cold night, and the wind blew keenly, and the frost was white and hard. A man would die to-night of lying out on

the marshes, I thought. And then I looked at the stars, and considered how awful it would be for a man to turn his face up to them as he froze to death, and see no help or pity in all the glittering multitude.

"Here comes the mare," said Joe, "ringing like a peal of bells!"

The sound of her iron shoes upon the hard road was quite musical, as she came along at a much brisker trot than usual. We got a chair out, ready for Mrs. Joe's alighting, and stirred up the fire that they might see a bright window, and took a final survey of the kitchen that nothing might be out of its place. When we had completed these preparations, they drove up, wrapped to the eyes. Mrs. Joe was soon landed, and Uncle Pumblechook was soon down too, covering the mare with a cloth, and we were soon all in the kitchen, carrying so much cold air in with us that it seemed to drive all the heat out of the fire.

"Now," said Mrs. Joe, unwrapping herself with haste and excitement, and throwing her bonnet back on her shoulders where it hung by the strings, "if this boy ain't grateful this night, he never will be!"

I looked as grateful as any boy possibly could, who was wholly uninformed why he ought to assume that expression.

"It's only to be hoped," said my sister, "that he won't be Pompeyed. But I have my fears."

"She ain't in that line, Mum," said Mr. Pumblechook. "She knows better."

She? I looked at Joe, making the motion with my lips and eyebrows, "She?" Joe looked at me, making the motion with *his* lips and eyebrows, "She?" My sister catching him in the act, he drew the back of his hand across his nose with his usual conciliatory air on such occasions, and looked at her.

"Well?" said my sister, in her snappish way. "What are you staring at? Is the house afire?"

"—Which some individual," Joe politely hinted, "mentioned—she."

"And she is a she, I suppose?" said my sister. "Unless you call Miss Havisham a he. And I doubt if even you'll go so far as that."

"Miss Havisham, up town?" said Joe.

"Is there any Miss Havisham down town?" returned my sister.

"She wants this boy to go and play there. And of course he's going. And he had better play there," said my sister, shaking her head at me as an encouragement to be extremely light and sportive, "or I'll work him."

I had heard of Miss Havisham up town,—everybody for miles round had heard of Miss Havisham up town,—as an immensely rich and grim lady who lived in a large and

dismal house barricaded against robbers, and who led a life of seclusion.

"Well to be sure!" said Joe, astounded. "I wonder how she come to know Pip!"

"Noodle!" cried my sister. "Who said she knew him?"

"—Which some individual," Joe again politely hinted, "mentioned that she wanted him to go and play there."

"And couldn't she ask Uncle Pumblechook if he knew of a boy to go and play there? Isn't it just barely possible that Uncle Pumblechook may be a tenant of hers, and that he may sometimes—we won't say quarterly or half-yearly, for that would be requiring too much of you—but sometimes—go there to pay his rent? And couldn't she then ask Uncle Pumblechook if he knew of a boy to go and play there? And couldn't Uncle Pumblechook, being always considerate and thoughtful for us—though you may not think it, Joseph," in a tone of the deepest reproach, as if he were the most callous of nephews, "then mention this boy, standing Prancing here"—which I solemnly declare I was not doing—"that I have for ever been a willing slave to?"

"Good again!" cried Uncle Pumblechook. "Well put! Prettily pointed! Good indeed! Now Joseph, you know the case."

"No, Joseph," said my sister, still in a reproachful manner, while Joe apologetically drew the back of his hand across and across his nose, "you do not yet—though you may not think it—know the case. You may consider that you do, but you do *not*, Joseph. For you do not know that Uncle Pumblechook, being sensible that for anything we can tell, this boy's fortune may be made by his going to Miss Havisham's, has offered to take him into town to-night in his own chaise-cart, and to keep him to-night, and to take him with his own hands to Miss Havisham's to-morrow morning. And Lor-a-mussy me!" cried my sister, casting off her bonnet in sudden desperation, "here I stand talking to mere Mooncalfs, with Uncle Pumblechook waiting, and the mare catching cold at the door, and the boy grimed with crock and dirt from the hair of his head to the sole of his foot!"

With that, she pounced upon me, like an eagle on a lamb, and my face was squeezed into wooden bowls in sinks, and my head was put under taps of water-butts, and I was soaped, and kneaded, and towelled, and thumped, and harrowed, and rasped, until I really was quite beside myself. (I may here remark that I suppose myself to be better acquainted than any living authority, with the ridgy effect of a wedding-ring, passing unsympathetically over the human countenance.)

When my ablutions were completed, I was put into clean linen of the stiffest character, like a young penitent into sackcloth, and was trussed up in my tightest and fearfullest suit. I was then delivered over to Mr. Pumblechook, who formally received me as if he were the

Sheriff, and who let off upon me the speech that I knew he had been dying to make all along: "Boy, be forever grateful to all friends, but especially unto them which brought you up by hand!"

"Good-bye, Joe!"

"God bless you, Pip, old chap!"

I had never parted from him before, and what with my feelings and what with soapsuds, I could at first see no stars from the chaise-cart. But they twinkled out one by one, without throwing any light on the questions why on earth I was going to play at Miss Havisham's, and what on earth I was expected to play at.

Chapter VIII

Mr. Pumblechook's premises in the High Street of the market town, were of a peppercorny and farinaceous character, as the premises of a corn-chandler and seedsman should be. It appeared to me that he must be a very happy man indeed, to have so many little drawers in his shop; and I wondered when I peeped into one or two on the lower tiers, and saw the tied-up brown paper packets inside, whether the flower-seeds and bulbs ever wanted of a fine day to break out of those jails, and bloom.

It was in the early morning after my arrival that I entertained this speculation. On the previous night, I had been sent straight to bed in an attic with a sloping roof, which was so low in the corner where the bedstead was, that I calculated the tiles as being within a foot of my eyebrows. In the same early morning, I discovered a singular affinity between seeds and corduroys. Mr. Pumblechook wore corduroys, and so did his shopman; and somehow, there was a general air and flavour about the corduroys, so much in the nature of seeds, and a general air and flavour about the seeds, so much in the nature of corduroys, that I hardly knew which was which. The same opportunity served me for noticing that Mr. Pumblechook appeared to conduct his business by looking across the street at the saddler, who appeared to transact *his* business by keeping his eye on the coachmaker, who appeared to get on in life by putting his hands in his pockets and contemplating the baker, who in his turn folded his arms and stared at the grocer, who stood at his door and yawned at the chemist. The watchmaker, always poring over a little desk with a magnifying-glass at his eye, and always inspected by a group of smock-frocks poring over him through the glass of his shop-window, seemed to be about the only person in the High Street whose trade engaged his attention.

Mr. Pumblechook and I breakfasted at eight o'clock in the parlour behind the shop, while the shopman took his mug of tea and hunch of bread and butter on a sack of peas in the front premises. I considered Mr. Pumblechook wretched company. Besides being possessed by my sister's idea that a mortifying and penitential character ought to

be imparted to my diet,—besides giving me as much crumb as possible in combination with as little butter, and putting such a quantity of warm water into my milk that it would have been more candid to have left the milk out altogether,—his conversation consisted of nothing but arithmetic. On my politely bidding him Good-morning, he said, pompously, “Seven times nine, boy?” And how should *I* be able to answer, dodged in that way, in a strange place, on an empty stomach! I was hungry, but before I had swallowed a morsel, he began a running sum that lasted all through the breakfast. “Seven?” “And four?” “And eight?” “And six?” “And two?” “And ten?” And so on. And after each figure was disposed of, it was as much as I could do to get a bite or a sup, before the next came; while he sat at his ease guessing nothing, and eating bacon and hot roll, in (if I may be allowed the expression) a gorging and gormandizing manner.

For such reasons, I was very glad when ten o’clock came and we started for Miss Havisham’s; though I was not at all at my ease regarding the manner in which I should acquit myself under that lady’s roof. Within a quarter of an hour we came to Miss Havisham’s house, which was of old brick, and dismal, and had a great many iron bars to it. Some of the windows had been walled up; of those that remained, all the lower were rustily barred. There was a courtyard in front, and that was barred; so we had to wait, after ringing the bell, until some one should come to open it. While we waited at the gate, I peeped in (even then Mr. Pumblechook said, “And fourteen?” but I pretended not to hear him), and saw that at the side of the house there was a large brewery. No brewing was going on in it, and none seemed to have gone on for a long long time.

A window was raised, and a clear voice demanded “What name?” To which my conductor replied, “Pumblechook.” The voice returned, “Quite right,” and the window was shut again, and a young lady came across the court-yard, with keys in her hand.

“This,” said Mr. Pumblechook, “is Pip.”

“This is Pip, is it?” returned the young lady, who was very pretty and seemed very proud; “come in, Pip.”

Mr. Pumblechook was coming in also, when she stopped him with the gate.

“Oh!” she said. “Did you wish to see Miss Havisham?”

“If Miss Havisham wished to see me,” returned Mr. Pumblechook, discomfited.

“Ah!” said the girl; “but you see she don’t.”

She said it so finally, and in such an undiscussible way, that Mr. Pumblechook, though in a condition of ruffled dignity, could not protest. But he eyed me severely,—as if *I* had done anything to him!—and departed with the words reproachfully delivered: “Boy! Let your behaviour here be a credit unto them which brought you up by hand!” I was not free from apprehension that he would

come back to propound through the gate, “And sixteen?” But he didn’t.

My young conductress locked the gate, and we went across the courtyard. It was paved and clean, but grass was growing in every crevice. The brewery buildings had a little lane of communication with it, and the wooden gates of that lane stood open, and all the brewery beyond stood open, away to the high enclosing wall; and all was empty and disused. The cold wind seemed to blow colder there than outside the gate; and it made a shrill noise in howling in and out at the open sides of the brewery, like the noise of wind in the rigging of a ship at sea.

She saw me looking at it, and she said, “You could drink without hurt all the strong beer that’s brewed there now, boy.”

“I should think I could, miss,” said I, in a shy way.

“Better not try to brew beer there now, or it would turn out sour, boy; don’t you think so?”

“It looks like it, miss.”

“Not that anybody means to try,” she added, “for that’s all done with, and the place will stand as idle as it is till it falls. As to strong beer, there’s enough of it in the cellars already, to drown the Manor House.”

“Is that the name of this house, miss?”

“One of its names, boy.”

“It has more than one, then, miss?”

“One more. Its other name was Satis; which is Greek, or Latin, or Hebrew, or all three—or all one to me—for enough.”

“Enough House,” said I; “that’s a curious name, miss.”

“Yes,” she replied; “but it meant more than it said. It meant, when it was given, that whoever had this house could want nothing else. They must have been easily satisfied in those days, I should think. But don’t loiter, boy.”

Though she called me “boy” so often, and with a carelessness that was far from complimentary, she was of about my own age. She seemed much older than I, of course, being a girl, and beautiful and self-possessed; and she was as scornful of me as if she had been one-and-twenty, and a queen.

We went into the house by a side door, the great front entrance had two chains across it outside,—and the first thing I noticed was, that the passages were all dark, and that she had left a candle burning there. She took it up, and we went through more passages and up a staircase, and still it was all dark, and only the candle lighted us.

At last we came to the door of a room, and she said, “Go in.”

I answered, more in shyness than politeness, “After you, miss.”

To this she returned: "Don't be ridiculous, boy; I am not going in." And scornfully walked away, and—what was worse—took the candle with her.

This was very uncomfortable, and I was half afraid. However, the only thing to be done being to knock at the door, I knocked, and was told from within to enter. I entered, therefore, and found myself in a pretty large room, well lighted with wax candles. No glimpse of daylight was to be seen in it. It was a dressing-room, as I supposed from the furniture, though much of it was of forms and uses then quite unknown to me. But prominent in it was a draped table with a gilded looking-glass, and that I made out at first sight to be a fine lady's dressing-table.

Whether I should have made out this object so soon if there had been no fine lady sitting at it, I cannot say. In an arm-chair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see.

She was dressed in rich materials,—satins, and lace, and silks,—all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table. Dresses, less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks, were scattered about. She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on,—the other was on the table near her hand,—her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom lay with those trinkets, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a Prayer-Book all confusedly heaped about the looking-glass.

It was not in the first few moments that I saw all these things, though I saw more of them in the first moments than might be supposed. But I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose had shrunk to skin and bone. Once, I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible personage lying in state. Once, I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out, if I could.

"Who is it?" said the lady at the table.

"Pip, ma'am."

"Pip?"

"Mr. Pumblechook's boy, ma'am. Come—to play."

"Come nearer; let me look at you. Come close."

It was when I stood before her, avoiding her eyes, that I took note of the surrounding objects in detail, and saw that her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and that a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine.

"Look at me," said Miss Havisham. "You are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?"

I regret to state that I was not afraid of telling the enormous lie comprehended in the answer "No."

"Do you know what I touch here?" she said, laying her hands, one upon the other, on her left side.

"Yes, ma'am." (It made me think of the young man.)

"What do I touch?"

"Your heart."

"Broken!"

She uttered the word with an eager look, and with strong emphasis, and with a weird smile that had a kind of boast in it. Afterwards she kept her hands there for a little while, and slowly took them away as if they were heavy.

"I am tired," said Miss Havisham. "I want diversion, and I have done with men and women. Play."

I think it will be conceded by my most disputatious reader, that she could hardly have directed an unfortunate boy to do anything in the wide world more difficult to be done under the circumstances.

"I sometimes have sick fancies," she went on, "and I have a sick fancy that I want to see some play. There, there!" with an impatient movement of the fingers of her right hand; "play, play, play!"

For a moment, with the fear of my sister's working me before my eyes, I had a desperate idea of starting round the room in the assumed character of Mr. Pumblechook's chaise-cart. But I felt myself so unequal to the performance that I gave it up, and stood looking at Miss Havisham in what I suppose she took for a dogged manner, inasmuch as she said, when we had taken a good look at each other,—

"Are you sullen and obstinate?"

"No, ma'am, I am very sorry for you, and very sorry I can't play just now. If you complain of me I shall get into trouble with my sister, so I would do it if I could; but it's so new here, and so strange, and so fine,—and melancholy—" I stopped, fearing I might say too much, or had already said it, and we took another look at each other.

Before she spoke again, she turned her eyes from me, and looked at the dress she wore, and at the dressing-table, and finally at herself in the looking-glass.

"So new to him," she muttered, "so old to me; so strange to him, so familiar to me; so melancholy to both of us! Call Estella."

As she was still looking at the reflection of herself, I thought she was still talking to herself, and kept quiet.

"Call Estella," she repeated, flashing a look at me. "You can do that. Call Estella. At the door."

To stand in the dark in a mysterious passage of an unknown house, bawling Estella to a scornful young lady neither visible nor responsive, and feeling it a dreadful liberty so to roar out her name, was almost as bad as playing to order. But she answered at last, and her light came along the dark passage like a star.

Miss Havisham beckoned her to come close, and took up a jewel from the table, and tried its effect upon her fair young bosom and against her pretty brown hair. "Your own, one day, my dear, and you will use it well. Let me see you play cards with this boy."

"With this boy? Why, he is a common labouring-boy!"

I thought I overheard Miss Havisham answer,—only it seemed so unlikely,—"Well? You can break his heart."

"What do you play, boy?" asked Estella of myself, with the greatest disdain.

"Nothing but beggar my neighbour, miss."

"Beggar him," said Miss Havisham to Estella. So we sat down to cards.

It was then I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago. I noticed that Miss Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up. As Estella dealt the cards, I glanced at the dressing-table again, and saw that the shoe upon it, once white, now yellow, had never been worn. I glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent, and saw that the silk stocking on it, once white, now yellow, had been trodden ragged. Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud.

So she sat, corpse-like, as we played at cards; the frillings and trimmings on her bridal dress, looking like earthy paper. I knew nothing then of the discoveries that are occasionally made of bodies buried in ancient times, which fall to powder in the moment of being distinctly seen; but, I have often thought since, that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust.

"He calls the knaves Jacks, this boy!" said Estella with disdain, before our first game was out. "And what coarse hands he has! And what thick boots!"

I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before; but I began to consider them a very indifferent

pair. Her contempt for me was so strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it.

She won the game, and I dealt. I misdealt, as was only natural, when I knew she was lying in wait for me to do wrong; and she denounced me for a stupid, clumsy labouring-boy.

"You say nothing of her," remarked Miss Havisham to me, as she looked on. "She says many hard things of you, but you say nothing of her. What do you think of her?"

"I don't like to say," I stammered.

"Tell me in my ear," said Miss Havisham, bending down.

"I think she is very proud," I replied, in a whisper.

"Anything else?"

"I think she is very pretty."

"Anything else?"

"I think she is very insulting." (She was looking at me then with a look of supreme aversion.)

"Anything else?"

"I think I should like to go home."

"And never see her again, though she is so pretty?"

"I am not sure that I shouldn't like to see her again, but I should like to go home now."

"You shall go soon," said Miss Havisham, aloud. "Play the game out."

Saving for the one weird smile at first, I should have felt almost sure that Miss Havisham's face could not smile. It had dropped into a watchful and brooding expression,—most likely when all the things about her had become transfixed,—and it looked as if nothing could ever lift it up again. Her chest had dropped, so that she stooped; and her voice had dropped, so that she spoke low, and with a dead lull upon her; altogether, she had the appearance of having dropped body and soul, within and without, under the weight of a crushing blow.

I played the game to an end with Estella, and she begged me. She threw the cards down on the table when she had won them all, as if she despised them for having been won of me.

"When shall I have you here again?" said Miss Havisham. "Let me think."

I was beginning to remind her that to-day was Wednesday, when she checked me with her former impatient movement of the fingers of her right hand.

"There, there! I know nothing of days of the week; I know nothing of weeks of the year. Come again after six days. You hear?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Estella, take him down. Let him have something to

eat, and let him roam and look about him while he eats. Go, Pip.”

I followed the candle down, as I had followed the candle up, and she stood it in the place where we had found it. Until she opened the side entrance, I had fancied, without thinking about it, that it must necessarily be night-time. The rush of the daylight quite confounded me, and made me feel as if I had been in the candlelight of the strange room many hours.

“You are to wait here, you boy,” said Estella; and disappeared and closed the door.

I took the opportunity of being alone in the courtyard to look at my coarse hands and my common boots. My opinion of those accessories was not favourable. They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now, as vulgar appendages. I determined to ask Joe why he had ever taught me to call those picture-cards Jacks, which ought to be called knaves. I wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up, and then I should have been so too.

She came back, with some bread and meat and a little mug of beer. She put the mug down on the stones of the yard, and gave me the bread and meat without looking at me, as insolently as if I were a dog in disgrace. I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry,—I cannot hit upon the right name for the smart—God knows what its name was,—that tears started to my eyes. The moment they sprang there, the girl looked at me with a quick delight in having been the cause of them. This gave me power to keep them back and to look at her: so, she gave a contemptuous toss—but with a sense, I thought, of having made too sure that I was so wounded—and left me.

But when she was gone, I looked about me for a place to hide my face in, and got behind one of the gates in the brewery-lane, and leaned my sleeve against the wall there, and leaned my forehead on it and cried. As I cried, I kicked the wall, and took a hard twist at my hair; so bitter were my feelings, and so sharp was the smart without a name, that needed counteraction.

My sister’s bringing up had made me sensitive. In the little world in which children have their existence

whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its world is small, and its rocking-horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter. Within myself, I had sustained, from my babyhood, a perpetual conflict with injustice. I had known, from the time when I could speak, that my sister, in her capricious and violent coercion, was unjust to me. I had cherished a profound conviction that her bringing me up by hand gave her no right to bring me up by jerks. Through all my punishments, disgraces, fasts, and vigils,

and other penitential performances, I had nursed this assurance; and to my communing so much with it, in a solitary and unprotected way, I in great part refer the fact that I was morally timid and very sensitive.

I got rid of my injured feelings for the time by kicking them into the brewery wall, and twisting them out of my hair, and then I smoothed my face with my sleeve, and came from behind the gate. The bread and meat were acceptable, and the beer was warming and tingling, and I was soon in spirits to look about me.

To be sure, it was a deserted place, down to the pigeon-house in the brewery-yard, which had been blown crooked on its pole by some high wind, and would have made the pigeons think themselves at sea, if there had been any pigeons there to be rocked by it. But there were no pigeons in the dove-cot, no horses in the stable, no pigs in the sty, no malt in the storehouse, no smells of grains and beer in the copper or the vat. All the uses and scents of the brewery might have evaporated with its last reek of smoke. In a by-yard, there was a wilderness of empty casks, which had a certain sour remembrance of better days lingering about them; but it was too sour to be accepted as a sample of the beer that was gone,—and in this respect I remember those recluses as being like most others.

Behind the furthest end of the brewery, was a rank garden with an old wall; not so high but that I could struggle up and hold on long enough to look over it, and see that the rank garden was the garden of the house, and that it was overgrown with tangled weeds, but that there was a track upon the green and yellow paths, as if some one sometimes walked there, and that Estella was walking away from me even then. But she seemed to be everywhere. For when I yielded to the temptation presented by the casks, and began to walk on them, I saw *her* walking on them at the end of the yard of casks. She had her back towards me, and held her pretty brown hair spread out in her two hands, and never looked round, and passed out of my view directly. So, in the brewery itself,—by which I mean the large paved lofty place in which they used to make the beer, and where the brewing utensils still were. When I first went into it, and, rather oppressed by its gloom, stood near the door looking about me, I saw her pass among the extinguished fires, and ascend some light iron stairs, and go out by a gallery high overhead, as if she were going out into the sky.

It was in this place, and at this moment, that a strange thing happened to my fancy. I thought it a strange thing then, and I thought it a stranger thing long afterwards. I turned my eyes—a little dimmed by looking up at the frosty light—towards a great wooden beam in a low nook of the building near me on my right hand, and I saw a figure hanging there by the neck. A figure all in yellow white, with but one shoe to the feet; and it hung so, that I could see that the faded trimmings of the dress were like earthy paper, and that the face was Miss Havisham’s, with

a movement going over the whole countenance as if she were trying to call to me. In the terror of seeing the figure, and in the terror of being certain that it had not been there a moment before, I at first ran from it, and then ran towards it. And my terror was greatest of all when I found no figure there.

Nothing less than the frosty light of the cheerful sky, the sight of people passing beyond the bars of the courtyard gate, and the reviving influence of the rest of the bread and meat and beer, would have brought me round. Even with those aids, I might not have come to myself as soon as I did, but that I saw Estella approaching with the keys, to let me out. She would have some fair reason for looking down upon me, I thought, if she saw me frightened; and she would have no fair reason.

She gave me a triumphant glance in passing me, as if she rejoiced that my hands were so coarse and my boots were so thick, and she opened the gate, and stood holding it. I was passing out without looking at her, when she touched me with a taunting hand.

“Why don’t you cry?”

“Because I don’t want to.”

“You do,” said she. “You have been crying till you are half blind, and you are near crying again now.”

She laughed contemptuously, pushed me out, and locked the gate upon me. I went straight to Mr. Pumblechook’s, and was immensely relieved to find him not at home. So, leaving word with the shopman on what day I was wanted at Miss Havisham’s again, I set off on the four-mile walk to our forge; pondering, as I went along, on all I had seen, and deeply revolving that I was a common labouring-boy; that my hands were coarse; that my boots were thick; that I had fallen into a despicable habit of calling knaves Jacks; that I was much more ignorant than I had considered myself last night, and generally that I was in a low-lived bad way.

Chapter IX

When I reached home, my sister was very curious to know all about Miss Havisham’s, and asked a number of questions. And I soon found myself getting heavily bumped from behind in the nape of the neck and the small of the back, and having my face ignominiously shoved against the kitchen wall, because I did not answer those questions at sufficient length.

If a dread of not being understood be hidden in the breasts of other young people to anything like the extent to which it used to be hidden in mine,—which I consider probable, as I have no particular reason to suspect myself of having been a monstrosity,—it is the key to many reservations. I felt convinced that if I described Miss Havisham’s as my eyes had seen it, I should not be understood. Not only that, but I felt convinced that Miss

Havisham too would not be understood; and although she was perfectly incomprehensible to me, I entertained an impression that there would be something coarse and treacherous in my dragging her as she really was (to say nothing of Miss Estella) before the contemplation of Mrs. Joe. Consequently, I said as little as I could, and had my face shoved against the kitchen wall.

The worst of it was that that bullying old Pumblechook, preyed upon by a devouring curiosity to be informed of all I had seen and heard, came gaping over in his chaise-cart at tea-time, to have the details divulged to him. And the mere sight of the torment, with his fishy eyes and mouth open, his sandy hair inquisitively on end, and his waistcoat heaving with windy arithmetic, made me vicious in my reticence.

“Well, boy,” Uncle Pumblechook began, as soon as he was seated in the chair of honour by the fire. “How did you get on up town?”

I answered, “Pretty well, sir,” and my sister shook her fist at me.

“Pretty well?” Mr. Pumblechook repeated. “Pretty well is no answer. Tell us what you mean by pretty well, boy?”

Whitewash on the forehead hardens the brain into a state of obstinacy perhaps. Anyhow, with whitewash from the wall on my forehead, my obstinacy was adamant. I reflected for some time, and then answered as if I had discovered a new idea, “I mean pretty well.”

My sister with an exclamation of impatience was going to fly at me,—I had no shadow of defence, for Joe was busy in the forge,—when Mr. Pumblechook interposed with “No! Don’t lose your temper. Leave this lad to me, ma’am; leave this lad to me.” Mr. Pumblechook then turned me towards him, as if he were going to cut my hair, and said,—

“First (to get our thoughts in order): Forty-three pence?”

I calculated the consequences of replying “Four Hundred Pound,” and finding them against me, went as near the answer as I could—which was somewhere about eightpence off. Mr. Pumblechook then put me through my pence-table from “twelve pence make one shilling,” up to “forty pence make three and fourpence,” and then triumphantly demanded, as if he had done for me, “Now! How much is forty-three pence?” To which I replied, after a long interval of reflection, “I don’t know.” And I was so aggravated that I almost doubt if I did know.

Mr. Pumblechook worked his head like a screw to screw it out of me, and said, “Is forty-three pence seven and sixpence three fardens, for instance?”

“Yes!” said I. And although my sister instantly boxed my ears, it was highly gratifying to me to see that the answer spoilt his joke, and brought him to a dead stop.

“Boy! What like is Miss Havisham?” Mr. Pumblechook

began again when he had recovered; folding his arms tight on his chest and applying the screw.

"Very tall and dark," I told him.

"Is she, uncle?" asked my sister.

Mr. Pumblechook winked assent; from which I at once inferred that he had never seen Miss Havisham, for she was nothing of the kind.

"Good!" said Mr. Pumblechook conceitedly. ("This is the way to have him! We are beginning to hold our own, I think, Mum?")

"I am sure, uncle," returned Mrs. Joe, "I wish you had him always; you know so well how to deal with him."

"Now, boy! What was she a-doing of, when you went in today?" asked Mr. Pumblechook.

"She was sitting," I answered, "in a black velvet coach."

Mr. Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe stared at one another—as they well might—and both repeated, "In a black velvet coach?"

"Yes," said I. "And Miss Estella—that's her niece, I think—handed her in cake and wine at the coach-window, on a gold plate. And we all had cake and wine on gold plates. And I got up behind the coach to eat mine, because she told me to."

"Was anybody else there?" asked Mr. Pumblechook.

"Four dogs," said I.

"Large or small?"

"Immense," said I. "And they fought for veal-cutlets out of a silver basket."

Mr. Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe stared at one another again, in utter amazement. I was perfectly frantic,—a reckless witness under the torture,—and would have told them anything.

"Where *was* this coach, in the name of gracious?" asked my sister.

"In Miss Havisham's room." They stared again. "But there weren't any horses to it." I added this saving clause, in the moment of rejecting four richly caparisoned coursers which I had had wild thoughts of harnessing.

"Can this be possible, uncle?" asked Mrs. Joe. "What can the boy mean?"

"I'll tell you, Mum," said Mr. Pumblechook. "My opinion is, it's a sedan-chair. She's flighty, you know,—very flighty,—quite flighty enough to pass her days in a sedan-chair."

"Did you ever see her in it, uncle?" asked Mrs. Joe.

"How could I," he returned, forced to the admission, "when I never see her in my life? Never clapped eyes upon her!"

"Goodness, uncle! And yet you have spoken to her?"

"Why, don't you know," said Mr. Pumblechook, testily, "that when I have been there, I have been took up to the outside of her door, and the door has stood ajar, and she has spoke to me that way. Don't say you don't know *that*, Mum. Howsoever, the boy went there to play. What did you play at, boy?"

"We played with flags," I said. (I beg to observe that I think of myself with amazement, when I recall the lies I told on this occasion.)

"Flags!" echoed my sister.

"Yes," said I. "Estella waved a blue flag, and I waved a red one, and Miss Havisham waved one sprinkled all over with little gold stars, out at the coach-window. And then we all waved our swords and hurrahd."

"Swords!" repeated my sister. "Where did you get swords from?"

"Out of a cupboard," said I. "And I saw pistols in it,—and jam,—and pills. And there was no daylight in the room, but it was all lighted up with candles."

"That's true, Mum," said Mr. Pumblechook, with a grave nod. "That's the state of the case, for that much I've seen myself." And then they both stared at me, and I, with an obtrusive show of artlessness on my countenance, stared at them, and plaited the right leg of my trousers with my right hand.

If they had asked me any more questions, I should undoubtedly have betrayed myself, for I was even then on the point of mentioning that there was a balloon in the yard, and should have hazarded the statement but for my invention being divided between that phenomenon and a bear in the brewery. They were so much occupied, however, in discussing the marvels I had already presented for their consideration, that I escaped. The subject still held them when Joe came in from his work to have a cup of tea. To whom my sister, more for the relief of her own mind than for the gratification of his, related my pretended experiences.

Now, when I saw Joe open his blue eyes and roll them all round the kitchen in helpless amazement, I was overtaken by penitence; but only as regarded him,—not in the least as regarded the other two. Towards Joe, and Joe only, I considered myself a young monster, while they sat debating what results would come to me from Miss Havisham's acquaintance and favour. They had no doubt that Miss Havisham would "do something" for me; their doubts related to the form that something would take. My sister stood out for "property." Mr. Pumblechook was in favour of a handsome premium for binding me apprentice to some genteel trade,—say, the corn and seed trade, for instance. Joe fell into the deepest disgrace with both, for offering the bright suggestion that I might only be presented with one of the dogs who had fought for the veal-cutlets. "If a fool's head can't express better opinions

than that," said my sister, "and you have got any work to do, you had better go and do it." So he went.

After Mr. Pumblechook had driven off, and when my sister was washing up, I stole into the forge to Joe, and remained by him until he had done for the night. Then I said, "Before the fire goes out, Joe, I should like to tell you something."

"Should you, Pip?" said Joe, drawing his shoeing-stool near the forge. "Then tell us. What is it, Pip?"

"Joe," said I, taking hold of his rolled-up shirt sleeve, and twisting it between my finger and thumb, "you remember all that about Miss Havisham's?"

"Remember?" said Joe. "I believe you! Wonderful!"

"It's a terrible thing, Joe; it ain't true."

"What are you telling of, Pip?" cried Joe, falling back in the greatest amazement. "You don't mean to say it's—"

"Yes I do; it's lies, Joe."

"But not all of it? Why sure you don't mean to say, Pip, that there was no black welwet co—eh?" For, I stood shaking my head. "But at least there was dogs, Pip? Come, Pip," said Joe, persuasively, "if there warn't no weal-cutlets, at least there was dogs?"

"No, Joe."

"A dog?" said Joe. "A puppy? Come?"

"No, Joe, there was nothing at all of the kind."

As I fixed my eyes hopelessly on Joe, Joe contem-plated me in dismay. "Pip, old chap! This won't do, old fellow! I say! Where do you expect to go to?"

"It's terrible, Joe; ain't it?"

"Terrible!" cried Joe. "Awful! What possessed you?"

"I don't know what possessed me, Joe," I replied, letting his shirt sleeve go, and sitting down in the ashes at his feet, hanging my head; "but I wish you hadn't taught me to call Knaves at cards Jacks; and I wish my boots weren't so thick nor my hands so coarse."

And then I told Joe that I felt very miserable, and that I hadn't been able to explain myself to Mrs. Joe and Pumblechook, who were so rude to me, and that there had been a beautiful young lady at Miss Havisham's who was dreadfully proud, and that she had said I was common, and that I knew I was common, and that I wished I was not common, and that the lies had come of it somehow, though I didn't know how.

This was a case of metaphysics, at least as difficult for Joe to deal with as for me. But Joe took the case altogether out of the region of metaphysics, and by that means vanquished it.

"There's one thing you may be sure of, Pip," said Joe, after some rumination, "namely, that lies is lies. Howsever they come, they didn't ought to come, and they come

from the father of lies, and work round to the same. Don't you tell no more of 'em, Pip. *That* ain't the way to get out of being common, old chap. And as to being common, I don't make it out at all clear. You are uncommon in some things. You're uncommon small. Likewise you're a uncommon scholar."

"No, I am ignorant and backward, Joe."

"Why, see what a letter you wrote last night! Wrote in print even! I've seen letters—Ah! and from gentlefolks!—that I'll swear weren't wrote in print," said Joe.

"I have learnt next to nothing, Joe. You think much of me. It's only that."

"Well, Pip," said Joe, "be it so or be it son't, you must be a common scholar afore you can be a oncom-mon one, I should hope! The king upon his throne, with his crown upon his ed, can't sit and write his acts of Parliament in print, without having begun, when he were a unpromoted Prince, with the alphabet.—Ah!" added Joe, with a shake of the head that was full of meaning, "and begun at A too, and worked his way to Z. And *I* know what that is to do, though I can't say I've exactly done it."

There was some hope in this piece of wisdom, and it rather encouraged me.

"Whether common ones as to callings and earnings," pursued Joe, reflectively, "mightn't be the better of continuing for to keep company with common ones, instead of going out to play with uncommon ones,—which reminds me to hope that there were a flag, perhaps?"

"No, Joe."

"(I'm sorry there weren't a flag, Pip). Whether that might be or mightn't be, is a thing as can't be looked into now, without putting your sister on the Rampage; and that's a thing not to be thought of as being done intentional. Lookee here, Pip, at what is said to you by a true friend. Which this to you the true friend say. If you can't get to be uncommon through going straight, you'll never get to do it through going crooked. So don't tell no more on 'em, Pip, and live well and die happy."

"You are not angry with me, Joe?"

"No, old chap. But bearing in mind that them were which I meanter say of a stunning and outdacious sort,—alluding to them which bordered on weal-cutlets and dog-fighting,—a sincere well-wisher would advise, Pip, their being dropped into your meditations, when you go upstairs to bed. That's all, old chap, and don't never do it no more."

When I got up to my little room and said my prayers, I did not forget Joe's recommendation, and yet my young mind was in that disturbed and unthankful state, that I thought long after I laid me down, how common Estella would consider Joe, a mere blacksmith; how thick his boots, and how coarse his hands. I thought how Joe and

my sister were then sitting in the kitchen, and how I had come up to bed from the kitchen, and how Miss Havisham and Estella never sat in a kitchen, but were far above the level of such common doings. I fell asleep recalling what I “used to do” when I was at Miss Havisham’s; as though I had been there weeks or months, instead of hours; and as though it were quite an old subject of remembrance, instead of one that had arisen only that day.

That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me. But it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day.

Chapter X

The felicitous idea occurred to me a morning or two later when I woke, that the best step I could take towards making myself uncommon was to get out of Biddy everything she knew. In pursuance of this luminous conception I mentioned to Biddy when I went to Mr. Wopsle’s great-aunt’s at night, that I had a particular reason for wishing to get on in life, and that I should feel very much obliged to her if she would impart all her learning to me. Biddy, who was the most obliging of girls, immediately said she would, and indeed began to carry out her promise within five minutes.

The Educational scheme or Course established by Mr. Wopsle’s great-aunt may be resolved into the following synopsis. The pupils ate apples and put straws down one another’s backs, until Mr. Wopsle’s great-aunt collected her energies, and made an indiscriminate totter at them with a birch-rod. After receiving the charge with every mark of derision, the pupils formed in line and buzzingly passed a ragged book from hand to hand. The book had an alphabet in it, some figures and tables, and a little spelling,—that is to say, it had had once. As soon as this volume began to circulate, Mr. Wopsle’s great-aunt fell into a state of coma, arising either from sleep or a rheumatic paroxysm. The pupils then entered among themselves upon a competitive examination on the subject of Boots, with the view of ascertaining who could tread the hardest upon whose toes. This mental exercise lasted until Biddy made a rush at them and distributed three defaced Bibles (shaped as if they had been unskillfully cut off the chump end of something), more illegibly printed at the best than any curiosities of literature I have since met with, speckled all over with ironmould, and having various specimens of the insect world smashed between their leaves. This part of the Course was usually lightened by several single combats between Biddy and refractory students. When the fights were over, Biddy gave out the number of a page, and then we all read aloud what we

could,—or what we couldn’t—in a frightful chorus; Biddy leading with a high, shrill, monotonous voice, and none of us having the least notion of, or reverence for, what we were reading about. When this horrible din had lasted a certain time, it mechanically awoke Mr. Wopsle’s great-aunt, who staggered at a boy fortuitously, and pulled his ears. This was understood to terminate the Course for the evening, and we emerged into the air with shrieks of intellectual victory. It is fair to remark that there was no prohibition against any pupil’s entertaining himself with a slate or even with the ink (when there was any), but that it was not easy to pursue that branch of study in the winter season, on account of the little general shop in which the classes were holden—and which was also Mr. Wopsle’s great-aunt’s sitting-room and bedchamber—being but faintly illuminated through the agency of one low-spirited dip-candle and no snuffers.

It appeared to me that it would take time to become uncommon, under these circumstances: nevertheless, I resolved to try it, and that very evening Biddy entered on our special agreement, by imparting some information from her little catalogue of Prices, under the head of moist sugar, and lending me, to copy at home, a large old English D which she had imitated from the heading of some newspaper, and which I supposed, until she told me what it was, to be a design for a buckle.

Of course there was a public-house in the village, and of course Joe liked sometimes to smoke his pipe there. I had received strict orders from my sister to call for him at the Three Jolly Bargemen, that evening, on my way from school, and bring him home at my peril. To the Three Jolly Bargemen, therefore, I directed my steps.

There was a bar at the Jolly Bargemen, with some alarmingly long chalk scores in it on the wall at the side of the door, which seemed to me to be never paid off. They had been there ever since I could remember, and had grown more than I had. But there was a quantity of chalk about our country, and perhaps the people neglected no opportunity of turning it to account.

It being Saturday night, I found the landlord looking rather grimly at these records; but as my business was with Joe and not with him, I merely wished him good evening, and passed into the common room at the end of the passage, where there was a bright large kitchen fire, and where Joe was smoking his pipe in company with Mr. Wopsle and a stranger. Joe greeted me as usual with “Halloa, Pip, old chap!” and the moment he said that, the stranger turned his head and looked at me.

He was a secret-looking man whom I had never seen before. His head was all on one side, and one of his eyes was half shut up, as if he were taking aim at something with an invisible gun. He had a pipe in his mouth, and he took it out, and, after slowly blowing all his smoke away and looking hard at me all the time, nodded. So, I

nodded, and then he nodded again, and made room on the settle beside him that I might sit down there.

But as I was used to sit beside Joe whenever I entered that place of resort, I said "No, thank you, sir," and fell into the space Joe made for me on the opposite settle. The strange man, after glancing at Joe, and seeing that his attention was otherwise engaged, nodded to me again when I had taken my seat, and then rubbed his leg—in a very odd way, as it struck me.

"You was saying," said the strange man, turning to Joe, "that you was a blacksmith."

"Yes. I said it, you know," said Joe.

"What'll you drink, Mr.—? You didn't mention your name, by the bye."

Joe mentioned it now, and the strange man called him by it. "What'll you drink, Mr. Gargery? At my expense? To top up with?"

"Well," said Joe, "to tell you the truth, I ain't much in the habit of drinking at anybody's expense but my own."

"Habit? No," returned the stranger, "but once and away, and on a Saturday night too. Come! Put a name to it, Mr. Gargery."

"I wouldn't wish to be stiff company," said Joe. "Rum."

"Rum," repeated the stranger. "And will the other gentleman originate a sentiment?"

"Rum," said Mr. Wopsle.

"Three Rums!" cried the stranger, calling to the landlord. "Glasses round!"

"This other gentleman," observed Joe, by way of introducing Mr. Wopsle, "is a gentleman that you would like to hear give it out. Our clerk at church."

"Aha!" said the stranger, quickly, and cocking his eye at me. "The lonely church, right out on the marshes, with graves round it?"

"That's it," said Joe.

The stranger, with a comfortable kind of grunt over his pipe, put his legs up on the settle that he had to himself. He wore a flapping broad-brimmed traveller's hat, and under it a handkerchief tied over his head in the manner of a cap: so that he showed no hair. As he looked at the fire, I thought I saw a cunning expression, followed by a half-laugh, come into his face.

"I am not acquainted with this country, gentlemen, but it seems a solitary country towards the river."

"Most marshes is solitary," said Joe.

"No doubt, no doubt. Do you find any gypsies, now, or tramps, or vagrants of any sort, out there?"

"No," said Joe; "none but a runaway convict now and then. And we don't find *them*, easy. Eh, Mr. Wopsle?"

Mr. Wopsle, with a majestic remembrance of old discomfiture, assented; but not warmly.

"Seems you have been out after such?" asked the stranger.

"Once," returned Joe. "Not that we wanted to take them, you understand; we went out as lookers on; me, and Mr. Wopsle, and Pip. Didn't us, Pip?"

"Yes, Joe."

The stranger looked at me again,—still cocking his eye, as if he were expressly taking aim at me with his invisible gun,—and said, "He's a likely young parcel of bones that. What is it you call him?"

"Pip," said Joe.

"Christened Pip?"

"No, not christened Pip."

"Surname Pip?"

"No," said Joe, "it's a kind of family name what he gave himself when a infant, and is called by."

"Son of yours?"

"Well," said Joe, meditatively, not, of course, that it could be in anywise necessary to consider about it, but because it was the way at the Jolly Bargemen to seem to consider deeply about everything that was discussed over pipes,—*"well—no. No, he ain't."*

"Nevvy?" said the strange man.

"Well," said Joe, with the same appearance of profound cogitation, "he is not—no, not to deceive you, he is *not*—my nevvy."

"What the Blue Blazes is he?" asked the stranger. Which appeared to me to be an inquiry of unnecessary strength.

Mr. Wopsle struck in upon that; as one who knew all about relationships, having professional occasion to bear in mind what female relations a man might not marry; and expounded the ties between me and Joe. Having his hand in, Mr. Wopsle finished off with a most terrifically snarling passage from Richard the Third, and seemed to think he had done quite enough to account for it when he added, "*—as the poet says.*"

And here I may remark that when Mr. Wopsle referred to me, he considered it a necessary part of such reference to rumple my hair and poke it into my eyes. I cannot conceive why everybody of his standing who visited at our house should always have put me through the same inflammatory process under similar circumstances. Yet I do not call to mind that I was ever in my earlier youth the subject of remark in our social family circle, but some large-handed person took some such ophthalmic steps to patronise me.

All this while, the strange man looked at nobody but me, and looked at me as if he were determined to have a shot at me at last, and bring me down. But he said nothing after offering his Blue Blazes observation, until the glasses of rum and water were brought; and then he made his shot, and a most extraordinary shot it was.

It was not a verbal remark, but a proceeding in dumb-show, and was pointedly addressed to me. He stirred his rum and water pointedly at me, and he tasted his rum and water pointedly at me. And he stirred it and he tasted it; not with a spoon that was brought to him, but *with a file*.

He did this so that nobody but I saw the file; and when he had done it he wiped the file and put it in a breast-pocket. I knew it to be Joe's file, and I knew that he knew my convict, the moment I saw the instrument. I sat gazing at him, spell-bound. But he now reclined on his settle, taking very little notice of me, and talking principally about turnips.

There was a delicious sense of cleaning-up and making a quiet pause before going on in life afresh, in our village on Saturday nights, which stimulated Joe to dare to stay out half an hour longer on Saturdays than at other times. The half-hour and the rum and water running out together, Joe got up to go, and took me by the hand.

"Stop half a moment, Mr. Gargery," said the strange man. "I think I've got a bright new shilling somewhere in my pocket, and if I have, the boy shall have it."

He looked it out from a handful of small change, folded it in some crumpled paper, and gave it to me. "Yours!" said he. "Mind! Your own."

I thanked him, staring at him far beyond the bounds of good manners, and holding tight to Joe. He gave Joe good-night, and he gave Mr. Wopsle good-night (who went out with us), and he gave me only a look with his aiming eye,—no, not a look, for he shut it up, but wonders may be done with an eye by hiding it.

On the way home, if I had been in a humour for talking, the talk must have been all on my side, for Mr. Wopsle parted from us at the door of the Jolly Bargemen, and Joe went all the way home with his mouth wide open, to rinse the rum out with as much air as possible. But I was in a manner stupefied by this turning up of my old misdeed and old acquaintance, and could think of nothing else.

My sister was not in a very bad temper when we presented ourselves in the kitchen, and Joe was encouraged by that unusual circumstance to tell her about the bright shilling. "A bad un, I'll be bound," said Mrs. Joe triumphantly, "or he wouldn't have given it to the boy! Let's look at it."

I took it out of the paper, and it proved to be a good one. "But what's this?" said Mrs. Joe, throwing down the shilling and catching up the paper. "Two One-Pound notes?"

Nothing less than two fat sweltering one-pound notes that seemed to have been on terms of the warmest intimacy with all the cattle-markets in the county. Joe caught up his hat again, and ran with them to the Jolly Bargemen to restore them to their owner. While he was gone, I sat down on my usual stool and looked vacantly at my sister, feeling pretty sure that the man would not be there.

Presently, Joe came back, saying that the man was gone, but that he, Joe, had left word at the Three Jolly

Bargemen concerning the notes. Then my sister sealed them up in a piece of paper, and put them under some dried rose-leaves in an ornamental teapot on the top of a press in the state parlour. There they remained, a nightmare to me, many and many a night and day.

I had sadly broken sleep when I got to bed, through thinking of the strange man taking aim at me with his invisible gun, and of the guiltily coarse and common thing it was, to be on secret terms of conspiracy with convicts,—a feature in my low career that I had previously forgotten. I was haunted by the file too. A dread possessed me that when I least expected it, the file would reappear. I coaxed myself to sleep by thinking of Miss Havisham's, next Wednesday; and in my sleep I saw the file coming at me out of a door, without seeing who held it, and I screamed myself awake.

Chapter XI

At the appointed time I returned to Miss Havisham's, and my hesitating ring at the gate brought out Estella. She locked it after admitting me, as she had done before, and again preceded me into the dark passage where her candle stood. She took no notice of me until she had the candle in her hand, when she looked over her shoulder, superciliously saying, "You are to come this way to-day," and took me to quite another part of the house.

The passage was a long one, and seemed to pervade the whole square basement of the Manor House. We traversed but one side of the square, however, and at the end of it she stopped, and put her candle down and opened a door. Here, the daylight reappeared, and I found myself in a small paved courtyard, the opposite side of which was formed by a detached dwelling-house, that looked as if it had once belonged to the manager or head clerk of the extinct brewery. There was a clock in the outer wall of this house. Like the clock in Miss Havisham's room, and like Miss Havisham's watch, it had stopped at twenty minutes to nine.

We went in at the door, which stood open, and into a gloomy room with a low ceiling, on the ground-floor at the back. There was some company in the room, and Estella said to me as she joined it, "You are to go and stand there boy, till you are wanted." "There", being the window, I crossed to it, and stood "there," in a very uncomfortable state of mind, looking out.

It opened to the ground, and looked into a most miserable corner of the neglected garden, upon a rank ruin of cabbage-stalks, and one box-tree that had been clipped round long ago, like a pudding, and had a new growth at the top of it, out of shape and of a different colour, as if that part of the pudding had stuck to the saucepan and got burnt. This was my homely thought, as I contemplated the box-tree. There had been some light snow, overnight, and it lay nowhere else to my

knowledge; but, it had not quite melted from the cold shadow of this bit of garden, and the wind caught it up in little eddies and threw it at the window, as if it pelted me for coming there.

I divined that my coming had stopped conversation in the room, and that its other occupants were looking at me. I could see nothing of the room except the shining of the fire in the window-glass, but I stiffened in all my joints with the consciousness that I was under close inspection.

There were three ladies in the room and one gentleman. Before I had been standing at the window five minutes, they somehow conveyed to me that they were all toadies and humbugs, but that each of them pretended not to know that the others were toadies and humbugs: because the admission that he or she did know it, would have made him or her out to be a toady and humbug.

They all had a listless and dreary air of waiting somebody's pleasure, and the most talkative of the ladies had to speak quite rigidly to repress a yawn. This lady, whose name was Camilla, very much reminded me of my sister, with the difference that she was older, and (as I found when I caught sight of her) of a blunter cast of features. Indeed, when I knew her better I began to think it was a Mercy she had any features at all, so very blank and high was the dead wall of her face.

"Poor dear soul!" said this lady, with an abruptness of manner quite my sister's. "Nobody's enemy but his own!"

"It would be much more commendable to be somebody else's enemy," said the gentleman; "far more natural."

"Cousin Raymond," observed another lady, "we are to love our neighbour."

"Sarah Pocket," returned Cousin Raymond, "if a man is not his own neighbour, who is?"

Miss Pocket laughed, and Camilla laughed and said (checking a yawn), "The idea!" But I thought they seemed to think it rather a good idea too. The other lady, who had not spoken yet, said gravely and emphatically, "*Very* true!"

"Poor soul!" Camilla presently went on (I knew they had all been looking at me in the mean time), "he is so very strange! Would anyone believe that when Tom's wife died, he actually could not be induced to see the importance of the children's having the deepest of trimmings to their mourning? 'Good Lord!' says he, 'Camilla, what can it signify so long as the poor bereaved little things are in black?' So like Matthew! The idea!"

"Good points in him, good points in him," said Cousin Raymond; "Heaven forbid I should deny good points in him; but he never had, and he never will have, any sense of the proprieties."

"You know I was obliged," said Camilla,— "I was

obliged to be firm. I said, 'It WILL NOT DO, for the credit of the family.' I told him that, without deep

trimmings, the family was disgraced. I cried about it from breakfast till dinner. I injured my digestion. And at last he flung out in his violent way, and said, with a D, 'Then do as you like.' Thank Goodness it will always be a consolation to me to know that I instantly went out in a pouring rain and bought the things."

"*He* paid for them, did he not?" asked Estella.

"It's not the question, my dear child, who paid for them," returned Camilla. "*I* bought them. And I shall often think of that with peace, when I wake up in the night."

The ringing of a distant bell, combined with the echoing of some cry or call along the passage by which I had come, interrupted the conversation and caused Estella to say to me, "Now, boy!" On my turning round, they all looked at me with the utmost contempt, and, as I went out, I heard Sarah Pocket say, "Well I am sure! What next!" and Camilla add, with indignation, "Was there ever such a fancy! The i-de-a!"

As we were going with our candle along the dark passage, Estella stopped all of a sudden, and, facing round, said in her taunting manner, with her face quite close to mine,—

"Well?"

"Well, miss?" I answered, almost falling over her and checking myself.

She stood looking at me, and, of course, I stood looking at her.

"Am I pretty?"

"Yes; I think you are very pretty."

"Am I insulting?"

"Not so much so as you were last time," said I.

"Not so much so?"

"No."

She fired when she asked the last question, and she slapped my face with such force as she had, when I answered it.

"Now?" said she. "You little coarse monster, what do you think of me now?"

"I shall not tell you."

"Because you are going to tell upstairs. Is that it?"

"No," said I, "that's not it."

"Why don't you cry again, you little wretch?"

"Because I'll never cry for you again," said I. Which was, I suppose, as false a declaration as ever was made; for I was inwardly crying for her then, and I know what I know of the pain she cost me afterwards.

We went on our way upstairs after this episode; and, as we were going up, we met a gentleman groping his way down.

"Whom have we here?" asked the gentleman, stopping and looking at me.

"A boy," said Estella.

He was a burly man of an exceedingly dark complexion, with an exceedingly large head, and a corresponding large hand. He took my chin in his large hand and turned up my face to have a look at me by the light of the candle. He was prematurely bald on the top of his head, and had bushy black eyebrows that wouldn't lie down but stood up bristling. His eyes were set very deep in his head, and were disagreeably sharp and suspicious. He had a large watch-chain, and strong black dots where his beard and whiskers would have been if he had let them. He was nothing to me, and I could have had no foresight then, that he ever would be anything to me, but it happened that I had this opportunity of observing him well.

"Boy of the neighbourhood? Hey?" said he.

"Yes, sir," said I.

"How do *you* come here?"

"Miss Havisham sent for me, sir," I explained.

"Well! Behave yourself. I have a pretty large experience of boys, and you're a bad set of fellows. Now mind!" said he, biting the side of his great forefinger as he frowned at me, "you behave yourself!"

With those words, he released me—which I was glad of, for his hand smelt of scented soap—and went his way downstairs. I wondered whether he could be a doctor; but no, I thought; he couldn't be a doctor, or he would have a quieter and more persuasive manner. There was not much time to consider the subject, for we were soon in Miss Havisham's room, where she and everything else were just as I had left them. Estella left me standing near the door, and I stood there until Miss Havisham cast her eyes upon me from the dressing-table.

"So!" she said, without being startled or surprised: "the days have worn away, have they?"

"Yes, ma'am. To-day is—"

"There, there, there!" with the impatient movement of her fingers. "I don't want to know. Are you ready to play?"

I was obliged to answer in some confusion, "I don't think I am, ma'am."

"Not at cards again?" she demanded, with a searching look.

"Yes, ma'am; I could do that, if I was wanted."

"Since this house strikes you old and grave, boy," said Miss Havisham, impatiently, "and you are unwilling to play, are you willing to work?"

I could answer this inquiry with a better heart than I had been able to find for the other question, and I said I was quite willing.

"Then go into that opposite room," said she, pointing at the door behind me with her withered hand, "and wait there till I come."

I crossed the staircase landing, and entered the room she indicated. From that room, too, the daylight was completely excluded, and it had an airless smell that was oppressive. A fire had been lately kindled in the damp old-fashioned grate, and it was more disposed to go out than to burn up, and the reluctant smoke which hung in the room seemed colder than the clearer air,—like our own marsh mist. Certain wintry branches of candles on the high chimney-piece faintly lighted the chamber; or it would be more expressive to say, faintly troubled its darkness. It was spacious, and I dare say had once been handsome, but every discernible thing in it was covered with dust and mould, and dropping to pieces. The most prominent object was a long table with a tablecloth spread on it, as if a feast had been in preparation when the house and the clocks all stopped together. An epergne or centre-piece of some kind was in the middle of this cloth; it was so heavily overhung with cobwebs that its form was quite undistinguishable; and, as I looked along the yellow expanse out of which I remember its seeming to grow, like a black fungus, I saw speckle-legged spiders with blotchy bodies running home to it, and running out from it, as if some circumstances of the greatest public importance had just transpired in the spider community.

I heard the mice too, rattling behind the panels, as if the same occurrence were important to their interests. But the black beetles took no notice of the agitation, and groped about the hearth in a ponderous elderly way, as if they were short-sighted and hard of hearing, and not on terms with one another.

These crawling things had fascinated my attention, and I was watching them from a distance, when Miss Havisham laid a hand upon my shoulder. In her other hand she had a crutch-headed stick on which she leaned, and she looked like the Witch of the place.

"This," said she, pointing to the long table with her stick, "is where I will be laid when I am dead. They shall come and look at me here."

With some vague misgiving that she might get upon the table then and there and die at once, the complete realisation of the ghastly waxwork at the Fair, I shrank under her touch.

"What do you think that is?" she asked me, again pointing with her stick; "that, where those cobwebs are?"

"I can't guess what it is, ma'am."

"It's a great cake. A bride-cake. Mine!"

She looked all round the room in a glaring manner, and then said, leaning on me while her hand twitched my shoulder, "Come, come, come! Walk me, walk me!"

I made out from this, that the work I had to do, was to walk Miss Havisham round and round the room. Accordingly, I started at once, and she leaned upon my shoulder, and we went away at a pace that might have been an imitation (founded on my first impulse under that roof) of Mr. Pumblechook's chaise-cart.

She was not physically strong, and after a little time said, "Slower!" Still, we went at an impatient fitful speed, and as we went, she twitched the hand upon my shoulder, and worked her mouth, and led me to believe that we were going fast because her thoughts

went fast. After a while she said, "Call Estella!" so I went out on the landing and roared that name as I had done on the previous occasion. When her light appeared, I returned to Miss Havisham, and we started away again round and round the room.

If only Estella had come to be a spectator of our proceedings, I should have felt sufficiently discontented; but as she brought with her the three ladies and the gentleman whom I had seen below, I didn't know what to do. In my politeness, I would have stopped; but Miss Havisham twitched my shoulder, and we posted on,—with a shame-faced consciousness on my part that they would think it was all my doing.

"Dear Miss Havisham," said Miss Sarah Pocket. "How well you look!"

"I do not," returned Miss Havisham. "I am yellow skin and bone."

Camilla brightened when Miss Pocket met with this rebuff; and she murmured, as she plaintively contemplated Miss Havisham, "Poor dear soul! Certainly not to be expected to look well, poor thing. The idea!"

"And how are *you*?" said Miss Havisham to Camilla. As we were close to Camilla then, I would have stopped as a matter of course, only Miss Havisham wouldn't stop. We swept on, and I felt that I was highly obnoxious to Camilla.

"Thank you, Miss Havisham," she returned, "I am as well as can be expected."

"Why, what's the matter with you?" asked Miss Havisham, with exceeding sharpness.

"Nothing worth mentioning," replied Camilla. "I don't wish to make a display of my feelings, but I have habitually thought of you more in the night than I am quite equal to."

"Then don't think of me," retorted Miss Havisham.

"Very easily said!" remarked Camilla, amiably repressing a sob, while a hitch came into her upper lip, and her tears overflowed. "Raymond is a witness what ginger and sal volatile I am obliged to take in the night. Raymond is a witness what nervous jerkings I have in my legs. Chokings and nervous jerkings, however, are

nothing new to me when I think with anxiety of those I love. If I could be less affectionate and sensitive, I should have a better digestion and an iron set of nerves. I am sure I wish it could be so. But as to not thinking of you in the night—The idea!" Here, a burst of tears.

The Raymond referred to, I understood to be the gentleman present, and him I understood to be Mr. Camilla. He came to the rescue at this point, and said in a consolatory and complimentary voice, "Camilla, my dear, it is well known that your family feelings are gradually undermining you to the extent of making one of your legs shorter than the other."

"I am not aware," observed the grave lady whose voice I had heard but once, "that to think of any person is to make a great claim upon that person, my dear."

Miss Sarah Pocket, whom I now saw to be a little dry, brown, corrugated old woman, with a small face that might have been made of walnut-shells, and a large mouth like a cat's without the whiskers, supported this position by saying, "No, indeed, my dear. Hem!"

"Thinking is easy enough," said the grave lady.

"What is easier, you know?" assented Miss Sarah Pocket.

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Camilla, whose fermenting feelings appeared to rise from her legs to her bosom. "It's all very true! It's a weakness to be so affectionate, but I can't help it. No doubt my health would be much

better if it was otherwise, still I wouldn't change my disposition if I could. It's the cause of much suffering, but it's a consolation to know I possess it, when I wake up in the night." Here another burst of feeling.

Miss Havisham and I had never stopped all this time, but kept going round and round the room; now brushing against the skirts of the visitors, now giving them the whole length of the dismal chamber.

"There's Matthew!" said Camilla. "Never mixing with any natural ties, never coming here to see how Miss Havisham is! I have taken to the sofa with my staylace cut, and have lain there hours insensible, with my head over the side, and my hair all down, and my feet I don't know where—"

("Much higher than your head, my love," said Mr. Camilla.)

"I have gone off into that state, hours and hours, on account of Matthew's strange and inexplicable conduct, and nobody has thanked me."

"Really I must say I should think not!" interposed the grave lady.

"You see, my dear," added Miss Sarah Pocket (a blandly vicious personage), "the question to put to yourself is, who did you expect to thank you, my love?"

"Without expecting any thanks, or anything of the sort," resumed Camilla, "I have remained in that state,

hours and hours, and Raymond is a witness of the extent to which I have choked, and what the total inefficacy of ginger has been, and I have been heard at the piano-forte tuner's across the street, where the poor mistaken children have even supposed it to be pigeons cooing at a distance,—and now to be told—” Here Camilla put her hand to her throat, and began to be quite chemical as to the formation of new combinations there.

When this same Matthew was mentioned, Miss Havisham stopped me and herself, and stood looking at the speaker. This change had a great influence in bringing Camilla's chemistry to a sudden end.

“Matthew will come and see me at last,” said Miss Havisham, sternly, “when I am laid on that table. That will be his place,—there,” striking the table with her stick, “at my head! And yours will be there! And your husband's there! And Sarah Pocket's there! And Georgiana's there! Now you all know where to take your stations when you come to feast upon me. And now go!”

At the mention of each name, she had struck the table with her stick in a new place. She now said, “Walk me, walk me!” and we went on again.

“I suppose there's nothing to be done,” exclaimed Camilla, “but comply and depart. It's something to have seen the object of one's love and duty for even so short a time. I shall think of it with a melancholy satisfaction when I wake up in the night. I wish Matthew could have that comfort, but he sets it at defiance. I am determined not to make a display of my feelings, but it's very hard to be told one wants to feast on one's relations,—as if one was a Giant,—and to be told to go. The bare idea!”

Mr. Camilla interposing, as Mrs. Camilla laid her hand upon her heaving bosom, that lady assumed an unnatural fortitude of manner which I supposed to be expressive of an intention to drop and choke when out of view, and kissing her hand to Miss Havisham, was escorted forth. Sarah Pocket and Georgiana contended who should remain last; but Sarah was too knowing to be outdone, and ambled round Georgiana with that artful slipperiness that the latter was obliged to take precedence. Sarah Pocket then made her separate effect of departing with, “Bless you, Miss Havisham dear!” and with a smile of forgiving pity on her walnut-shell countenance for the weaknesses of the rest.

While Estella was away lighting them down, Miss Havisham still walked with her hand on my shoulder, but more and more slowly. At last she stopped before the fire, and said, after muttering and looking at it some seconds, —

“This is my birthday, Pip.”

I was going to wish her many happy returns, when she lifted her stick.

“I don't suffer it to be spoken of. I don't suffer those

who were here just now, or any one to speak of it. They come here on the day, but they dare not refer to it.”

Of course I made no further effort to refer to it.

“On this day of the year, long before you were born, this heap of decay,” stabbing with her crutched stick at the pile of cobwebs on the table, but not touching it, “was brought here. It and I have worn away together. The mice have gnawed at it, and sharper teeth than teeth of mice have gnawed at me.”

She held the head of her stick against her heart as she stood looking at the table; she in her once white dress, all yellow and withered; the once white cloth all yellow and withered; everything around in a state to crumble under a touch.

“When the ruin is complete,” said she, with a ghastly look, “and when they lay me dead, in my bride's dress on the bride's table,—which shall be done, and which will be the finished curse upon him,—so much the better if it is done on this day!”

She stood looking at the table as if she stood looking at her own figure lying there. I remained quiet. Estella returned, and she too remained quiet. It seemed to me that we continued thus for a long time. In the heavy air of the room, and the heavy darkness that brooded in its remoter corners, I even had an alarming fancy that Estella and I might presently begin to decay.

At length, not coming out of her distraught state by degrees, but in an instant, Miss Havisham said, “Let me see you two play cards; why have you not begun?” With that, we returned to her room, and sat down as before; I was beggared, as before; and again, as before, Miss Havisham watched us all the time, directed my attention to Estella's beauty, and made me notice it the more by trying her jewels on Estella's breast and hair.

Estella, for her part, likewise treated me as before, except that she did not condescend to speak. When we had played some half-dozen games, a day was appointed for my return, and I was taken down into the yard to be fed in the former dog-like manner. There, too, I was again left to wander about as I liked.

It is not much to the purpose whether a gate in that garden wall which I had scrambled up to peep over on the last occasion was, on that last occasion, open or shut. Enough that I saw no gate then, and that I saw one now. As it stood open, and as I knew that Estella had let the visitors out,—for she had returned with the keys in her hand,—I strolled into the garden, and strolled all over it. It was quite a wilderness, and there were old melon-frames and cucumber-frames in it, which seemed in their decline to have produced a spontaneous growth of weak attempts at pieces of old hats and boots, with now and then a weedy offshoot into the likeness of a battered saucepan.

When I had exhausted the garden and a greenhouse with nothing in it but a fallen-down grape-vine and some bottles, I found myself in the dismal corner upon which I had looked out of the window. Never questioning for a

moment that the house was now empty, I looked in at another window, and found myself, to my great surprise, exchanging a broad stare with a pale young gentleman with red eyelids and light hair.

This pale young gentleman quickly disappeared, and reappeared beside me. He had been at his books when I had found myself staring at him, and I now saw that he was inky.

"Halloa!" said he, "young fellow!"

Halloa being a general observation which I had usually observed to be best answered by itself, I said, "Halloa!" politely omitting young fellow.

"Who let *you* in?" said he.

"Miss Estella."

"Who gave you leave to prowl about?"

"Miss Estella."

"Come and fight," said the pale young gentleman.

What could I do but follow him? I have often asked myself the question since; but what else could I do? His manner was so final, and I was so astonished, that I followed where he led, as if I had been under a spell.

"Stop a minute, though," he said, wheeling round before we had gone many paces. "I ought to give you a reason for fighting, too. There it is!" In a most irritating manner he instantly slapped his hands against one another, daintily flung one of his legs up behind him, pulled my hair, slapped his hands again, dipped his head, and butted it into my stomach.

The bull-like proceeding last mentioned, besides that it was unquestionably to be regarded in the light of a liberty, was particularly disagreeable just after bread and meat. I therefore hit out at him and was going to hit out again, when he said, "Aha! Would you?" and began dancing backwards and forwards in a manner quite unparalleled within my limited experience.

"Laws of the game!" said he. Here, he skipped from his left leg on to his right. "Regular rules!" Here, he skipped from his right leg on to his left. "Come to the ground, and go through the preliminaries!" Here, he dodged backwards and forwards, and did all sorts of things while I looked helplessly at him.

I was secretly afraid of him when I saw him so dexterous; but I felt morally and physically convinced that his light head of hair could have had no business in the pit of my stomach, and that I had a right to consider it irrelevant when so obtruded on my attention. Therefore, I followed him without a word, to a retired nook of the garden, formed by the junction of two walls and screened by some rubbish. On his asking me if I was satisfied with the ground, and on my replying Yes, he begged my leave to absent himself for a moment, and quickly returned

with a bottle of water and a sponge dipped in vinegar. "Available for both," he said, placing these against the

wall. And then fell to pulling off, not only his jacket and waistcoat, but his shirt too, in a manner at once light-hearted, business-like, and bloodthirsty.

Although he did not look very healthy,—having pimples on his face, and a breaking out at his mouth,—these dreadful preparations quite appalled me. I judged him to be about my own age, but he was much taller, and he had a way of spinning himself about that was full of appearance. For the rest, he was a young gentleman in a grey suit (when not denuded for battle), with his elbows, knees, wrists, and heels considerably in advance of the rest of him as to development.

My heart failed me when I saw him squaring at me with every demonstration of mechanical nicety, and eyeing my anatomy as if he were minutely choosing his bone. I never have been so surprised in my life, as I was when I let out the first blow, and saw him lying on his back, looking up at me with a bloody nose and his face exceedingly fore-shortened.

But, he was on his feet directly, and after sponging himself with a great show of dexterity began squaring again. The second greatest surprise I have ever had in my life was seeing him on his back again, looking up at me out of a black eye.

His spirit inspired me with great respect. He seemed to have no strength, and he never once hit me hard, and he was always knocked down; but he would be up again in a moment, sponging himself or drinking out of the water-bottle, with the greatest satisfaction in seconding himself according to form, and then came at me with an air and a show that made me believe he really was going to do for me at last. He got heavily bruised, for I am sorry to record that the more I hit him, the harder I hit him; but he came up again and again and again, until at last he got a bad fall with the back of his head against the wall. Even after that crisis in our affairs, he got up and turned round and round confusedly a few times, not knowing where I was; but finally went on his knees to his sponge and threw it up: at the same time panting out, "That means you have won."

He seemed so brave and innocent, that although I had not proposed the contest, I felt but a gloomy satisfaction in my victory. Indeed, I go so far as to hope that I regarded myself while dressing as a species of savage young wolf or other wild beast. However, I got dressed, darkly wiping my sanguinary face at intervals, and I said, "Can I help you?" and he said "No thankee," and I said "Good afternoon," and he said "Same to you."

When I got into the courtyard, I found Estella waiting with the keys. But she neither asked me where I had been, nor why I had kept her waiting; and there was a bright flush upon her face, as though something had happened to

delight her. Instead of going straight to the gate, too, she stepped back into the passage, and beckoned me.

"Come here! You may kiss me, if you like."

I kissed her cheek as she turned it to me. I think I would have gone through a great deal to kiss her cheek. But I felt that the kiss was given to the coarse common boy as a piece of money might have been, and that it was worth nothing.

What with the birthday visitors, and what with the cards, and what with the fight, my stay had lasted so long, that when I neared home the light on the spit of sand off the point on the marshes was gleaming against a black night-sky, and Joe's furnace was flinging a path of fire across the road.

Chapter XII

My mind grew very uneasy on the subject of the pale young gentleman. The more I thought of the fight, and recalled the pale young gentleman on his back in various stages of puffy and incrimsoned countenance, the more certain it appeared that something would be done to me. I felt that the pale young gentleman's blood was on my head, and that the Law would avenge it. Without having any definite idea of the penalties I had incurred, it was clear to me that village boys could not go stalking about the country, ravaging the houses of gentlefolks and pitching into the studious youth of England, without laying themselves open to severe punishment. For some days, I even kept close at home, and looked out at the kitchen door with the greatest caution and trepidation before going on an errand, lest the officers of the County Jail should pounce upon me. The pale young gentleman's nose had stained my trousers, and I tried to wash out that evidence of my guilt in the dead of night. I had cut my knuckles against the pale young gentleman's teeth, and I twisted my imagination into a thousand tangles, as I devised incredible ways of accounting for that damnatory circumstance when I should be haled before the Judges.

When the day came round for my return to the scene of the deed of violence, my terrors reached their height. Whether myrmidons of Justice, especially sent down from London, would be lying in ambush behind the gate;—whether Miss Havisham, preferring to take personal vengeance for an outrage done to her house, might rise in those grave-clothes of hers, draw a pistol, and shoot me dead;—whether suborned boys—a numerous band of mercenaries—might be engaged to fall upon me in the brewery, and cuff me until I was no more;—it was high testimony to my confidence in the spirit of the pale young gentleman, that I never imagined *him* accessory to these retaliations; they always came into my mind as the acts of injudicious relatives of his, goaded on by the state of his visage and an indignant sympathy with the family features.

However, go to Miss Havisham's I must, and go I did. And behold! nothing came of the late struggle. It was not alluded to in any way, and no pale young gentleman was to be discovered on the premises. I found the same gate open, and I explored the garden, and even looked in at the windows of the detached house; but my view was suddenly stopped by the closed shutters within, and all was lifeless. Only in the corner where the combat had taken place could I detect any evidence of the young gentleman's existence. There were traces of his gore in that spot, and I covered them with garden-mould from the eye of man.

On the broad landing between Miss Havisham's own room and that other room in which the long table was laid out, I saw a garden-chair,—a light chair on wheels, that you pushed from behind. It had been placed there since my last visit, and I entered, that same day, on a regular occupation of pushing Miss Havisham in this chair (when she was tired of walking with her hand upon my shoulder) round her own room, and across the landing, and round the other room. Over and over and over again, we would make these journeys, and sometimes they would last as long as three hours at a stretch. I insensibly fall into a general mention of these journeys as numerous, because it was at once settled that I should return every alternate day at noon for these purposes, and because I am now going to sum up a period of at least eight or ten months.

As we began to be more used to one another, Miss Havisham talked more to me, and asked me such questions as what had I learnt and what was I going to be? I told her I was going to be apprenticed to Joe, I believed; and I enlarged upon my knowing nothing and wanting to know everything, in the hope that she might offer some help towards that desirable end. But she did not; on the contrary, she seemed to prefer my being ignorant. Neither did she ever give me any money,—or anything but my daily dinner,—nor ever stipulate that I should be paid for my services.

Estella was always about, and always let me in and out, but never told me I might kiss her again. Sometimes, she would coldly tolerate me; sometimes, she would condescend to me; sometimes, she would be quite familiar with me; sometimes, she would tell me energetically that she hated me. Miss Havisham would often ask me in a whisper, or when we were alone, "Does she grow prettier and prettier, Pip?" And when I said yes (for indeed she did), would seem to enjoy it greedily. Also, when we played at cards Miss Havisham would look on, with a miserly relish of Estella's moods, whatever they were. And sometimes, when her moods were so many and so contradictory of one another that I was puzzled what to say or do, Miss Havisham would embrace her with lavish fondness, murmuring something in her ear that sounded like "Break their hearts my pride and hope, break their hearts and have no mercy!"

There was a song Joe used to hum fragments of at the forge, of which the burden was Old Clem. This was not a very ceremonious way of rendering homage to a patron saint, but I believe Old Clem stood in that relation towards smiths. It was a song that imitated the measure of beating upon iron, and was a mere lyrical excuse for the introduction of Old Clem's respected name. Thus, you were to hammer boys round—Old Clem! With a thump and a sound—Old Clem! Beat it out, beat it out—Old Clem! With a clink for the stout—Old Clem! Blow the fire, blow the fire—Old Clem! Roaring dryer, soaring higher—Old Clem! One day soon after the appearance of the chair, Miss Havisham suddenly saying to me, with the impatient movement of her fingers, "There, there, there! Sing!" I was surprised into crooning this ditty as I pushed her over the floor. It happened so to catch her fancy that she took it up in a low brooding voice as if she were singing in her sleep. After that, it became customary with us to have it as we moved about, and Estella would often join in; though the whole strain was so subdued, even when there were three of us, that it made less noise in the grim old house than the lightest breath of wind.

What could I become with these surroundings? How could my character fail to be influenced by them? Is it to be wondered at if my thoughts were dazed, as my eyes were, when I came out into the natural light from the misty yellow rooms?

Perhaps I might have told Joe about the pale young gentleman, if I had not previously been betrayed into those enormous inventions to which I had confessed. Under the circumstances, I felt that Joe could hardly fail to discern in the pale young gentleman, an appropriate passenger to be put into the black velvet coach; therefore, I said nothing of him. Besides, that shrinking from having Miss Havisham and Estella discussed, which had come upon me in the beginning, grew much more potent as time went on. I reposed complete confidence in no one but Biddy; but I told poor Biddy everything. Why it came natural to me to do so, and why Biddy had a deep concern in everything I told her, I did not know then, though I think I know now.

Meanwhile, councils went on in the kitchen at home, fraught with almost insupportable aggravation to my exasperated spirit. That ass, Pumblechook, used often to come over of a night for the purpose of discussing my prospects with my sister; and I really do believe (to this hour with less penitence than I ought to feel), that if these hands could have taken a linchpin out of his chaise-cart, they would have done it. The miserable man was a man of that confined stolidity of mind, that he could not discuss my prospects without having me before him,—as it were, to operate upon,—and he would drag me up from my stool (usually by the collar) where I was quiet in a corner, and, putting me before the fire as if I were going to be cooked, would begin by saying, "Now, Mum, here is this boy! Here is this boy which you brought up by hand. Hold

up your head, boy, and be forever grateful unto them which so did do. Now, Mum, with respects to this boy!" And then he would rumple my hair the wrong way,—which from my earliest remembrance, as already hinted, I have in my soul denied the right of any fellow-creature to do,—and would hold me before him by the sleeve,—a spectacle of imbecility only to be equalled by himself.

Then, he and my sister would pair off in such nonsensical speculations about Miss Havisham, and about what she would do with me and for me, that I used to want—quite painfully—to burst into spiteful tears, fly at Pumblechook, and pummel him all over. In these dialogues, my sister spoke to me as if she were morally wrenching one of my teeth out at every reference; while Pumblechook himself, self-constituted my patron, would sit supervising me with a depreciatory eye, like the architect of my fortunes who thought himself engaged on a very unremunerative job.

In these discussions, Joe bore no part. But he was often talked at, while they were in progress, by reason of Mrs. Joe's perceiving that he was not favourable to my being taken from the forge. I was fully old enough now to be apprenticed to Joe; and when Joe sat with the poker on his knees thoughtfully raking out the ashes between the lower bars, my sister would so distinctly construe that innocent action into opposition on his part, that she would dive at him, take the poker out of his hands, shake him, and put it away. There was a most irritating end to every one of these debates. All in a moment, with nothing to lead up to it, my sister would stop herself in a yawn, and catching sight of me as it were incidentally, would swoop upon me with, "Come! there's enough of *you!* *You* get along to bed; *you've* given trouble enough for one night, I hope!" As if I had besought them as a favour to bother my life out.

We went on in this way for a long time, and it seemed likely that we should continue to go on in this way for a long time, when one day Miss Havisham stopped short as she and I were walking, she leaning on my shoulder; and said with some displeasure,—

"You are growing tall, Pip!"

I thought it best to hint, through the medium of a meditative look, that this might be occasioned by circumstances over which I had no control.

She said no more at the time; but she presently stopped and looked at me again; and presently again; and after that, looked frowning and moody. On the next day of my attendance, when our usual exercise was over, and I had landed her at her dressing-table, she stayed me with a movement of her impatient fingers:—

"Tell me the name again of that blacksmith of yours."

"Joe Gargery, ma'am."

"Meaning the master you were to be apprenticed to?"

"Yes, Miss Havisham."

"You had better be apprenticed at once. Would Gargery come here with you, and bring your indentures, do you think?"

I signified that I had no doubt he would take it as an honour to be asked.

"Then let him come."

"At any particular time, Miss Havisham?"

"There, there! I know nothing about times. Let him come soon, and come along with you."

When I got home at night, and delivered this message for Joe, my sister "went on the Rampage," in a more alarming degree than at any previous period. She asked me and Joe whether we supposed she was door-mats under our feet, and how we dared to use her so, and what company we graciously thought she *was* fit for? When she had exhausted a torrent of such inquiries, she threw a candlestick at Joe, burst into a loud sobbing, got out the dustpan,—which was always a very bad sign,—put on her coarse apron, and began cleaning up to a terrible extent. Not satisfied with a dry cleaning, she took to a pail and scrubbing-brush, and cleaned us out of house and home, so that we stood shivering in the back-yard. It was ten o'clock at night before we ventured to creep in again, and then she asked Joe why he hadn't married a Negress Slave at once? Joe offered no answer, poor fellow, but stood feeling his whisker and looking dejectedly at me, as if he thought it really might have been a better speculation.

Chapter XIII

It was a trial to my feelings, on the next day but one, to see Joe arraying himself in his Sunday clothes to accompany me to Miss Havisham's. However, as he thought his court-suit necessary to the occasion, it was not for me to tell him that he looked far better in his working-dress; the rather, because I knew he made himself so dreadfully uncomfortable, entirely on my account, and that it was for me he pulled up his shirt-collar so very high behind, that it made the hair on the crown of his head stand up like a tuft of feathers.

At breakfast-time my sister declared her intention of going to town with us, and being left at Uncle Pumblechook's and called for "when we had done with our fine ladies"—a way of putting the case, from which Joe appeared inclined to augur the worst. The forge was shut up for the day, and Joe inscribed in chalk upon the door (as it was his custom to do on the very rare occasions when he was not at work) the monosyllable HOUT, accompanied by a sketch of an arrow supposed to be flying in the direction he had taken.

We walked to town, my sister leading the way in a very large beaver bonnet, and carrying a basket like the Great Seal of England in plaited Straw, a pair of pattens, a spare shawl, and an umbrella, though it was a fine bright day. I

am not quite clear whether these articles were carried penitentially or ostentatiously; but I rather think they were displayed as articles of property,—much as Cleopatra or any other sovereign lady on the Rampage might exhibit her wealth in a pageant or procession.

When we came to Pumblechook's, my sister bounced in and left us. As it was almost noon, Joe and I held straight on to Miss Havisham's house. Estella opened the gate as usual, and, the moment she appeared, Joe took his hat off and stood weighing it by the brim in both his hands; as if he had some urgent reason in his mind for being particular to half a quarter of an ounce.

Estella took no notice of either of us, but led us the way that I knew so well. I followed next to her, and Joe came last. When I looked back at Joe in the long passage, he was still weighing his hat with the greatest care, and was coming after us in long strides on the tips of his toes.

Estella told me we were both to go in, so I took Joe by the coat-cuff and conducted him into Miss Havisham's presence. She was seated at her dressing-table, and looked round at us immediately.

"Oh!" said she to Joe. "You are the husband of the sister of this boy?"

I could hardly have imagined dear old Joe looking so unlike himself or so like some extraordinary bird; standing as he did speechless, with his tuft of feathers ruffled, and his mouth open as if he wanted a worm.

"You are the husband," repeated Miss Havisham, "of the sister of this boy?"

It was very aggravating; but, throughout the inter-view, Joe persisted in addressing Me instead of Miss Havisham.

"Which I meanersay, Pip," Joe now observed in a manner that was at once expressive of forcible argumentation, strict confidence, and great politeness, "as I hup and married your sister, and I were at the time what you might call (if you was anyways inclined) a single man."

"Well!" said Miss Havisham. "And you have reared the boy, with the intention of taking him for your apprentice; is that so, Mr. Gargery?"

"You know, Pip," replied Joe, "as you and me were ever friends, and it were looked for'ard to betwixt us, as being calc'lated to lead to larks. Not but what, Pip, if you had ever made objections to the business,—such as its being open to black and sut, or such-like,—not but what they would have been attended to, don't you see?"

"Has the boy," said Miss Havisham, "ever made any objection? Does he like the trade?"

"Which it is well bekknown to yourself, Pip," returned Joe, strengthening his former mixture of argumentation, confidence, and politeness, "that it were the wish of your own hart." (I saw the idea suddenly break upon him that

he would adapt his epitaph to the occasion, before he went on to say) "And there weren't no objection on your part, and Pip it were the great wish of your hart!"

It was quite in vain for me to endeavour to make him sensible that he ought to speak to Miss Havisham. The more I made faces and gestures to him to do it, the more confidential, argumentative, and polite, he persisted in being to Me.

"Have you brought his indentures with you?" asked Miss Havisham.

"Well, Pip, you know," replied Joe, as if that were a little unreasonable, "you yourself see me put 'em in my 'at, and therefore you know as they are here." With which he took them out, and gave them, not to Miss Havisham, but to me. I am afraid I was ashamed of the dear good fellow, —I *know* I was ashamed of him,—when I saw that Estella stood at the back of Miss Havisham's chair, and that her eyes laughed mischievously. I took the indentures out of his hand and gave them to Miss Havisham.

"You expected," said Miss Havisham, as she looked them over, "no premium with the boy?"

"Joe!" I remonstrated, for he made no reply at all. "Why don't you answer—"

"Pip," returned Joe, cutting me short as if he were hurt, "which I mean to say that were not a question requiring a answer betwixt yourself and me, and which you know the answer to be full well No. You know it to be No, Pip, and wherefore should I say it?"

Miss Havisham glanced at him as if she understood what he really was better than I had thought possible, seeing what he was there; and took up a little bag from the table beside her.

"Pip has earned a premium here," she said, "and here it is. There are five-and-twenty guineas in this bag. Give it to your master, Pip."

As if he were absolutely out of his mind with the wonder awakened in him by her strange figure and the strange room, Joe, even at this pass, persisted in addressing me.

"This is wery liberal on your part, Pip," said Joe, "and it is as such received and grateful welcome, though never looked for, far nor near, nor nowheres. And now, old chap," said Joe, conveying to me a sensation, first of burning and then of freezing, for I felt as if that familiar expression were applied to Miss Havisham,—“and now, old chap, may we do our duty! May you and me do our duty, both on us, by one and another, and by them which your liberal present—have-conveyed—to be—for the satisfaction of mind-of—them as never—” here Joe showed that he felt he had fallen into frightful difficulties, until he triumphantly rescued himself with the words, “and from myself far be it!” These words had such a round and convincing sound for him that he said them twice.

"Good-bye, Pip!" said Miss Havisham. "Let them out, Estella."

"Am I to come again, Miss Havisham?" I asked.

"No. Gargery is your master now. Gargery! One word!"

Thus calling him back as I went out of the door, I heard her say to Joe in a distinct emphatic voice, "The boy has been a good boy here, and that is his reward. Of course, as an honest man, you will expect no other and no more."

How Joe got out of the room, I have never been able to determine; but I know that when he did get out he was steadily proceeding upstairs instead of coming down, and was deaf to all remonstrances until I went after him and laid hold of him. In another minute we were outside the gate, and it was locked, and Estella was gone. When we stood in the daylight alone again, Joe backed up against a wall, and said to me, "Astonishing!" And there he remained so long saying,

"Astonishing" at intervals, so often, that I began to think his senses were never coming back. At length he prolonged his remark into "Pip, I do assure *you* this is as-TON-ishing!" and so, by degrees, became conversational and able to walk away.

I have reason to think that Joe's intellects were brightened by the encounter they had passed through, and that on our way to Pumblechook's he invented a subtle and deep design. My reason is to be found in what took place in Mr. Pumblechook's parlour: where, on our presenting ourselves, my sister sat in conference with that detested seedsman.

"Well?" cried my sister, addressing us both at once. "And what's happened to *you*? I wonder you condescend to come back to such poor society as this, I am sure I do!"

"Miss Havisham," said Joe, with a fixed look at me, like an effort of remembrance, "made it wery partick'ler that we should give her—were it compliments or respects, Pip?"

"Compliments," I said.

"Which that were my own belief," answered Joe; "her compliments to Mrs. J. Gargery—"

"Much good they'll do me!" observed my sister; but rather gratified too.

"And wishing," pursued Joe, with another fixed look at me, like another effort of remembrance, "that the state of Miss Havisham's elth were sitch as would have—allowed, were it, Pip?"

"Of her having the pleasure," I added.

"Of ladies' company," said Joe. And drew a long breath.

"Well!" cried my sister, with a mollified glance at Mr. Pumblechook. "She might have had the politeness to send that message at first, but it's better late than never. And what did she give young Rantipole here?"

"She giv' him," said Joe, "nothing."

Mrs. Joe was going to break out, but Joe went on.

"What she giv'," said Joe, "she giv' to his friends. 'And by his friends,' were her explanation, 'I mean into the hands of his sister Mrs. J. Gargery.' Them were her words;

‘Mrs. J. Gargery.’ She mayn’t have know’d,” added Joe, with an appearance of reflection, “whether it were Joe, or Jorge.”

My sister looked at Pumblechook: who smoothed the elbows of his wooden arm-chair, and nodded at her and at the fire, as if he had known all about it beforehand.

“And how much have you got?” asked my sister, laughing. Positively laughing!

“What would present company say to ten pound?” demanded Joe.

“They’d say,” returned my sister, curtly, “pretty well. Not too much, but pretty well.”

“It’s more than that, then,” said Joe.

That fearful Impostor, Pumblechook, immediately nodded, and said, as he rubbed the arms of his chair, “It’s more than that, Mum.”

“Why, you don’t mean to say—” began my sister.

“Yes I do, Mum,” said Pumblechook; “but wait a bit. Go on, Joseph. Good in you! Go on!”

“What would present company say,” proceeded Joe, “to twenty pound?”

“Handsome would be the word,” returned my sister.

“Well, then,” said Joe, “It’s more than twenty pound.”

That abject hypocrite, Pumblechook, nodded again, and said, with a patronizing laugh, “It’s more than that, Mum. Good again! Follow her up, Joseph!”

“Then to make an end of it,” said Joe, delightedly handing the bag to my sister; “it’s five-and-twenty pound.”

“It’s five-and-twenty pound, Mum,” echoed that basest of swindlers, Pumblechook, rising to shake hands with her; “and it’s no more than your merits (as I said when my opinion was asked), and I wish you joy of the money!”

If the villain had stopped here, his case would have been sufficiently awful, but he blackened his guilt by proceeding to take me into custody, with a right of patronage that left all his former criminality far behind.

“Now you see, Joseph and wife,” said Pumblechook, as he took me by the arm above the elbow, “I am one of them that always go right through with what they’ve begun. This boy must be bound, out of hand. That’s *my* way. Bound out of hand.”

“Goodness knows, Uncle Pumblechook,” said my sister (grasping the money), “we’re deeply beholden to you.”

“Never mind me, Mum,” returned that diabolical cornchandler. “A pleasure’s a pleasure all the world over. But this boy, you know; we must have him bound. I said I’d see to it—to tell you the truth.”

The Justices were sitting in the Town Hall near at hand, and we at once went over to have me bound apprentice to

Joe in the Magisterial presence. I say we went over, but I was pushed over by Pumblechook, exactly as if I had that moment picked a pocket or fired a rick; indeed, it was the general impression in Court that I had been taken red-handed; for, as Pumblechook shoved me before him through the crowd, I heard some people say, “What’s he done?” and others, “He’s a young ’un, too, but looks bad, don’t he?” One person of mild and benevolent aspect even gave me a tract ornamented with a woodcut of a malevolent young man fitted up with a perfect sausage-shop of fetters, and entitled TO BE READ IN MY CELL.

The Hall was a queer place, I thought, with higher pews in it than a church,—and with people hanging over the pews looking on,—and with mighty Justices (one with a powdered head) leaning back in chairs, with folded arms, or taking snuff, or going to sleep, or writing, or reading the newspapers,—and with some shining black portraits on the walls, which my unartistic eye regarded as a composition of hardbake and sticking-plaster. Here, in a corner my indentures were duly signed and attested, and I was “bound”; Mr. Pumblechook holding me all the while as if we had looked in on our way to the scaffold, to have those little preliminaries disposed of.

When we had come out again, and had got rid of the boys who had been put into great spirits by the expectation of seeing me publicly tortured, and who were much disappointed to find that my friends were merely rallying round me, we went back to Pumblechook’s. And there my sister became so excited by the twenty-five guineas, that nothing would serve her but we must have a dinner out of that windfall at the Blue Boar, and that Pumblechook must go over in his chaise-cart, and bring the Hubbles and Mr. Wopsle.

It was agreed to be done; and a most melancholy day I passed. For, it inscrutably appeared to stand to reason, in the minds of the whole company, that I was an excrescence on the entertainment. And to make it worse, they all asked me from time to time,—in short, whenever they had nothing else to do,—why I didn’t enjoy myself? And what could I possibly do then, but say I *was* enjoying myself,—when I wasn’t!

However, they were grown up and had their own way, and they made the most of it. That swindling Pumblechook, exalted into the beneficent contriver of the whole occasion, actually took the top of the table; and, when he addressed them on the subject of my being bound, and had fiendishly congratulated them on my being liable to imprisonment if I played at cards, drank strong liquors, kept late hours or bad company, or indulged in other vagaries which the form of my indentures appeared to contemplate as next to inevitable, he placed me standing on a chair beside him to illustrate his remarks.

My only other remembrances of the great festival are, That they wouldn’t let me go to sleep, but whenever they

saw me dropping off, woke me up and told me to enjoy myself. That, rather late in the evening Mr. Wopsle gave us Collins's ode, and threw his bloodstained sword in thunder down, with such effect, that a waiter came in and said, "The Commercials underneath sent up their compliments, and it wasn't the Tumblers' Arms." That, they were all in excellent spirits on the road home, and sang, O Lady Fair! Mr. Wopsle taking the bass, and asserting with a tremendously strong voice (in reply to the inquisitive bore who leads that piece of music in a most impertinent manner, by wanting to know all about everybody's private affairs) that *he* was the man with his white locks flowing, and that he was upon the whole the weakest pilgrim going.

Finally, I remember that when I got into my little bedroom, I was truly wretched, and had a strong conviction on me that I should never like Joe's trade. I had liked it once, but once was not now.

Chapter XIV

It is a most miserable thing to feel ashamed of home. There may be black ingratitude in the thing, and the punishment may be retributive and well deserved; but that it is a miserable thing, I can testify.

Home had never been a very pleasant place to me, because of my sister's temper. But, Joe had sanctified it, and I had believed in it. I had believed in the best parlour as a most elegant saloon; I had believed in the front door, as a mysterious portal of the Temple of State whose solemn opening was attended with a sacrifice of roast fowls; I had believed in the kitchen as a chaste though not magnificent apartment; I had believed in the forge as the glowing road to manhood and independence. Within a single year all this was changed. Now it was all coarse and common, and I would not have had Miss Havisham and Estella see it on any account.

How much of my ungracious condition of mind may have been my own fault, how much Miss Havisham's, how much my sister's, is now of no moment to me or to any one. The change was made in me; the thing was done. Well or ill done, excusably or inexcusably, it was done.

Once, it had seemed to me that when I should at last roll up my shirt-sleeves and go into the forge, Joe's 'prentice, I should be distinguished and happy. Now the reality was in my hold, I only felt that I was dusty with the dust of small-coal, and that I had a weight upon my daily remembrance to which the anvil was a feather. There have been occasions in my later life (I suppose as in most lives) when I have felt for a time as if a thick curtain had fallen on all its interest and romance, to shut me out from anything save dull endurance any more. Never has that curtain dropped so heavy and blank, as when my way in life lay stretched out straight before me through the newly entered road of apprenticeship to Joe.

I remember that at a later period of my "time," I used to stand about the churchyard on Sunday evenings when night was falling, comparing my own perspective with the windy marsh view, and making out some likeness between them by thinking how flat and low both were, and how on both there came an unknown way and a dark mist and then the sea. I was quite as dejected on the first working-day of my apprenticeship as in that after-time; but I am glad to know that I never breathed a murmur to Joe while my indentures lasted. It is about the only thing I *am* glad to know of myself in that connection.

For, though it includes what I proceed to add, all the merit of what I proceed to add was Joe's. It was not because I was faithful, but because Joe was faithful, that I never ran away and went for a soldier or a sailor.

It was not because I had a strong sense of the virtue of industry, but because Joe had a strong sense of the virtue of industry, that I worked with tolerable zeal against the grain. It is not possible to know how far the influence of any amiable honest-hearted duty-doing man flies out into the world; but it is very possible to know how it has touched one's self in going by, and I know right well that any good that intermixed itself with my apprenticeship came of plain contented Joe, and not of restlessly aspiring discontented me.

What I wanted, who can say? How can *I* say, when I never knew? What I dreaded was, that in some unlucky hour I, being at my grimmest and commonest, should lift up my eyes and see Estella looking in at one of the wooden windows of the forge. I was haunted by the fear that she would, sooner or later, find me out, with a black face and hands, doing the coarsest part of my work, and would exult over me and despise me. Often after dark, when I was pulling the bellows for Joe, and we were singing Old Clem, and when the thought how we used to sing it at Miss Havisham's would seem to show me Estella's face in the fire, with her pretty hair fluttering in the wind and her eyes scorning me,—often at such a time I would look towards those panels of black night in the wall which the wooden windows then were, and would fancy that I saw her just drawing her face away, and would believe that she had come at last.

After that, when we went in to supper, the place and the meal would have a more homely look than ever, and I would feel more ashamed of home than ever, in my own ungracious breast.



Chapter XV

As I was getting too big for Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt's room, my education under that preposterous female terminated. Not, however, until Bidly had imparted to me everything she knew, from the little catalogue of prices, to a comic song she had once bought for a half-penny. Although the only coherent part of the latter piece of literature were the opening lines,

*When I went to Lunnon town sirs,
Too rul loo rul
Too rul loo rul
Wasn't I done very brown sirs?
Too rul loo rul
Too rul loo rul*

—still, in my desire to be wiser, I got this composition by heart with the utmost gravity; nor do I recollect that I questioned its merit, except that I thought (as I still do) the amount of Too rul somewhat in excess of the poetry. In my hunger for information, I made proposals to Mr. Wopsle to bestow some intellectual crumbs upon me, with which he kindly complied. As it turned out, however, that he only wanted me for a dramatic lay-figure, to be contradicted and embraced and wept over and bullied and clutched and stabbed and knocked about in a variety of ways, I soon declined that course of instruction; though not until Mr. Wopsle in his poetic fury had severely mauled me.

Whatever I acquired, I tried to impart to Joe. This statement sounds so well, that I cannot in my conscience let it pass unexplained. I wanted to make Joe less ignorant and common, that he might be worthier of my society and less open to Estella's reproach.

The old Battery out on the marshes was our place of study, and a broken slate and a short piece of slate-pencil were our educational implements: to which Joe always added a pipe of tobacco. I never knew Joe to remember anything from one Sunday to another, or to acquire, under my tuition, any piece of information whatever. Yet he would smoke his pipe at the Battery with a far more sagacious air than anywhere else,—even with a learned air,—as if he considered himself to be advancing immensely. Dear fellow, I hope he did.

It was pleasant and quiet, out there with the sails on the river passing beyond the earthwork, and sometimes, when the tide was low, looking as if they belonged to sunken ships that were still sailing on at the bottom of the water. Whenever I watched the vessels standing out to sea with their white sails spread, I somehow thought of Miss Havisham and Estella; and whenever the light struck aslant, afar off, upon a cloud or sail or green hillside or water-line, it was just the same.—Miss Havisham and Estella and the strange house and the strange life appeared

to have something to do with everything that was picturesque.

One Sunday when Joe, greatly enjoying his pipe, had so plumed himself on being “most awful dull,” that I had given him up for the day, I lay on the earthwork for some time with my chin on my hand, descrying traces of Miss Havisham and Estella all over the prospect, in the sky and in the water, until at last I resolved to mention a thought concerning them that had been much in my head.

“Joe,” said I; “don't you think I ought to make Miss Havisham a visit?”

“Well, Pip,” returned Joe, slowly considering. “What for?”

“What for, Joe? What is any visit made for?”

“There is some wisits p'r'aps,” said Joe, “as for ever remains open to the question, Pip. But in regard to visiting Miss Havisham. She might think you wanted something,—expected something of her.”

“Don't you think I might say that I did not, Joe?”

“You might, old chap,” said Joe. “And she might credit it. Similarly she mightn't.”

Joe felt, as I did, that he had made a point there, and he pulled hard at his pipe to keep himself from weakening it by repetition.

“You see, Pip,” Joe pursued, as soon as he was past that danger, “Miss Havisham done the handsome thing by you. When Miss Havisham done the handsome thing by you, she called me back to say to me as that were all.”

“Yes, Joe. I heard her.”

“ALL,” Joe repeated, very emphatically.

“Yes, Joe. I tell you, I heard her.”

“Which I meanersay, Pip, it might be that her meaning were,—Make a end on it!—As you was!—Me to the North, and you to the South!—Keep in sunders!”

I had thought of that too, and it was very far from comforting to me to find that he had thought of it; for it seemed to render it more probable.

“But, Joe.”

“Yes, old chap.”

“Here am I, getting on in the first year of my time, and, since the day of my being bound, I have never thanked Miss Havisham, or asked after her, or shown that I remember her.”

“That's true, Pip; and unless you was to turn her out a set of shoes all four round,—and which I meanersay as even a set of shoes all four round might not be acceptable as a present, in a total wacancy of hoofs—”

“I don't mean that sort of remembrance, Joe; I don't mean a present.”

But Joe had got the idea of a present in his head and must harp upon it. "Or even," said he, "if you was helped to knocking her up a new chain for the front door,—or say a gross or two of shark-headed screws for general use,—or some light fancy article, such as a toasting-fork when she took her muffins,—or a gridiron when she took a sprat or such like—"

"I don't mean any present at all, Joe," I interposed.

"Well," said Joe, still harping on it as though I had particularly pressed it, "if I was yourself, Pip, I wouldn't. No, I would *not*. For what's a door-chain when she's got one always up? And shark-headers is open to misrepresentations. And if it was a toasting-fork, you'd go into brass and do yourself no credit. And the oncommonest workman can't show himself oncommon in a gridiron,—for a gridiron *IS* a gridiron," said Joe, steadfastly impressing it upon me, as if he were endeavouring to rouse me from a fixed delusion, "and you may haim at what you like, but a gridiron it will come out, either by your leave or again your leave, and you can't help yourself—"

"My dear Joe," I cried, in desperation, taking hold of his coat, "don't go on in that way. I never thought of making Miss Havisham any present."

"No, Pip," Joe assented, as if he had been contending for that, all along; "and what I say to you is, you are right, Pip."

"Yes, Joe; but what I wanted to say, was, that as we are rather slack just now, if you would give me a half-holiday to-morrow, I think I would go uptown and make a call on Miss Est—Havisham."

"Which her name," said Joe, gravely, "ain't Estavisham, Pip, unless she have been rechris'ened."

"I know, Joe, I know. It was a slip of mine. What do you think of it, Joe?"

In brief, Joe thought that if I thought well of it, he thought well of it. But, he was particular in stipulating that if I were not received with cordiality, or if I were not encouraged to repeat my visit as a visit which had no ulterior object but was simply one of gratitude for a favour received, then this experimental trip should have no successor. By these conditions I promised to abide.

Now, Joe kept a journeyman at weekly wages whose name was Orlick. He pretended that his Christian name was Dolge,—a clear Impossibility,—but he was a fellow of that obstinate disposition that I believe him to have been the prey of no delusion in this particular, but wilfully to have imposed that name upon the village as an affront to its understanding. He was a broad-shouldered, loose-limbed swarthy fellow of great strength, never in a hurry, and always slouching. He never even seemed to come to his work on purpose, but would slouch in as if by mere accident; and when he went to the Jolly Bargemen to eat

his dinner, or went away at night, he would slouch out, like Cain or the Wandering Jew, as if he had no idea where he was going and no intention of ever coming back. He lodged at a sluice-keeper's out on the marshes, and on working-days would come slouching from his hermitage, with his hands in his pockets and his dinner loosely tied in a bundle round his neck and dangling on his back. On Sundays he mostly lay all day on the sluice-gates, or stood against ricks and barns. He always slouched, locomotively, with his eyes on the ground; and, when accosted or otherwise required to raise them, he looked up in a half-resentful, half-puzzled way, as though the only thought he ever had was, that it was rather an odd and injurious fact that he should never be thinking.

This morose journeyman had no liking for me. When I was very small and timid, he gave me to understand that the Devil lived in a black corner of the forge, and that he knew the fiend very well: also that it was necessary to make up the fire, once in seven years, with a live boy, and that I might consider myself fuel. When I became Joe's 'prentice, Orlick was perhaps confirmed in some suspicion that I should displace him; howbeit, he liked me still less. Not that he ever said anything, or did anything, openly importing hostility; I only noticed that he always beat his sparks in my direction, and that whenever I sang Old Clem, he came in out of time.

Dolge Orlick was at work and present, next day, when I reminded Joe of my half-holiday. He said nothing at the moment, for he and Joe had just got a piece of hot iron between them, and I was at the bellows; but by and by he said, leaning on his hammer,—

"Now, master! Sure you're not a-going to favour only one of us. If Young Pip has a half-holiday, do as much for Old Orlick." I suppose he was about five-and-twenty, but he usually spoke of himself as an ancient person.

"Why, what'll you do with a half-holiday, if you get it?" said Joe.

"What'll *I* do with it! What'll *he* do with it? I'll do as much with it as *him*," said Orlick.

"As to Pip, he's going up town," said Joe.

"Well then, as to Old Orlick, *he's* a-going up town," retorted that worthy. "Two can go up town. Tain't only one wot can go up town."

"Don't lose your temper," said Joe.

"Shall if I like," growled Orlick. "Some and their uptowning! Now, master! Come. No favouring in this shop. Be a man!"

The master refusing to entertain the subject until the journeyman was in a better temper, Orlick plunged at the furnace, drew out a red-hot bar, made at me with it as if he were going to run it through my body, whisked it round my head, laid it on the anvil, hammered it out,—as if it were I, I thought, and the sparks were my spirting

blood,—and finally said, when he had hammered himself hot and the iron cold, and he again leaned on his hammer,—

“Now, master!”

“Are you all right now?” demanded Joe.

“Ah! I am all right,” said gruff Old Orlick.

“Then, as in general you stick to your work as well as most men,” said Joe, “let it be a half-holiday for all.”

My sister had been standing silent in the yard, within hearing,—she was a most unscrupulous spy and listener,—and she instantly looked in at one of the windows.

“Like you, you fool!” said she to Joe, “giving holidays to great idle hulkers like that. You are a rich man, upon my life, to waste wages in that way. I wish *I* was his master!”

“You’d be everybody’s master, if you durst,” retorted Orlick, with an ill-favoured grin.

(“Let her alone,” said Joe.)

“I’d be a match for all noodles and all rogues,” returned my sister, beginning to work herself into a mighty rage. “And I couldn’t be a match for the noodles, without being a match for your master, who’s the dunder-headed king of the noodles. And I couldn’t be a match for the rogues, without being a match for you, who are the blackest-looking and the worst rogue between this and France. Now!”

“You’re a foul shrew, Mother Gargery,” growled the journeyman. “If that makes a judge of rogues, you ought to be a good’un.”

(“Let her alone, will you?” said Joe.)

“What did you say?” cried my sister, beginning to scream. “What did you say? What did that fellow Orlick say to me, Pip? What did he call me, with my husband standing by? Oh! oh! oh!” Each of these exclamations was a shriek; and I must remark of my sister, what is equally true of all the violent women I have ever seen, that passion was no excuse for her, because it is undeniable that instead of lapsing into passion, she consciously and deliberately took extraordinary pains to force herself into it, and became blindly furious by regular stages; “what was the name he gave me before the base man who swore to defend me? Oh! Hold me! Oh!”

“Ah-h-h!” growled the journeyman, between his teeth, “I’d hold you, if you was my wife. I’d hold you under the pump, and choke it out of you.”

(“I tell you, let her alone,” said Joe.)

“Oh! To hear him!” cried my sister, with a clap of her hands and a scream together,—which was her next stage. “To hear the names he’s giving me! That Orlick! In my own house! Me, a married woman! With my husband standing by! Oh! Oh!” Here my sister, after a fit of clappings and screamings, beat her hands upon her bosom

and upon her knees, and threw her cap off, and pulled her hair down,—which were the last stages on her road to frenzy. Being by this time a perfect Fury and a complete success, she made a dash at the door which I had fortunately locked.

What could the wretched Joe do now, after his disregarded parenthetical interruptions, but stand up to his journeyman, and ask him what he meant by interfering betwixt himself and Mrs. Joe; and further whether he was man enough to come on? Old Orlick felt that the situation admitted of nothing less than coming on, and was on his defence straightway; so, without so much as pulling off their singed and burnt aprons, they went at one another, like two giants. But, if any man in that neighbourhood could stand uplong against Joe, I never saw the man. Orlick, as if he had been of no more account than the pale young gentleman, was very soon among the coal-dust, and in no hurry to come out of it. Then Joe unlocked the door and picked up my sister, who had dropped insensible at the window (but who had seen the fight first, I think), and who was carried into the house and laid down, and who was recommended to revive, and would do nothing but struggle and clench her hands in Joe’s hair. Then came that singular calm and silence which succeed all uproars; and then, with the vague sensation which I have always connected with such a lull,—namely, that it was Sunday, and somebody was dead,—I went upstairs to dress myself.

When I came down again, I found Joe and Orlick sweeping up, without any other traces of discomposure than a slit in one of Orlick’s nostrils, which was neither expressive nor ornamental. A pot of beer had appeared from the Jolly Bargemen, and they were sharing it by turns in a peaceable manner. The lull had a sedative and philosophical influence on Joe, who followed me out into the road to say, as a parting observation that might do me good, “On the Rampage, Pip, and off the Rampage, Pip:—such is Life!”

With what absurd emotions (for we think the feelings that are very serious in a man quite comical in a boy) I found myself again going to Miss Havisham’s, matters little here. Nor, how I passed and repassed the gate many times before I could make up my mind to ring. Nor, how I debated whether I should go away without ringing; nor, how I should undoubtedly have gone, if my time had been my own, to come back.

Miss Sarah Pocket came to the gate. No Estella.

“How, then? You here again?” said Miss Pocket. “What do you want?”

When I said that I only came to see how Miss Havisham was, Sarah evidently deliberated whether or no she should send me about my business. But unwilling to hazard the responsibility, she let me in, and presently brought the sharp message that I was to “come up.”

Everything was unchanged, and Miss Havisham was alone.

“Well?” said she, fixing her eyes upon me. “I hope you want nothing? You’ll get nothing.”

“No indeed, Miss Havisham. I only wanted you to know that I am doing very well in my apprenticeship, and am always much obliged to you.”

“There, there!” with the old restless fingers. “Come now and then; come on your birthday.—Ay!” she cried suddenly, turning herself and her chair towards me, “You are looking round for Estella? Hey?”

I had been looking round,—in fact, for Estella,—and I stammered that I hoped she was well.

“Abroad,” said Miss Havisham; “educating for a lady; far out of reach; prettier than ever; admired by all who see her. Do you feel that you have lost her?”

There was such a malignant enjoyment in her utterance of the last words, and she broke into such a disagreeable laugh, that I was at a loss what to say. She spared me the trouble of considering, by dismissing me. When the gate was closed upon me by Sarah of the walnut-shell countenance, I felt more than ever dissatisfied with my home and with my trade and with everything; and that was all I took by *that* motion.

As I was loitering along the High Street, looking in disconsolately at the shop windows, and thinking what I would buy if I were a gentleman, who should come out of the bookshop but Mr. Wopsle. Mr. Wopsle had in his hand the affecting tragedy of George Barnwell, in which he had that moment invested sixpence, with the view of heaping every word of it on the head of Pumblechook, with whom he was going to

drink tea. No sooner did he see me, than he appeared to consider that a special Providence had put a ’prentice in his way to be read at; and he laid hold of me, and insisted on my accompanying him to the Pumblechookian parlour. As I knew it would be miserable at home, and as the nights were dark and the way was dreary, and almost any companionship on the road was better than none, I made no great resistance; consequently, we turned into Pumblechook’s just as the street and the shops were lighting up.

As I never assisted at any other representation of George Barnwell, I don’t know how long it may usually take; but I know very well that it took until half-past nine o’ clock that night, and that when Mr. Wopsle got into Newgate, I thought he never would go to the scaffold, he became so much slower than at any former period of his disgraceful career. I thought it a little too much that he should complain of being cut short in his flower after all, as if he had not been running to seed, leaf after leaf, ever since his course began. This, however, was a mere question of length and wearisomeness. What stung me, was the

identification of the whole affair with my unoffending self. When Barnwell began to go wrong, I declare that I felt positively apologetic, Pumblechook’s indignant stare so taxed me with it. Wopsle, too, took pains to present me in the worst light. At once ferocious and maudlin, I was made to murder my uncle with no extenuating circumstances whatever; Millwood put me down in argument, on every occasion; it became sheer monomania in my master’s daughter to care a button for me; and all I can say for my gasping and procrastinating conduct on the fatal morning, is, that it was worthy of the general feebleness of my character. Even after I was happily hanged and Wopsle had closed the book, Pumblechook sat staring at me, and shaking his head, and saying, “Take warning, boy, take warning!” as if it were a well-known fact that I contemplated murdering a near relation, provided I could only induce one to have the weakness to become my benefactor.

It was a very dark night when it was all over, and when I set out with Mr. Wopsle on the walk home. Beyond town, we found a heavy mist out, and it fell wet and thick. The turnpike lamp was a blur, quite out of the lamp’s usual place apparently, and its rays looked solid substance on the fog. We were noticing this, and saying how that the mist rose with a change of wind from a certain quarter of our marshes, when we came upon a man, slouching under the lee of the turnpike house.

“Halloa!” we said, stopping. “Orlick there?”

“Ah!” he answered, slouching out. “I was standing by a minute, on the chance of company.”

“You are late,” I remarked.

Orlick not unnaturally answered, “Well? And *you’re* late.”

“We have been,” said Mr. Wopsle, exalted with his late performance,—“we have been indulging, Mr. Orlick, in an intellectual evening.”

Old Orlick growled, as if he had nothing to say about that, and we all went on together. I asked him presently whether he had been spending his half-holiday up and down town?

“Yes,” said he, “all of it. I come in behind yourself. I didn’t see you, but I must have been pretty close behind you. By the by, the guns is going again.”

“At the Hulks?” said I.

“Ay! There’s some of the birds flown from the cages. The guns have been going since dark, about. You’ll hear one presently.”

In effect, we had not walked many yards further, when the well-remembered boom came towards us, deadened by the mist, and heavily rolled away along the low grounds by the river, as if it were pursuing and threatening the fugitives.

“A good night for cutting off in,” said Orlick. “We’d be puzzled how to bring down a jail-bird on the wing, to-night.”

The subject was a suggestive one to me, and I thought about it in silence. Mr. Wopsle, as the ill-requited uncle of the evening’s tragedy, fell to meditating aloud in his garden at Camberwell. Orlick, with his hands in his pockets, slouched heavily at my side. It was very dark, very wet, very muddy, and so we splashed along. Now and then, the sound of the signal cannon broke upon us again, and again rolled sulkily along the course of the river. I kept myself to myself and my thoughts. Mr. Wopsle died amiably at Camberwell, and exceedingly game on Bosworth Field, and in the greatest agonies at Glastonbury. Orlick sometimes growled, “Beat it out, beat it out,—Old Clem! With a clink for the stout,—Old Clem!” I thought he had been drinking, but he was not drunk.

Thus, we came to the village. The way by which we approached it took us past the Three Jolly Bargemen, which we were surprised to find—it being eleven o’clock—in a state of commotion, with the door wide open, and unwonted lights that had been hastily caught up and put down scattered about. Mr. Wopsle dropped in to ask what was the matter (surmising that a convict had been taken), but came running out in a great hurry.

“There’s something wrong,” said he, without stopping, “up at your place, Pip. Run all!”

“What is it?” I asked, keeping up with him. So did Orlick, at my side.

“I can’t quite understand. The house seems to have been violently entered when Joe Gargery was out. Supposed by convicts. Somebody has been attacked and hurt.”

We were running too fast to admit of more being said, and we made no stop until we got into our kitchen. It was full of people; the whole village was there, or in the yard; and there was a surgeon, and there was Joe, and there were a group of women, all on the floor in the midst of the kitchen. The unemployed bystanders drew back when they saw me, and so I became aware of my sister,—lying without sense or movement on the bare boards where she had been knocked down by a tremendous blow on the back of the head, dealt by some unknown hand when her face was turned towards the fire,—destined never to be on the Rampage again, while she was the wife of Joe.



Chapter XVI

With my head full of George Barnwell, I was at first disposed to believe that *I* must have had some hand in the attack upon my sister, or at all events that as her near relation, popularly known to be under obligations to her, I was a more legitimate object of suspicion than any one else. But when, in the clearer light of next morning, I began to reconsider the matter and to hear it discussed around me on all sides, I took another view of the case, which was more reasonable.

Joe had been at the Three Jolly Bargemen, smoking his pipe, from a quarter after eight o’clock to a quarter before ten. While he was there, my sister had been seen standing at the kitchen door, and had exchanged Good Night with a farm-labourer going home. The man could not be more particular as to the time at which he saw her (he got into dense confusion when he tried to be), than that it must have been before nine. When Joe went home at five minutes before ten, he found her struck down on the floor, and promptly called in assistance. The fire had not then burnt unusually low, nor was the snuff of the candle very long; the candle, however, had been blown out.

Nothing had been taken away from any part of the house. Neither, beyond the blowing out of the candle,—which stood on a table between the door and my sister, and was behind her when she stood facing the fire and was struck,—was there any disarrangement of the kitchen, excepting such as she herself had made, in falling and bleeding. But, there was one remarkable piece of evidence on the spot. She had been struck with something blunt and heavy, on the head and spine; after the blows were dealt, something heavy had been thrown down at her with considerable violence, as she lay on her face. And on the ground beside her, when Joe picked her up, was a convict’s leg-iron which had been filed asunder.

Now, Joe, examining this iron with a smith’s eye, declared it to have been filed asunder some time ago. The hue and cry going off to the Hulks, and people coming thence to examine the iron, Joe’s opinion was corroborated. They did not undertake to say when it had left the prison-ships to which it undoubtedly had once belonged; but they claimed to know for certain that that particular manacle had not been worn by either of the two convicts who had escaped last night. Further, one of those two was already retaken, and had not freed himself of his iron.

Knowing what I knew, I set up an inference of my own here. I believed the iron to be my convict’s iron,—the iron I had seen and heard him filing at, on the marshes,—but my mind did not accuse him of having put it to its latest use. For I believed one of two other persons to have become possessed of it, and to have turned it to this cruel account. Either Orlick, or the strange man who had shown me the file.

Now, as to Orlick; he had gone to town exactly as he told us when we picked him up at the turnpike, he had been seen about town all the evening, he had been in

divers companies in several public-houses, and he had come back with myself and Mr. Wopsle. There was nothing against him, save the quarrel; and my sister had quarrelled with him, and with everybody else about her, ten thousand times. As to the strange man; if he had come back for his two bank-notes there could have been no dispute about them, because my sister was fully prepared to restore them. Besides, there had been no altercation; the assailant had come in so silently and suddenly, that she had been felled before she could look round.

It was horrible to think that I had provided the weapon, however undesignedly, but I could hardly think otherwise. I suffered unspeakable trouble while I considered and reconsidered whether I should at last dissolve that spell of my childhood and tell Joe all the story. For months afterwards, I every day settled the question finally in the negative, and reopened and reargued it next morning. The contention came, after all, to this;—the secret was such an old one now, had so grown into me and become a part of myself, that I could not tear it away. In addition to the dread that, having led up to so much mischief, it would be now more likely than ever to alienate Joe from me if he believed it, I had a further restraining dread that he would not believe it, but would assort it with the fabulous dogs and veal-cutlets as a monstrous invention. However, I temporized with myself, of course—for, was I not wavering between right and wrong, when the thing is always done?—and resolved to make a full disclosure if I should see any such new occasion as a new chance of helping in the discovery of the assailant.

The Constables and the Bow Street men from London—for, this happened in the days of the extinct red-waistcoated police—were about the house for a week or two, and did pretty much what I have heard and read of like authorities doing in other such cases. They took up several obviously wrong people, and they ran their heads very hard against wrong ideas, and persisted in trying to fit the circumstances to the ideas, instead of trying to extract ideas from the circumstances. Also, they stood about the door of the Jolly Bargemen, with knowing and reserved looks that filled the whole neighbourhood with admiration; and they had a mysterious manner of taking their drink, that was almost as good as taking the culprit. But not quite, for they never did it.

Long after these constitutional powers had dispersed, my sister lay very ill in bed. Her sight was disturbed, so that she saw objects multiplied, and grasped at visionary teacups and wineglasses instead of the realities; her hearing was greatly impaired; her memory also; and her speech was unintelligible. When, at last, she came round so far as to be helped downstairs, it was still necessary to keep my slate always by her, that she might indicate in

writing what she could not indicate in speech. As she was (very bad handwriting apart) a more than indifferent speller, and as Joe was a more than indifferent reader, extraordinary complications arose between them which I was always called in to solve. The administration of mutton instead of medicine, the substitution of Tea for Joe, and the baker for bacon, were among the mildest of my own mistakes.

However, her temper was greatly improved, and she was patient. A tremulous uncertainty of the action of all her limbs soon became a part of her regular state, and afterwards, at intervals of two or three months, she would often put her hands to her head, and would then remain for about a week at a time in some gloomy aberration of mind. We were at a loss to find a suitable attendant for her, until a circumstance happened conveniently to relieve us. Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt conquered a confirmed habit of living into which she had fallen, and Biddy became a part of our establishment.

It may have been about a month after my sister's reappearance in the kitchen, when Biddy came to us with a small speckled box containing the whole of her worldly effects, and became a blessing to the household. Above all, she was a blessing to Joe, for the dear old fellow was sadly cut up by the constant contemplation of the wreck of his wife, and had been accustomed, while attending on her of an evening, to turn to me every now and then and say, with his blue eyes moistened, "Such a fine figure of a woman as she once were, Pip!" Biddy instantly taking the cleverest charge of her as though she had studied her from infancy; Joe became able in some sort to appreciate the greater quiet of his life, and to get down to the Jolly Bargemen now and then for a change that did him good. It was characteristic of the police people that they had all more or less suspected poor Joe (though he never knew it), and that they had to a man concurred in regarding him as one of the deepest spirits they had ever encountered.

Biddy's first triumph in her new office, was to solve a difficulty that had completely vanquished me. I had tried hard at it, but had made nothing of it. Thus it was:—

Again and again and again, my sister had traced upon the slate, a character that looked like a curious T, and then with the utmost eagerness had called our attention to it as something she particularly wanted. I had in vain tried everything producible that began with a T, from tar to toast and tub. At length it had come into my head that the sign looked like a hammer, and on my lustily calling that word in my sister's ear, she had begun to hammer on the table and had expressed a qualified assent. Thereupon, I had brought in all our hammers, one after another, but without avail. Then I bethought me of a crutch, the shape being much the same, and I borrowed one in the village, and displayed it to my sister with considerable confidence. But she shook her head to that extent when she was shown it, that we were terrified lest in her weak and shattered state she should dislocate her neck.

When my sister found that Biddy was very quick to understand her, this mysterious sign reappeared on the slate. Biddy looked thoughtfully at it, heard my explanation, looked thoughtfully at my sister, looked thoughtfully at Joe (who was always represented on the slate by his initial letter), and ran into the forge, followed by Joe and me.

"Why, of course!" cried Biddy, with an exultant face. "Don't you see? It's *him*!"

Orlick, without a doubt! She had lost his name, and could only signify him by his hammer. We told him why we wanted him to come into the kitchen, and he slowly laid down his hammer, wiped his brow with his arm, took another wipe at it with his apron, and came slouching out, with a curious loose vagabond bend in the knees that strongly distinguished him.

I confess that I expected to see my sister denounce him, and that I was disappointed by the different result. She manifested the greatest anxiety to be on good terms with him, was evidently much pleased by his being at length produced, and motioned that she would have him given something to drink. She watched his countenance as if she were particularly wishful to be assured that he took kindly to his reception, she showed every possible desire to conciliate him, and there was an air of humble propitiation in all she did, such as I have seen pervade the bearing of a child towards a hard master. After that day, a day rarely passed without her drawing the hammer on her slate, and without Orlick's slouching in and standing doggedly before her, as if he knew no more than I did what to make of it.

Chapter XVII

I now fell into a regular routine of apprenticeship life, which was varied beyond the limits of the village and the marshes, by no more remarkable circumstance than the arrival of my birthday and my paying another visit to Miss Havisham. I found Miss Sarah Pocket still on duty at the gate; I found Miss Havisham just as I had left her, and she spoke of Estella in the very same way, if not in the very same words. The interview lasted but a few minutes, and she gave me a guinea when I was going, and told me to come again on my next birthday. I may mention at once that this became an annual custom. I tried to decline taking the guinea on the first occasion, but with no better effect than causing her to ask me very angrily, if I expected more? Then, and after that, I took it.

So unchanging was the dull old house, the yellow light in the darkened room, the faded spectre in the chair by the dressing-table glass, that I felt as if the stopping of the clocks had stopped Time in that mysterious place, and, while I and everything else outside it grew older, it stood still. Daylight never entered the house as to my thoughts and remembrances of it, any more than as to the actual fact. It bewildered me, and under its influence I continued at heart to hate my trade and to be ashamed of home.

Imperceptibly I became conscious of a change in Biddy, however. Her shoes came up at the heel, her hair grew bright and neat, her hands were always clean. She was not beautiful,—she was common, and could not be like Estella,—but she was pleasant and wholesome and sweet-tempered. She had not been with us more than a year (I remember her being newly out of mourning at the time it struck me), when I observed to myself one evening that she had curiously thoughtful and attentive eyes; eyes that were very pretty and very good.

It came of my lifting up my own eyes from a task I was poring at—writing some passages from a book, to improve myself in two ways at once by a sort of stratagem—and seeing Biddy observant of what I was about. I laid down my pen, and Biddy stopped in her needlework without laying it down.

"Biddy," said I, "how do you manage it? Either I am very stupid, or you are very clever."

"What is it that I manage? I don't know," returned Biddy, smiling.

She managed our whole domestic life, and wonderfully too; but I did not mean that, though that made what I did mean more surprising.

"How do you manage, Biddy," said I, "to learn everything that I learn, and always to keep up with me?" I was beginning to be rather vain of my knowledge, for I spent my birthday guineas on it, and set aside the greater part of my pocket-money for similar investment; though I have no doubt, now, that the little I knew was extremely dear at the price.

"I might as well ask you," said Biddy, "how *you* manage?"

"No; because when I come in from the forge of a night, any one can see me turning to at it. But you never turn to at it, Biddy."

"I suppose I must catch it like a cough," said Biddy, quietly; and went on with her sewing.

Pursuing my idea as I leaned back in my wooden chair, and looked at Biddy sewing away with her head on one side, I began to think her rather an extraordinary girl. For I called to mind now, that she was equally accomplished in the terms of our trade, and the names of our different sorts of work, and our various tools. In short, whatever I knew, Biddy knew. Theoretically, she was already as good a blacksmith as I, or better.

"You are one of those, Biddy," said I, "who make the most of every chance. You never had a chance before you came here, and see how improved you are!"

Biddy looked at me for an instant, and went on with her sewing. "I was your first teacher though; wasn't I?" said she, as she sewed.

"Biddy!" I exclaimed, in amazement. "Why, you are crying!"

"No I am not," said Biddy, looking up and laughing. "What put that in your head?"

What could have put it in my head but the glistening of a tear as it dropped on her work? I sat silent, recalling what a drudge she had been until Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt successfully overcame that bad habit of living, so highly desirable to be got rid of by some people. I recalled the hopeless circumstances by which she had been surrounded in the miserable little shop and the miserable little noisy evening school, with that miserable old bundle of incompetence always to be dragged and shouldered. I reflected that even in those untoward times there must have been latent in Biddy what was now developing, for, in my first uneasiness and discontent I had turned to her for help, as a matter of course. Biddy sat quietly sewing, shedding no more tears, and while I looked at her and thought about it all, it occurred to me that perhaps I had not been sufficiently grateful to Biddy. I might have been too reserved, and should have patronised her more (though I did not use that precise word in my meditations) with my confidence.

"Yes, Biddy," I observed, when I had done turning it over, "you were my first teacher, and that at a time when we little thought of ever being together like this, in this kitchen."

"Ah, poor thing!" replied Biddy. It was like her self-forgetfulness to transfer the remark to my sister, and to get up and be busy about her, making her more comfortable; "that's sadly true!"

"Well!" said I, "we must talk together a little more, as we used to do. And I must consult you a little more, as I used to do. Let us have a quiet walk on the marshes next Sunday, Biddy, and a long chat."

My sister was never left alone now; but Joe more than readily undertook the care of her on that Sunday afternoon, and Biddy and I went out together. It was summer-time, and lovely weather. When we had passed the village and the church and the churchyard, and were out on the marshes and began to see the sails of the ships as they sailed on, I began to combine Miss Havisham and Estella with the prospect, in my usual way. When we came to the river-side and sat down on the bank, with the water rippling at our feet, making it all more quiet than it would have been without that sound, I resolved that it was a good time and place for the admission of Biddy into my inner confidence.

"Biddy," said I, after binding her to secrecy, "I want to be a gentleman."

"O, I wouldn't, if I was you!" she returned. "I don't think it would answer."

"Biddy," said I, with some severity, "I have particular reasons for wanting to be a gentleman."

"You know best, Pip; but don't you think you are happier as you are?"

"Biddy," I exclaimed, impatiently, "I am not at all happy as I am. I am disgusted with my calling and with my life. I have never taken to either, since I was bound. Don't be absurd."

"Was I absurd?" said Biddy, quietly raising her eyebrows; "I am sorry for that; I didn't mean to be. I only want you to do well, and to be comfortable."

"Well, then, understand once for all that I never shall or can be comfortable—or anything but miserable—there, Biddy!—unless I can lead a very different sort of life from the life I lead now."

"That's a pity!" said Biddy, shaking her head with a sorrowful air.

Now, I too had so often thought it a pity, that, in the singular kind of quarrel with myself which I was always carrying on, I was half inclined to shed tears of vexation and distress when Biddy gave utterance to her sentiment and my own. I told her she was right, and I knew it was much to be regretted, but still it was not to be helped.

"If I could have settled down," I said to Biddy, plucking up the short grass within reach, much as I had once upon a time pulled my feelings out of my hair and kicked them into the brewery wall,—“if I could have settled down and been but half as fond of the forge as I was when I was little, I know it would have been much better for me. You and I and Joe would have wanted nothing then, and Joe and I would perhaps have gone partners when I was out of my time, and I might even have grown up to keep company with you, and we might have sat on this very bank on a fine Sunday, quite different people. I should have been good enough for *you*; shouldn't I, Biddy?"

Biddy sighed as she looked at the ships sailing on, and returned for answer, "Yes; I am not over-particular." It scarcely sounded flattering, but I knew she meant well.

"Instead of that," said I, plucking up more grass and chewing a blade or two, "see how I am going on. Dissatisfied, and uncomfortable, and—what would it signify to me, being coarse and common, if nobody had told me so!"

Biddy turned her face suddenly towards mine, and looked far more attentively at me than she had looked at the sailing ships.

"It was neither a very true nor a very polite thing to say," she remarked, directing her eyes to the ships again. "Who said it?"

I was disconcerted, for I had broken away without quite seeing where I was going to. It was not to be shuffled off now, however, and I answered, "The beautiful young lady at Miss Havisham's, and she's more beautiful than anybody ever was, and I admire her dreadfully, and I want to be a gentleman on her account." Having made this lunatic confession, I began to throw my torn-up grass into the river, as if I had some thoughts of following it.

"Do you want to be a gentleman, to spite her or to gain her over?" Biddy quietly asked me, after a pause.

"I don't know," I moodily answered.

"Because, if it is to spite her," Biddy pursued, "I should think—but you know best—that might be better and more independently done by caring nothing for her words. And if it is to gain her over, I should think—but you know best—she was not worth gaining over."

Exactly what I myself had thought, many times. Exactly what was perfectly manifest to me at the moment. But how could I, a poor dazed village lad, avoid that wonderful inconsistency into which the best and wisest of men fall every day?

"It may be all quite true," said I to Biddy, "but I admire her dreadfully."

In short, I turned over on my face when I came to that, and got a good grasp on the hair on each side of my head, and wrenched it well. All the while knowing the madness of my heart to be so very mad and misplaced, that I was quite conscious it would have served my face right, if I had lifted it up by my hair, and knocked it against the pebbles as a punishment for belonging to such an idiot.

Biddy was the wisest of girls, and she tried to reason no more with me. She put her hand, which was a comfortable hand though roughened by work, upon my hands, one after another, and gently took them out of my hair. Then she softly patted my shoulder in a soothing way, while with my face upon my sleeve I cried a little,—exactly as I had done in the brewery yard,—and felt vaguely convinced that I was very much ill-used by somebody, or by everybody; I can't say which.

"I am glad of one thing," said Biddy, "and that is, that you have felt you could give me your confidence, Pip. And I am glad of another thing, and that is, that of course you know you may depend upon my keeping it and always so far deserving it. If your first teacher (dear! such a poor one, and so much in need of being taught herself!) had been your teacher at the present time, she thinks she knows what lesson she would set. But it would be a hard one to learn, and you have got beyond her, and it's of no use now." So, with a quiet sigh for me, Biddy rose from the bank, and said, with a fresh and pleasant change of voice, "Shall we walk a little farther, or go home?"

"Biddy," I cried, getting up, putting my arm round her neck, and giving her a kiss, "I shall always tell you everything."

"Till you're a gentleman," said Biddy.

"You know I never shall be, so that's always. Not that I have any occasion to tell you anything, for you know everything I know,—as I told you at home the other night."

"Ah!" said Biddy, quite in a whisper, as she looked away at the ships. And then repeated, with her former pleasant change, "shall we walk a little farther, or go home?"

I said to Biddy we would walk a little farther, and we

did so, and the summer afternoon toned down into the summer evening, and it was very beautiful. I began to consider whether I was not more naturally and wholesomely situated, after all, in these circumstances, than playing beggar my neighbour by candle-light in the room with the stopped clocks, and being despised by Estella. I thought it would be very good for me if I could get her out of my head, with all the rest of those remembrances and fancies, and could go to work determined to relish what I had to do, and stick to it, and make the best of it. I asked myself the question whether I did not surely know that if Estella were beside me at that moment instead of Biddy, she would make me miserable? I was obliged to admit that I did know it for a certainty, and I said to myself, "Pip, what a fool you are!"

We talked a good deal as we walked, and all that Biddy said seemed right. Biddy was never insulting, or capricious, or Biddy to-day and somebody else to-morrow; she would have derived only pain, and no pleasure, from giving me pain; she would far rather have wounded her own breast than mine. How could it be, then, that I did not like her much the better of the two?

"Biddy," said I, when we were walking homeward, "I wish you could put me right."

"I wish I could!" said Biddy.

"If I could only get myself to fall in love with you,—you don't mind my speaking so openly to such an old acquaintance?"

"Oh dear, not at all!" said Biddy. "Don't mind me."

"If I could only get myself to do it, *that* would be the thing for me."

"But you never will, you see," said Biddy.

It did not appear quite so unlikely to me that evening, as it would have done if we had discussed it a few hours before. I therefore observed I was not quite sure of that. But Biddy said she *was*, and she said it decisively. In my heart I believed her to be right; and yet I took it rather ill, too, that she should be so positive on the point.

When we came near the churchyard, we had to cross an embankment, and get over a stile near a sluice-gate. There started up, from the gate, or from the rushes, or from the ooze (which was quite in his stagnant way), Old Orlick.

"Halloa!" he growled, "where are you two going?"

"Where should we be going, but home?"

"Well, then," said he, "I'm jiggered if I don't see you home!"

This penalty of being jiggered was a favourite supposititious case of his. He attached no definite meaning to the word that I am aware of, but used it, like his own pretended Christian name, to affront mankind, and convey an idea of something savagely damaging. When I was younger, I had had a general belief that if he had jiggered me personally, he would have done it with a sharp and twisted hook.

Biddy was much against his going with us, and said to me in a whisper, "Don't let him come; I don't like him." As I did not like him either, I took the liberty of saying that we thanked him, but we didn't want seeing home. He received that piece of information with a yell of laughter, and dropped back, but came slouching after us at a little distance.

Curious to know whether Biddy suspected him of having had a hand in that murderous attack of which my sister had never been able to give any account, I asked her why she did not like him.

"Oh!" she replied, glancing over her shoulder as he slouched after us, "because I—I am afraid he likes me."

"Did he ever tell you he liked you?" I asked indignantly.

"No," said Biddy, glancing over her shoulder again, "he never told me so; but he dances at me, whenever he can catch my eye."

However novel and peculiar this testimony of attachment, I did not doubt the accuracy of the interpretation. I was very hot indeed upon Old Orlick's daring to admire her; as hot as if it were an outrage on myself.

"But it makes no difference to you, you know," said Biddy, calmly.

"No, Biddy, it makes no difference to me; only I don't like it; I don't approve of it."

"Nor I neither," said Biddy. "Though *that* makes no difference to you."

"Exactly," said I; "but I must tell you I should have no opinion of you, Biddy, if he danced at you with your own consent."

I kept an eye on Orlick after that night, and, whenever circumstances were favourable to his

dancing at Biddy, got before him to obscure that demonstration. He had struck root in Joe's establishment, by reason of my sister's sudden fancy for him, or I should have tried to get him dismissed. He quite understood and reciprocated my good intentions, as I had reason to know thereafter.

And now, because my mind was not confused enough before, I complicated its confusion fifty thousand-fold, by having states and seasons when I was clear that Biddy was immeasurably better than Estella, and that the plain honest working life to which I was born had nothing in it to be ashamed of, but offered me sufficient means of self-respect and happiness. At those times, I would decide conclusively that my disaffection to dear old Joe and the forge was gone, and that I was growing up in a fair way to be partners with Joe and to keep company with Biddy,—when all in a moment some confounding remembrance of the Havisham days would fall upon me like a destructive missile, and scatter my wits again. Scattered

wits take a long time picking up; and often before I had got them well together, they would be dispersed in all directions by one stray thought, that perhaps after all Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune when my time was out.

If my time had run out, it would have left me still at the height of my perplexities, I dare say. It never did run out, however, but was brought to a premature end, as I proceed to relate.

Chapter XVIII

It was in the fourth year of my apprenticeship to Joe, and it was a Saturday night. There was a group assembled round the fire at the Three Jolly Bargemen, attentive to Mr. Wopsle as he read the newspaper aloud. Of that group I was one.

A highly popular murder had been committed, and Mr. Wopsle was imbrued in blood to the eyebrows. He gloated over every abhorrent adjective in the description, and identified himself with every witness at the Inquest. He faintly moaned, "I am done for," as the victim, and he barbarously bellowed, "I'll serve you out," as the murderer. He gave the medical testimony, in pointed imitation of our local practitioner; and he piped and shook, as the aged turnpike-keeper who had heard blows, to an extent so very paralytic as to suggest a doubt regarding the mental competency of that witness. The coroner, in Mr. Wopsle's hands, became Timon of Athens; the beadle, Coriolanus. He enjoyed himself thoroughly, and we all enjoyed ourselves, and were delightfully comfortable. In this cosy state of mind we came to the verdict Wilful Murder.

Then, and not sooner, I became aware of a strange gentleman leaning over the back of the settle opposite me, looking on. There was an expression of contempt on his face, and he bit the side of a great forefinger as he watched the group of faces.

"Well!" said the stranger to Mr. Wopsle, when the reading was done, "you have settled it all to your own satisfaction, I have no doubt?"

Everybody started and looked up, as if it were the murderer. He looked at everybody coldly and sarcastically.

"Guilty, of course?" said he. "Out with it. Come!"

"Sir," returned Mr. Wopsle, "without having the honour of your acquaintance, I do say Guilty." Upon this we all took courage to unite in a confirmatory murmur.

"I know you do," said the stranger; "I knew you would. I told you so. But now I'll ask you a question. Do you know, or do you not know, that the law of England supposes every man to be innocent, until he is proved—proved—to be guilty?"

"Sir," Mr. Wopsle began to reply, "as an Englishman myself, I—"

"Come!" said the stranger, biting his forefinger at him. "Don't evade the question. Either you know it, or you don't know it. Which is it to be?"

He stood with his head on one side and himself on one side, in a bullying, interrogative manner, and he threw his forefinger at Mr. Wopsle,—as it were to mark him out—before biting it again.

"Now!" said he. "Do you know it, or don't you know it?"

"Certainly I know it," replied Mr. Wopsle.

"Certainly you know it. Then why didn't you say so at first? Now, I'll ask you another question,"—taking possession of Mr. Wopsle, as if he had a right to him,—"do you know that none of these witnesses have yet been cross-examined?"

Mr. Wopsle was beginning, "I can only say—" when the stranger stopped him.

"What? You won't answer the question, yes or no? Now, I'll try you again." Throwing his finger at him again. "Attend to me. Are you aware, or are you not aware, that none of these witnesses have yet been cross-examined? Come, I only want one word from you. Yes, or no?"

Mr. Wopsle hesitated, and we all began to conceive rather a poor opinion of him.

"Come!" said the stranger, "I'll help you. You don't deserve help, but I'll help you. Look at that paper you hold in your hand. What is it?"

"What is it?" repeated Mr. Wopsle, eyeing it, much at a loss.

"Is it," pursued the stranger in his most sarcastic and suspicious manner, "the printed paper you have just been reading from?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Undoubtedly. Now, turn to that paper, and tell me whether it distinctly states that the prisoner expressly said that his legal advisers instructed him altogether to reserve his defence?"

"I read that just now," Mr. Wopsle pleaded.

"Never mind what you read just now, sir; I don't ask you what you read just now. You may read the Lord's Prayer backwards, if you like,—and, perhaps, have done it before to-day. Turn to the paper. No, no, no my friend; not to the top of the column; you know better than that; to the bottom, to the bottom." (We all began to think Mr. Wopsle full of subterfuge.) "Well? Have you found it?"

"Here it is," said Mr. Wopsle.

"Now, follow that passage with your eye, and tell me whether it distinctly states that the prisoner expressly said that he was instructed by his legal advisers wholly to reserve his defence? Come! Do you make that of it?"

Mr. Wopsle answered, "Those are not the exact words."

"Not the exact words!" repeated the gentleman bitterly. "Is that the exact substance?"

"Yes," said Mr. Wopsle.

"Yes," repeated the stranger, looking round at the rest of the company with his right hand extended towards the witness, Wopsle. "And now I ask you what you say to the conscience of that man who, with that passage before his eyes, can lay his head upon his pillow after having pronounced a fellow-creature guilty, unheard?"

We all began to suspect that Mr. Wopsle was not the man we had thought him, and that he was beginning to be found out.

"And that same man, remember," pursued the gentleman, throwing his finger at Mr. Wopsle heavily,— "that same man might be summoned as a jurymen upon this very trial, and, having thus deeply committed himself, might return to the bosom of his family and lay his head upon his pillow, after deliberately swearing that he would well and truly try the issue joined between Our Sovereign Lord the King and the prisoner at the bar, and would a true verdict give according to the evidence, so help him God!"

We were all deeply persuaded that the unfortunate Wopsle had gone too far, and had better stop in his reckless career while there was yet time.

The strange gentleman, with an air of authority not to be disputed, and with a manner expressive of knowing something secret about every one of us that would effectually do for each individual if he chose to disclose it, left the back of the settle, and came into the space between the two settles, in front of the fire, where he remained standing, his left hand in his pocket, and he biting the forefinger of his right.

"From information I have received," said he, looking round at us as we all quailed before him, "I have reason to believe there is a blacksmith among you, by name Joseph—or Joe—Gargery. Which is the man?"

"Here is the man," said Joe.

The strange gentleman beckoned him out of his place, and Joe went.

"You have an apprentice," pursued the stranger, "commonly known as Pip? Is he here?"

"I am here!" I cried.

The stranger did not recognise me, but I recognised him as the gentleman I had met on the stairs, on the occasion of my second visit to Miss Havisham. I had known him the moment I saw him looking over the settle, and now that I stood confronting him with his hand upon my shoulder, I checked off again in detail his large head, his dark complexion, his deep-set eyes, his bushy black eyebrows, his large watch-chain, his strong black dots of beard and whisker, and even the smell of scented soap on his great hand.

"I wish to have a private conference with you two," said he, when he had surveyed me at his leisure. "It will take a little time. Perhaps we had better go to your place of residence. I prefer not to anticipate my communication here; you will impart as much or as little of it as you please to your friends afterwards; I have nothing to do with that."

Amidst a wondering silence, we three walked out of the Jolly Bargemen, and in a wondering silence walked home. While going along, the strange gentleman occasionally looked at me, and occasionally bit the side of his finger. As we neared home, Joe vaguely acknowledging the occasion as an impressive and ceremonious one, went on ahead to open the front door. Our conference was held in the state parlour, which was feebly lighted by one candle.

It began with the strange gentleman's sitting down at the table, drawing the candle to him, and looking over some entries in his pocket-book. He then put up the pocket-book and set the candle a little aside, after peering round it into the darkness at Joe and me, to ascertain which was which.

"My name," he said, "is Jaggers, and I am a lawyer in London. I am pretty well known. I have unusual business to transact with you, and I commence by explaining that it is not of my originating. If my advice had been asked, I should not have been here. It was not asked, and you see me here. What I have to do as the confidential agent of another, I do. No less, no more."

Finding that he could not see us very well from where he sat, he got up, and threw one leg over the back of a chair and leaned upon it; thus having one foot on the seat of the chair, and one foot on the ground.

"Now, Joseph Gargery, I am the bearer of an offer to relieve you of this young fellow your apprentice. You would not object to cancel his indentures at his request and for his good? You would want nothing for so doing?"

"Lord forbid that I should want anything for not standing in Pip's way," said Joe, staring.

"Lord forbidding is pious, but not to the purpose," returned Mr. Jaggers. "The question is, Would you want anything? Do you want anything?"

"The answer is," returned Joe, sternly, "No."

I thought Mr. Jaggers glanced at Joe, as if he considered him a fool for his disinterestedness. But I was too much bewildered between breathless curiosity and surprise, to be sure of it.

"Very well," said Mr. Jaggers. "Recollect the admission you have made, and don't try to go from it presently."

"Who's a-going to try?" retorted Joe.

"I don't say anybody is. Do you keep a dog?"

"Yes, I do keep a dog."

"Bear in mind then, that Brag is a good dog, but

Holdfast is a better. Bear that in mind, will you?" repeated Mr. Jaggers, shutting his eyes and nodding his head at Joe, as if he were forgiving him something. "Now, I return to this young fellow. And the communication I have got to make is, that he has great expectations."

Joe and I gasped, and looked at one another.

"I am instructed to communicate to him," said Mr. Jaggers, throwing his finger at me sideways, "that he will come into a handsome property. Further, that it is the desire of the present possessor of that property, that he be immediately removed from his present sphere of life and from this place, and be brought up as a gentleman,—in a word, as a young fellow of great expectations."

My dream was out; my wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality; Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune on a grand scale.

"Now, Mr. Pip," pursued the lawyer, "I address the rest of what I have to say, to you. You are to understand, first, that it is the request of the person from whom I take my instructions that you always bear the name of Pip. You will have no objection, I dare say, to your great expectations being encumbered with that easy condition. But if you have any objection, this is the time to mention it."

My heart was beating so fast, and there was such a singing in my ears, that I could scarcely stammer I had no objection.

"I should think not! Now you are to understand, secondly, Mr. Pip, that the name of the person who is your liberal benefactor remains a profound secret, until the person chooses to reveal it. I am empowered to mention that it is the intention of the person to reveal it at first hand by word of mouth to yourself. When or where that intention may be carried out, I cannot say; no one can say. It may be years hence.

Now, you are distinctly to understand that you are most positively prohibited from making any inquiry on this head, or any allusion or reference, however distant, to any individual whomsoever as *the* individual, in all the communications you may have with me. If you have a suspicion in your own breast, keep that suspicion in your own breast. It is not the least to the purpose what the reasons of this prohibition are; they may be the strongest and gravest reasons, or they may be mere whim. This is not for you to inquire into. The condition is laid down. Your acceptance of it, and your observance of it as binding, is the only remaining condition that I am charged with, by the person from whom I take my instructions, and for whom I am not otherwise responsible. That person is the person from whom you derive your expectations, and the secret is solely held by that person and by me. Again, not a very difficult condition with which to encumber such a rise in fortune; but if you have any objection to it, this is the time to mention it. Speak out."

Once more, I stammered with difficulty that I had no objection.

"I should think not! Now, Mr. Pip, I have done with stipulations." Though he called me Mr. Pip, and began rather to make up to me, he still could not get rid of a certain air of bullying suspicion; and even now he occasionally shut his eyes and threw his finger at me while he spoke, as much as to express that he knew all kinds of things to my disparagement, if he only chose to mention them. "We come next, to mere details of arrangement. You must know that, although I have used the term 'expectations' more than once, you are not endowed with expectations only. There is already lodged in my hands a sum of money amply sufficient for your suitable education and maintenance. You will please consider me your guardian. Oh!" for I was going to thank him, "I tell you at once, I am paid for my services, or I shouldn't render them. It is considered that you must be better educated, in accordance with your altered position, and that you will be alive to the importance and necessity of at once entering on that advantage."

I said I had always longed for it.

"Never mind what you have always longed for, Mr. Pip," he retorted; "keep to the record. If you long for it now, that's enough. Am I answered that you are ready to be placed at once under some proper tutor? Is that it?"

I stammered yes, that was it.

"Good. Now, your inclinations are to be consulted. I don't think that wise, mind, but it's my trust. Have you ever heard of any tutor whom you would prefer to another?"

I had never heard of any tutor but Biddy and Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt; so, I replied in the negative.

"There is a certain tutor, of whom I have some knowledge, who I think might suit the purpose," said Mr. Jaggers. "I don't recommend him, observe; because I never recommend anybody. The gentleman I speak of is one Mr. Matthew Pocket."

Ah! I caught at the name directly. Miss Havisham's relation. The Matthew whom Mr. and Mrs. Camilla had spoken of. The Matthew whose place was to be at Miss Havisham's head, when she lay dead, in her bride's dress on the bride's table.

"You know the name?" said Mr. Jaggers, looking shrewdly at me, and then shutting up his eyes while he waited for my answer.

My answer was, that I had heard of the name.

"Oh!" said he. "You have heard of the name. But the question is, what do you say of it?"

I said, or tried to say, that I was much obliged to him for his recommendation—

"No, my young friend!" he interrupted, shaking his great head very slowly. "Recollect yourself."

Not recollecting myself, I began again that I was much obliged to him for his recommendation—

"No, my young friend," he interrupted, shaking his head and frowning and smiling both at once,—“no, no, no; it's very well done, but it won't do; you are too young to fix me with it. Recommendation is not the word, Mr. Pip. Try another."

Correcting myself, I said that I was much obliged to him for his mention of Mr. Matthew Pocket—

"That's more like it!" cried Mr. Jaggers.—And (I added), I would gladly try that gentleman.

"Good. You had better try him in his own house. The way shall be prepared for you, and you can see his son first, who is in London. When will you come to London?"

I said (glancing at Joe, who stood looking on, motionless), that I supposed I could come directly.

"First," said Mr. Jaggers, "you should have some new clothes to come in, and they should not be working-clothes. Say this day week. You'll want some money. Shall I leave you twenty guineas?"

He produced a long purse, with the greatest coolness, and counted them out on the table and pushed them over to me. This was the first time he had taken his leg from the chair. He sat astride of the chair when he had pushed the money over, and sat swinging his purse and eyeing Joe.

"Well, Joseph Gargery? You look dumbfounded?"

"I *am*!" said Joe, in a very decided manner.

"It was understood that you wanted nothing for yourself, remember?"

"It were understood," said Joe. "And it are understood. And it ever will be similar according."

"But what," said Mr. Jaggers, swinging his purse,—“what if it was in my instructions to make you a present, as compensation?"

"As compensation what for?" Joe demanded.

"For the loss of his services."

Joe laid his hand upon my shoulder with the touch of a woman. I have often thought him since, like the steam-hammer that can crush a man or pat an egg-shell, in his combination of strength with gentleness. "Pip is that hearty welcome," said Joe, "to go free with his services, to honour and fortun', as no words can tell him. But if you think as Money can make compen-sation to me for the loss of the little child—what come to the forge—and ever the best of friends!"

O dear good Joe, whom I was so ready to leave and so unthankful to, I see you again, with your muscular blacksmith's arm before your eyes, and your broad chest heaving, and your voice dying away. O dear good faithful tender Joe, I feel the loving tremble of your hand upon my arm, as solemnly this day as if it had been the rustle of an angel's wing!

But I encouraged Joe at the time. I was lost in the mazes of my future fortunes, and could not retrace the by-paths we had trodden together. I begged Joe to be comforted, for (as he said) we had ever been the best of friends, and (as I said) we ever would be so. Joe scooped his eyes with his disengaged wrist, as if he were bent on gouging himself, but said not another word.

Mr. Jaggers had looked on at this, as one who recognised in Joe the village idiot, and in me his keeper. When it was over, he said, weighing in his hand the purse he had ceased to swing:—

“Now, Joseph Gargery, I warn you this is your last chance. No half measures with me. If you mean to take a present that I have it in charge to make you, speak out, and you shall have it. If on the contrary you mean to say —” Here, to his great amazement, he was stopped by Joe’s suddenly working round him with every demonstration of a fell pugilistic purpose.

“Which I meantsay,” cried Joe, “that if you come into my place bull-baiting and badgering me, come out! Which I meantsay as sech if you’re a man, come on! Which I meantsay that what I say, I meantsay and stand or fall by!”

I drew Joe away, and he immediately became placable; merely stating to me, in an obliging manner and as a polite expostulatory notice to any one whom it might happen to concern, that he were not a-going to be bull-baited and badgered in his own place. Mr. Jaggers had risen when Joe demonstrated, and had backed near the door. Without evincing any inclination to come in again, he there delivered his valedictory remarks. They were these.

“Well, Mr. Pip, I think the sooner you leave here—as you are to be a gentleman—the better. Let it stand for this day week, and you shall receive my printed address in the meantime. You can take a hackney-coach at the stage-coach office in London, and come straight to me. Understand, that I express no opinion, one way or other, on the trust I undertake. I am paid for undertaking it, and I do so. Now, understand that, finally. Understand that!”

He was throwing his finger at both of us, and I think would have gone on, but for his seeming to think Joe dangerous, and going off.

Something came into my head which induced me to run after him, as he was going down to the Jolly Bargemen, where he had left a hired carriage.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Jaggers.”

“Halloa!” said he, facing round, “what’s the matter?”

“I wish to be quite right, Mr. Jaggers, and to keep to your directions; so I thought I had better ask. Would there be any objection to my taking leave of any one I know, about here, before I go away?”

“No,” said he, looking as if he hardly understood me.

“I don’t mean in the village only, but up town?”

“No,” said he. “No objection.”

I thanked him and ran home again, and there I found that Joe had already locked the front door and vacated the state parlour, and was seated by the kitchen fire with a hand on each knee, gazing intently at the burning coals. I too sat down before the fire and gazed at the coals, and nothing was said for a long time.

My sister was in her cushioned chair in her corner, and Biddy sat at her needle-work before the fire, and Joe sat next Biddy, and I sat next Joe in the corner opposite my sister. The more I looked into the glowing coals, the more incapable I became of looking at Joe; the longer the silence lasted, the more unable I felt to speak.

At length I got out, “Joe, have you told Biddy?”

“No, Pip,” returned Joe, still looking at the fire, and holding his knees tight, as if he had private information that they intended to make off somewhere, “which I left it to yourself, Pip.”

“I would rather you told, Joe.”

“Pip’s a gentleman of fortun’ then,” said Joe, “and God bless him in it!”

Biddy dropped her work, and looked at me. Joe held his knees and looked at me. I looked at both of them. After a pause, they both heartily congratulated me; but there was a certain touch of sadness in their congratulations that I rather resented.

I took it upon myself to impress Biddy (and through Biddy, Joe) with the grave obligation I considered my friends under, to know nothing and say nothing about the maker of my fortune. It would all come out in good time, I observed, and in the meanwhile nothing was to be said, save that I had come into great expectations from a mysterious patron. Biddy nodded her head thoughtfully at the fire as she took up her work again, and said she would be very particular; and Joe, still detaining his knees, said, “Ay, ay, I’ll be ekervally partickler, Pip;” and then they congratulated me again, and went on to express so much wonder at the notion of my being a gentleman that I didn’t half like it.

Infinite pains were then taken by Biddy to convey to my sister some idea of what had happened. To the best of my belief, those efforts entirely failed. She laughed and nodded her head a great many times, and even repeated after Biddy, the words “Pip” and “Property.” But I doubt if they had more meaning in them than an election cry, and I cannot suggest a darker picture of her state of mind.

I never could have believed it without experience, but as Joe and Biddy became more at their cheerful ease again, I became quite gloomy. Dissatisfied with my fortune, of course I could not be; but it is possible that I may have been, without quite knowing it, dissatisfied with myself.

Anyhow, I sat with my elbow on my knee and my face upon my hand, looking into the fire, as those two talked about my going away, and about what they should do without me, and all that. And whenever I caught one of them looking at me, though never so pleasantly (and they often looked at me,—particularly Biddy), I felt offended: as if they were expressing some mistrust of me. Though Heaven knows they never did by word or sign.

At those times I would get up and look out at the door; for our kitchen door opened at once upon the night, and stood open on summer evenings to air the room. The very stars to which I then raised my eyes, I am afraid I took to be but poor and humble stars for glittering on the rustic objects among which I had passed my life.

“Saturday night,” said I, when we sat at our supper of bread and cheese and beer. “Five more days, and then the day before *the* day! They’ll soon go.”

“Yes, Pip,” observed Joe, whose voice sounded hollow in his beer-mug. “They’ll soon go.”

“Soon, soon go,” said Biddy.

“I have been thinking, Joe, that when I go down town on Monday, and order my new clothes, I shall tell the tailor that I’ll come and put them on there, or that I’ll have them sent to Mr. Pumblechook’s. It would be very disagreeable to be stared at by all the people here.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Hubble might like to see you in your new gen-teel figure too, Pip,” said Joe, industriously cutting his bread, with his cheese on it, in the palm of his left hand, and glancing at my untasted supper as if he thought of the time when we used to compare slices. “So might Wopsle. And the Jolly Bargemen might take it as a compliment.”

“That’s just what I don’t want, Joe. They would make such a business of it,—such a coarse and common business,—that I couldn’t bear myself.”

“Ah, that indeed, Pip!” said Joe. “If you couldn’t abear yourself—”

Biddy asked me here, as she sat holding my sister’s plate, “Have you thought about when you’ll show yourself to Mr. Gargery, and your sister and me? You will show yourself to us; won’t you?”

“Biddy,” I returned with some resentment, “you are so exceedingly quick that it’s difficult to keep up with you.”

(“She always were quick,” observed Joe.)

“If you had waited another moment, Biddy, you would have heard me say that I shall bring my clothes here in a bundle one evening,—most likely on the evening before I go away.”

Biddy said no more. Handsomely forgiving her, I soon exchanged an affectionate good night with her and Joe, and went up to bed. When I got into my little room, I sat down and took a long look at it, as a mean little room

that I should soon be parted from and raised above, for ever. It was furnished with fresh young remembrances too, and even at the same moment I fell into much the same confused division of mind between it and the better rooms to which I was going, as I had been in so often between the forge and Miss Havisham’s, and Biddy and Estella.

The sun had been shining brightly all day on the roof of my attic, and the room was warm. As I put the window open and stood looking out, I saw Joe come slowly forth at the dark door, below, and take a turn or two in the air; and then I saw Biddy come, and bring him a pipe and light it for him. He never smoked so late, and it seemed to hint to me that he wanted comforting, for some reason or other.

He presently stood at the door immediately beneath me, smoking his pipe, and Biddy stood there too, quietly talking to him, and I knew that they talked of me, for I heard my name mentioned in an endearing tone by both of them more than once. I would not have listened for more, if I could have heard more; so I drew away from the window, and sat down in my one chair by the bedside, feeling it very sorrowful and strange that this first night of my bright fortunes should be the loneliest I had ever known.

Looking towards the open window, I saw light wreaths from Joe’s pipe floating there, and I fancied it was like a blessing from Joe,—not obtruded on me or paraded before me, but pervading the air we shared together. I put my light out, and crept into bed; and it was an uneasy bed now, and I never slept the old sound sleep in it any more.

Chapter XIX

Morning made a considerable difference in my general prospect of Life, and brightened it so much that it scarcely seemed the same. What lay heaviest on my mind was, the consideration that six days intervened between me and the day of departure; for I could not divest myself of a misgiving that something might happen to London in the meanwhile, and that, when I got there, it would be either greatly deteriorated or clean gone.

Joe and Biddy were very sympathetic and pleasant when I spoke of our approaching separation; but they only referred to it when I did. After breakfast, Joe brought out my indentures from the press in the best parlour, and we put them in the fire, and I felt that I was free. With all the novelty of my emancipation on me, I went to church with Joe, and thought perhaps the clergyman wouldn’t have read that about the rich man and the kingdom of Heaven, if he had known all.

After our early dinner, I strolled out alone, purposing to finish off the marshes at once, and get them done with. As I passed the church, I felt (as I had felt during service in

the morning) a sublime compassion for the poor creatures who were destined

to go there, Sunday after Sunday, all their lives through, and to lie obscurely at last among the low green mounds. I promised myself that I would do something for them one of these days, and formed a plan in outline for bestowing a dinner of roast-beef and plum-pudding, a pint of ale, and a gallon of condescension, upon everybody in the village.

If I had often thought before, with something allied to shame, of my companionship with the fugitive whom I had once seen limping among those graves, what were my thoughts on this Sunday, when the place recalled the wretch, ragged and shivering, with his felon iron and badge! My comfort was, that it happened a long time ago, and that he had doubtless been transported a long way off, and that he was dead to me, and might be veritably dead into the bargain.

No more low, wet grounds, no more dikes and sluices, no more of these grazing cattle,—though they seemed, in their dull manner, to wear a more respectful air now, and to face round, in order that they might stare as long as possible at the possessor of such great expectations,—farewell, monotonous acquaintances of my childhood, henceforth I was for London and greatness; not for smith's work in general, and for you! I made my exultant way to the old Battery, and, lying down there to consider the question whether Miss Havisham intended me for Estella, fell asleep.

When I awoke, I was much surprised to find Joe sitting beside me, smoking his pipe. He greeted me with a cheerful smile on my opening my eyes, and said:

"As being the last time, Pip, I thought I'd foller."

"And Joe, I am very glad you did so."

"Thankee, Pip."

"You may be sure, dear Joe," I went on, after we had shaken hands, "that I shall never forget you."

"No, no, Pip!" said Joe, in a comfortable tone, "I'm sure of that. Ay, ay, old chap! Bless you, it were only necessary to get it well round in a man's mind, to be certain on it. But it took a bit of time to get it well round, the change come so uncommon plump; didn't it?"

Somehow, I was not best pleased with Joe's being so mightily secure of me. I should have liked him to have betrayed emotion, or to have said, "It does you credit, Pip," or something of that sort. Therefore, I made no remark on Joe's first head; merely saying as to his second, that the tidings had indeed come suddenly, but that I had always wanted to be a gentleman, and had often and often speculated on what I would do, if I were one.

"Have you though?" said Joe. "Astonishing!"

"It's a pity now, Joe," said I, "that you did not get on a little more, when we had our lessons here; isn't it?"

"Well, I don't know," returned Joe. "I'm so awful dull. I'm only master of my own trade. It were always a pity as I was so awful dull; but it's no more of a pity now, than it was—this day twelvemonth—don't you see?"

What I had meant was, that when I came into my property and was able to do something for Joe, it would have been much more agreeable if he had been better qualified for a rise in station. He was so perfectly innocent of my meaning, however, that I thought I would mention it to Biddy in preference.

So, when we had walked home and had had tea, I took Biddy into our little garden by the side of the lane, and, after throwing out in a general way for the elevation of her spirits, that I should never forget her, said I had a favour to ask of her.

"And it is, Biddy," said I, "that you will not omit any opportunity of helping Joe on, a little."

"How helping him on?" asked Biddy, with a steady sort of glance.

"Well! Joe is a dear good fellow,—in fact, I think he is the dearest fellow that ever lived,—but he is rather backward in some things. For instance, Biddy, in his learning and his manners."

Although I was looking at Biddy as I spoke, and although she opened her eyes very wide when I had spoken, she did not look at me.

"O, his manners! won't his manners do then?" asked Biddy, plucking a black-currant leaf.

"My dear Biddy, they do very well here—"

"O! they *do* very well here!" interrupted Biddy, looking closely at the leaf in her hand.

"Hear me out,—but if I were to remove Joe into a higher sphere, as I shall hope to remove him when I fully come into my property, they would hardly do him justice."

"And don't you think he knows that?" asked Biddy.

It was such a very provoking question (for it had never in the most distant manner occurred to me), that I said, snappishly,—

"Biddy, what do you mean?"

Biddy, having rubbed the leaf to pieces between her hands,—and the smell of a black-currant bush has ever since recalled to me that evening in the little garden by the side of the lane,—said, "Have you never considered that he may be proud?"

"Proud?" I repeated, with disdainful emphasis.

"O! there are many kinds of pride," said Biddy, looking full at me and shaking her head; "pride is not all of one kind—"

"Well? What are you stopping for?" said I.

"Not all of one kind," resumed Biddy. "He may be too proud to let any one take him out of a place that he is competent to fill, and fills well and with respect. To tell you the truth, I think he is; though it sounds bold in me to say so, for you must know him far better than I do."

"Now, Biddy," said I, "I am very sorry to see this in you. I did not expect to see this in you. You are envious, Biddy, and grudging. You are dissatisfied on account of my rise in fortune, and you can't help showing it."

"If you have the heart to think so," returned Biddy, "say so. Say so over and over again, if you have the heart to think so."

"If you have the heart to be so, you mean, Biddy," said I, in a virtuous and superior tone; "don't put it off upon me. I am very sorry to see it, and it's a—it's a bad side of human nature. I did intend to ask you to use any little opportunities you might have after I was gone, of improving dear Joe. But after this I ask you nothing. I am extremely sorry to see this in you, Biddy," I repeated. "It's a—it's a bad side of human nature."

"Whether you scold me or approve of me," returned poor Biddy, "you may equally depend upon my trying to do all that lies in my power, here, at all times. And whatever opinion you take away of me, shall make no difference in my remembrance of you. Yet a gentleman should not be unjust neither," said Biddy, turning away her head.

I again warmly repeated that it was a bad side of human nature (in which sentiment, waiving its application, I have since seen reason to think I was right), and I walked down the little path away from Biddy, and Biddy went into the house, and I went out at the garden gate and took a dejected stroll until supper-time; again feeling it very sorrowful and strange that this, the second night of my bright fortunes, should be as lonely and unsatisfactory as the first.

But, morning once more brightened my view, and I extended my clemency to Biddy, and we dropped the subject. Putting on the best clothes I had, I went into town as early as I could hope to find the shops open, and presented myself before Mr. Trabb, the tailor, who was having his breakfast in the parlour behind his shop, and who did not think it worth his while to come out to me, but called me in to him.

"Well!" said Mr. Trabb, in a hail-fellow-well-met kind of way. "How are you, and what can I do for you?"

Mr. Trabb had sliced his hot roll into three feather-beds, and was slipping butter in between the blankets, and covering it up. He was a prosperous old bachelor, and his open window looked into a prosperous little garden and orchard, and there was a prosperous iron safe let into the wall at the side of his fireplace, and I did not doubt that heaps of his prosperity were put away in it in bags.

"Mr. Trabb," said I, "it's an unpleasant thing to have to mention, because it looks like boasting; but I have come into a handsome property."

A change passed over Mr. Trabb. He forgot the butter in bed, got up from the bedside, and wiped his fingers on the tablecloth, exclaiming, "Lord bless my soul!"

"I am going up to my guardian in London," said I, casually drawing some guineas out of my pocket and looking at them; "and I want a fashionable suit of clothes to go in. I wish to pay for them," I added—otherwise I thought he might only pretend to make them, "with ready money."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Trabb, as he respectfully bent his body, opened his arms, and took the liberty of touching me on the outside of each elbow, "don't hurt me by mentioning that. May I venture to congratulate you? Would you do me the favour of stepping into the shop?"

Mr. Trabb's boy was the most audacious boy in all that country-side. When I had entered he was sweeping the shop, and he had sweetened his labours by sweeping over me. He was still sweeping when I came out into the shop with Mr. Trabb, and he knocked the broom against all possible corners and obstacles, to express (as I understood it) equality with any blacksmith, alive or dead.

"Hold that noise," said Mr. Trabb, with the greatest sternness, "or I'll knock your head off!—Do me the favour to be seated, sir. Now, this," said Mr. Trabb, taking down a roll of cloth, and tiding it out in a flowing manner over the counter, preparatory to getting his hand under it to show the gloss, "is a very sweet article. I can recommend it for your purpose, sir, because it really is extra super. But you shall see some others. Give me Number Four, you!" (To the boy, and with a dreadfully severe stare; foreseeing the danger of that miscreant's brushing me with it, or making some other sign of familiarity.)

Mr. Trabb never removed his stern eye from the boy until he had deposited number four on the counter and was at a safe distance again. Then he commanded him to bring number five, and number eight. "And let me have none of your tricks here," said Mr. Trabb, "or you shall repent it, you young scoundrel, the longest day you have to live."

Mr. Trabb then bent over number four, and in a sort of deferential confidence recommended it to me as a light article for summer wear, an article much in vogue among the nobility and gentry, an article that it would ever be an honour to him to reflect upon a distinguished fellow-townsmen's (if he might claim me for a fellow-townsmen) having worn. "Are you bringing numbers five and eight, you vagabond," said Mr. Trabb to the boy after that, "or shall I kick you out of the shop and bring them myself?"

I selected the materials for a suit, with the assistance of Mr. Trabb's judgment, and re-entered the parlour to be measured. For although Mr. Trabb had my measure already, and had previously been quite contented with it, he said apologetically that it "wouldn't do under existing circumstances, sir,—wouldn't do at all." So, Mr. Trabb measured and calculated me in the parlour, as if I were an estate and he the finest species of surveyor, and gave himself such a world of trouble that I felt that no suit of clothes could possibly remunerate him for his pains. When he had at last done and had appointed to send the articles to Mr. Pumblechook's on the Thursday evening, he said, with his hand upon the parlour lock, "I know, sir, that London gentlemen cannot be expected to patronise local work, as a rule; but if you would give me a turn now and then in the quality of a townsman, I should greatly esteem it. Good-morning, sir, much obliged.—Door!"

The last word was flung at the boy, who had not the least notion what it meant. But I saw him collapse as his master rubbed me out with his hands, and my first decided experience of the stupendous power of money was, that it had morally laid upon his back Trabb's boy.

After this memorable event, I went to the hatter's, and the bootmaker's, and the hosier's, and felt rather like Mother Hubbard's dog whose outfit required the services of so many trades. I also went to the coach-office and took my place for seven o'clock on Saturday morning. It was not necessary to explain everywhere that I had come into a handsome property; but whenever I said anything to that effect, it followed that the officiating tradesman ceased to have his attention diverted through the window by the High Street, and concentrated his mind upon me. When I had ordered everything I wanted, I directed my steps towards Pumblechook's, and, as I approached that gentleman's place of business, I saw him standing at his door.

He was waiting for me with great impatience. He had been out early with the chaise-cart, and had called at the forge and heard the news. He had prepared a collation for me in the Barnwell parlour, and he too ordered his shopman to "come out of the gangway" as my sacred person passed.

"My dear friend," said Mr. Pumblechook, taking me by both hands, when he and I and the collation were alone, "I give you joy of your good fortune. Well deserved, well deserved!"

This was coming to the point, and I thought it a sensible way of expressing himself.

"To think," said Mr. Pumblechook, after snorting admiration at me for some moments, "that I should have been the humble instrument of leading up to this, is a proud reward."

I begged Mr. Pumblechook to remember that nothing was to be ever said or hinted, on that point.

"My dear young friend," said Mr. Pumblechook; "if you will allow me to call you so—"

I murmured "Certainly," and Mr. Pumblechook took me by both hands again, and communicated a movement to his waistcoat, which had an emotional appearance, though it was rather low down, "My dear young friend, rely upon my doing my little all in your absence, by keeping the fact before the mind of Joseph.—Joseph!" said Mr. Pumblechook, in the way of a compassionate adjuration. "Joseph!! Joseph!!!" There-upon he shook his head and tapped it, expressing his sense of deficiency in Joseph.

"But my dear young friend," said Mr. Pumblechook, "you must be hungry, you must be exhausted. Be seated. Here is a chicken had round from the Boar, here is a tongue had round from the Boar, here's one or two little things had round from the Boar, that I hope you may not despise. But do I," said Mr. Pumblechook, getting up again the moment after he had sat down, "see afore me, him as I ever sported with in his times of happy infancy? And may I—*may I*—?"

This *May I*, meant might he shake hands? I consented, and he was fervent, and then sat down again.

"Here is wine," said Mr. Pumblechook. "Let us drink, Thanks to Fortune, and may she ever pick out her favourites with equal judgment! And yet I cannot," said Mr. Pumblechook, getting up again, "see afore me One—and likewise drink to One—without again expressing—*May I—may I*—?"

I said he might, and he shook hands with me again, and emptied his glass and turned it upside down. I did the same; and if I had turned myself upside down before drinking, the wine could not have gone more direct to my head.

Mr. Pumblechook helped me to the liver wing, and to the best slice of tongue (none of those out-of-the-way No Thoroughfares of Pork now), and took, comparatively speaking, no care of himself at all. "Ah! poultry, poultry! You little thought," said Mr. Pumblechook, apostrophising the fowl in the dish,

"when you was a young fledgling, what was in store for you. You little thought you was to be refreshment beneath this humble roof for one as—Call it a weakness, if you will," said Mr. Pumblechook, getting up again, "but may I? *may I*—?"

It began to be unnecessary to repeat the form of saying he might, so he did it at once. How he ever did it so often without wounding himself with my knife, I don't know.

"And your sister," he resumed, after a little steady eating, "which had the honour of bringing you up by hand! It's a sad picter, to reflect that she's no longer equal to fully understanding the honour. *May*—"

I saw he was about to come at me again, and I stopped him.

"We'll drink her health," said I.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Pumblechook, leaning back in his chair, quite flaccid with admiration, "that's the way you know 'em, sir!" (I don't know who Sir was, but he certainly was not I, and there was no third person present); "that's the way you know the noble-minded, sir! Ever forgiving and ever affable. It might," said the servile Pumblechook, putting down his untasted glass in a hurry and getting up again, "to a common person, have the appearance of repeating—but *may* I—?"

When he had done it, he resumed his seat and drank to my sister. "Let us never be blind," said Mr. Pumblechook, "to her faults of temper, but it is to be hoped she meant well."

At about this time, I began to observe that he was getting flushed in the face; as to myself, I felt all face, steeped in wine and smarting.

I mentioned to Mr. Pumblechook that I wished to have my new clothes sent to his house, and he was ecstatic on my so distinguishing him. I mentioned my reason for desiring to avoid observation in the village, and he lauded it to the skies. There was nobody but himself, he intimated, worthy of my confidence, and—in short, might he? Then he asked me tenderly if I remembered our boyish games at sums, and how we had gone together to have me bound apprentice, and, in effect, how he had ever been my favourite fancy and my chosen friend? If I had taken ten times as many glasses of wine as I had, I should have known that he never had stood in that relation towards me, and should in my heart of hearts have repudiated the idea. Yet for all that, I remember feeling convinced that I had been much mistaken in him, and that he was a sensible, practical, good-hearted prime fellow.

By degrees he fell to reposing such great confidence in me, as to ask my advice in reference to his own affairs. He mentioned that there was an opportunity for a great amalgamation and monopoly of the corn and seed trade on those premises, if enlarged, such as had never occurred before in that or any other neighbourhood. What alone was wanting to the realisation of a vast fortune, he considered to be More Capital. Those were the two little words, more capital. Now it appeared to him (Pumblechook) that if that capital were got into the business, through a sleeping partner, sir,—which sleeping partner would have nothing to do but walk in, by self or deputy, whenever he pleased, and examine the books,—and walk in twice a year and take his profits away in his pocket, to the tune of fifty per cent,—it appeared to him that that might be an opening for a young gentleman of spirit combined with property, which would be worthy of his attention. But what did I think? He had great confidence in my opinion, and what did I think? I gave it

as my opinion. "Wait a bit!" The united vastness and distinctness of this view so struck him, that he no longer asked if he might shake hands with me, but said he really must,—and did.

We drank all the wine, and Mr. Pumblechook pledged himself over and over again to keep Joseph up to the mark (I don't know what mark), and to render me efficient and constant service (I don't know what service). He also made known to me for the first time in my life, and certainly after having kept his secret wonderfully well, that he had always said of me, "That boy is no common boy, and mark me, his fortun' will be no common fortun'." He said with a tearful smile that it was a singular thing to think of now, and I said so too. Finally, I went out into the air, with a dim perception that there was something unwonted in the conduct of the sunshine, and found that I had slumberously got to the turnpike without having taken any account of the road.

There, I was roused by Mr. Pumblechook's hailing me. He was a long way down the sunny street, and was making expressive gestures for me to stop. I stopped, and he came up breathless.

"No, my dear friend," said he, when he had recovered wind for speech. "Not if I can help it. This occasion shall not entirely pass without that affability on your part.—May I, as an old friend and well-wisher? *May* I?"

We shook hands for the hundredth time at least, and he ordered a young carter out of my way with the greatest indignation. Then, he blessed me and stood waving his hand to me until I had passed the crook in the road; and then I turned into a field and had a long nap under a hedge before I pursued my way home.

I had scant luggage to take with me to London, for little of the little I possessed was adapted to my new station. But I began packing that same afternoon, and wildly packed up things that I knew I should want next morning, in a fiction that there was not a moment to be lost.

So, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, passed; and on Friday morning I went to Mr. Pumblechook's, to put on my new clothes and pay my visit to Miss Havisham. Mr. Pumblechook's own room was given up to me to dress in, and was decorated with clean towels expressly for the event. My clothes were rather a disappointment, of course. Probably every new and eagerly expected garment ever put on since clothes came in, fell a trifle short of the wearer's expectation. But after I had had my new suit on some half an hour, and had gone through an immensity of posturing with Mr. Pumblechook's very limited dressing-glass, in the futile endeavour to see my legs, it seemed to fit me better. It being market morning at a neighbouring town some ten miles off, Mr. Pumblechook was not at home. I had not told him exactly when I meant to leave, and was not likely to shake hands with him again before departing. This was all as it should be, and I went out in my new array, fearfully ashamed of having to pass the shopman, and suspicious after all that I was at a personal disadvantage, something like Joe's in his Sunday suit.

I went circuitously to Miss Havisham's by all the back ways, and rang at the bell constrainedly, on account of the stiff long fingers of my gloves. Sarah Pocket came to the gate, and positively reeled back when she saw me so changed; her walnut-shell countenance likewise turned from brown to green and yellow.

"You?" said she. "You? Good gracious! What do you want?"

"I am going to London, Miss Pocket," said I, "and want to say good-bye to Miss Havisham."

I was not expected, for she left me locked in the yard, while she went to ask if I were to be admitted. After a very short delay, she returned and took me up, staring at me all the way.

Miss Havisham was taking exercise in the room with the long spread table, leaning on her crutch stick. The room was lighted as of yore, and at the sound of our entrance, she stopped and turned. She was then just abreast of the rotted bride-cake.

"Don't go, Sarah," she said. "Well, Pip?"

"I start for London, Miss Havisham, to-morrow," I was exceedingly careful what I said, "and I thought you would kindly not mind my taking leave of you."

"This is a gay figure, Pip," said she, making her crutch stick play round me, as if she, the fairy godmother who had changed me, were bestowing the finishing gift.

"I have come into such good fortune since I saw you last, Miss Havisham," I murmured. "And I am so grateful for it, Miss Havisham!"

"Ay, ay!" said she, looking at the discomfited and envious Sarah, with delight. "I have seen Mr. Jaggers. I have heard about it, Pip. So you go to-morrow?"

"Yes, Miss Havisham."

"And you are adopted by a rich person?"

"Yes, Miss Havisham."

"Not named?"

"No, Miss Havisham."

"And Mr. Jaggers is made your guardian?"

"Yes, Miss Havisham."

She quite gloated on these questions and answers, so keen was her enjoyment of Sarah Pocket's jealous dismay. "Well!" she went on; "you have a promising career before you. Be good—deserve it—and abide by Mr. Jaggers's instructions." She looked at me, and looked at Sarah, and Sarah's countenance wrung out of her watchful face a cruel smile. "Good-bye, Pip!—you will always keep the name of Pip, you know."

"Yes, Miss Havisham."

"Good-bye, Pip!"

She stretched out her hand, and I went down on my knee and put it to my lips. I had not considered how I should take leave of her; it came naturally to me at the moment to do this. She looked at Sarah Pocket with

triumph in her weird eyes, and so I left my fairy godmother, with both her hands on her crutch stick, standing in the midst of the dimly lighted room beside the rotten bride-cake that was hidden in cobwebs.

Sarah Pocket conducted me down, as if I were a ghost who must be seen out. She could not get over my appearance, and was in the last degree confounded. I said "Good-bye, Miss Pocket;" but she merely stared, and did not seem collected enough to know that I had spoken. Clear of the house, I made the best of my way back to Pumblechook's, took off my new clothes, made them into a bundle, and went back home in my older dress, carrying it—to speak the truth—much more at my ease too, though I had the bundle to carry.

And now, those six days which were to have run out so slowly, had run out fast and were gone, and to-morrow looked me in the face more steadily than I could look at it. As the six evenings had dwindled away, to five, to four, to three, to two, I had become more and more appreciative of the society of Joe and Biddy. On this last evening, I dressed myself out in my new clothes for their delight, and sat in my splendour until bedtime. We had a hot supper on the occasion, graced by the inevitable roast fowl, and we had some flip to finish with. We were all very low, and none the higher for pretending to be in spirits.

I was to leave our village at five in the morning, carrying my little hand-portmanteau, and I had told Joe that I wished to walk away all alone. I am afraid—sore afraid—that this purpose originated in my sense of the contrast there would be between me and Joe, if we went to the coach together. I had pretended with myself that there was nothing of this taint in the arrangement; but when I went up to my little room on this last night, I felt compelled to admit that it might be so, and had an impulse upon me to go down again and entreat Joe to walk with me in the morning. I did not.

All night there were coaches in my broken sleep, going to wrong places instead of to London, and having in the traces, now dogs, now cats, now pigs, now men,—never horses. Fantastic failures of journeys occupied me until the day dawned and the birds were singing. Then, I got up and partly dressed, and sat at the window to take a last look out, and in taking it fell asleep.

Biddy was astir so early to get my breakfast, that, although I did not sleep at the window an hour, I smelt the smoke of the kitchen fire when I started up with a terrible idea that it must be late in the afternoon. But long after that, and long after I had heard the clinking of the teacups and was quite ready, I wanted the resolution to go downstairs. After all, I remained up there, repeatedly unlocking and unstrapping my small portmanteau and locking and strapping it up again, until Biddy called to me that I was late.

It was a hurried breakfast with no taste in it. I got up from the meal, saying with a sort of briskness, as if it had only just occurred to me, "Well! I suppose I must be off!" and then I kissed my sister who was laughing and nodding

and shaking in her usual chair, and kissed Biddy, and threw my arms around Joe's neck. Then I took up my little portmanteau and walked out. The last I saw of them was, when I presently heard a scuffle behind me, and looking back, saw Joe throwing an old shoe after me and Biddy throwing another old shoe. I stopped then, to wave my hat, and dear old Joe waved his strong right arm above his head, crying huskily "Hooroar!" and Biddy put her apron to her face.

I walked away at a good pace, thinking it was easier to go than I had supposed it would be, and reflecting that it would never have done to have had an old shoe thrown after the coach, in sight of all the High Street. I whistled and made nothing of going. But the village was very peaceful and quiet, and the light mists were solemnly rising, as if to show me the world, and I had been so innocent and little there, and all beyond was so unknown and great, that in a moment with a strong heave and sob I broke into tears. It was by the finger-post at the end of the village, and I laid my hand upon it, and said, "Good-bye, O my dear, dear friend!"

Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts. I was better after I had cried than before,—more sorry, more aware of my own ingratitude, more gentle. If I had cried before, I should have had Joe with me then.

So subdued I was by those tears, and by their breaking out again in the course of the quiet walk, that when I was on the coach, and it was clear of the town, I deliberated with an aching heart whether I would not get down when we changed horses and walk back, and have another evening at home, and a better parting. We changed, and I had not made up my mind, and still reflected for my comfort that it would be quite practicable to get down and walk back, when we changed again. And while I was occupied with these deliberations, I would fancy an exact resemblance to Joe in some man coming along the road towards us, and my heart would beat high.—As if he could possibly be there!

We changed again, and yet again, and it was now too late and too far to go back, and I went on. And the mists had all solemnly risen now, and the world lay spread before me.

THIS IS THE END OF THE FIRST STAGE OF PIP'S EXPECTATIONS

Chapter XX

The journey from our town to the metropolis was a journey of about five hours. It was a little past midday when the four-horse stage-coach by which I was a passenger, got into the ravel of traffic frayed out about the Cross Keys, Wood Street, Cheapside, London.

We Britons had at that time particularly settled that it was treasonable to doubt our having and our being the best of everything: otherwise, while I was scared by the immensity of London, I think I might have had some faint doubts whether it was not rather ugly, crooked, narrow, and dirty.

Mr. Jaggers had duly sent me his address; it was, Little Britain, and he had written after it on his card, "just out of Smithfield, and close by the coach-office." Nevertheless, a hackney-coachman, who seemed to have as many capes to his greasy great-coat as he was years old, packed me up in his coach and hemmed me in with a folding and jingling barrier of steps, as if he were going to take me fifty miles. His getting on his box, which I remember to have been decorated with an old weather-stained pea-green hammercloth moth-eaten into rags, was quite a work of time. It was a wonderful equipage, with six great coronets outside, and ragged things behind for I don't know how many footmen to hold on by, and a harrow below them, to prevent amateur footmen from yielding to the temptation.

I had scarcely had time to enjoy the coach and to think how like a straw-yard it was, and yet how like a rag-shop, and to wonder why the horses' nose-bags were kept inside, when I observed the coachman beginning to get down, as if we were going to stop presently. And stop we presently did, in a gloomy street, at certain offices with an open door, whereon was painted MR. JAGGERS.

"How much?" I asked the coachman.

The coachman answered, "A shilling—unless you wish to make it more."

I naturally said I had no wish to make it more.

"Then it must be a shilling," observed the coachman. "I don't want to get into trouble. *I know him!*" He darkly closed an eye at Mr. Jaggers's name, and shook his head.

When he had got his shilling, and had in course of time completed the ascent to his box, and had got away (which appeared to relieve his mind), I went into the front office with my little portmanteau in my hand and asked, Was Mr. Jaggers at home?

"He is not," returned the clerk. "He is in Court at present. Am I addressing Mr. Pip?"

I signified that he was addressing Mr. Pip.

"Mr. Jaggers left word, would you wait in his room. He couldn't say how long he might be, having a case on. But

it stands to reason, his time being valuable, that he won't be longer than he can help."

With those words, the clerk opened a door, and ushered me into an inner chamber at the back. Here, we found a gentleman with one eye, in a velvet suit and knee-breeches, who wiped his nose with his sleeve on being interrupted in the perusal of the newspaper.

"Go and wait outside, Mike," said the clerk.

I began to say that I hoped I was not interrupting, when the clerk shoved this gentleman out with as little ceremony as I ever saw used, and tossing his fur cap out after him, left me alone.

Mr. Jaggers's room was lighted by a skylight only, and was a most dismal place; the skylight, eccentrically pitched like a broken head, and the distorted adjoining houses looking as if they had twisted themselves to peep down at me through it. There were not so many papers about, as I should have expected to see; and there were some odd objects about, that I should not have expected to see,—such as an old rusty pistol, a sword in a scabbard, several strange-looking boxes and packages, and two dreadful casts on a shelf, of faces peculiarly swollen, and twitchy about the nose. Mr. Jaggers's own high-backed chair was of deadly black horsehair, with rows of brass nails round it, like a coffin; and I fancied I could see how he leaned back in it, and bit his forefinger at the clients. The room was but small, and the clients seemed to have had a habit of backing up against the wall; the wall, especially opposite to Mr. Jaggers's chair, being greasy with shoulders. I recalled, too, that the one-eyed gentleman had shuffled forth against the wall when I was the innocent cause of his being turned out.

I sat down in the cliental chair placed over against Mr. Jaggers's chair, and became fascinated by the dismal atmosphere of the place. I called to mind that the clerk had the same air of knowing something to everybody else's disadvantage, as his master had. I wondered how many other clerks there were upstairs, and whether they all claimed to have the same detrimental mastery of their fellow-creatures. I wondered what was the history of all the odd litter about the room, and how it came there. I wondered whether the two swollen faces were of Mr. Jaggers's family, and, if he were so unfortunate as to have had a pair of such ill-looking relations, why he stuck them on that dusty perch for the blacks and flies to settle on, instead of giving them a place at home. Of course I had no experience of a London summer day, and my spirits may have been oppressed by the hot exhausted air, and by the dust and grit that lay thick on everything. But I sat wondering and waiting in Mr. Jaggers's close room, until I really could not bear the two casts on the shelf above Mr. Jaggers's chair, and got up and went out.

When I told the clerk that I would take a turn in the air while I waited, he advised me to go round the corner and I

should come into Smithfield. So I came into Smithfield; and the shameful place, being all asmeared with filth and fat and blood and foam, seemed to stick to me. So, I rubbed it off with all possible speed by turning into a street where I saw the great black dome of Saint Paul's bulging at me from behind a grim stone building which a bystander said was Newgate Prison. Following the wall of the jail, I found the roadway covered with straw to deaden the noise of passing vehicles; and from this, and from the quantity of people standing about smelling strongly of spirits and beer, I inferred that the trials were on.

While I looked about me here, an exceedingly dirty and partially drunk minister of justice asked me if I would like to step in and hear a trial or so: informing me that he could give me a front place for half a crown, whence I should command a full view of the Lord Chief Justice in his wig and robes,—mentioning that awful personage like waxwork, and presently offering him at the reduced price of eighteen-pence. As I declined the proposal on the plea of an appointment, he was so good as to take me into a yard and show me where the gallows was kept, and also where people were publicly whipped, and then he showed me the Debtors' Door, out of which culprits came to be hanged; heightening the interest of that dreadful portal by giving me to understand that "four on 'em" would come out at that door the day after to-morrow at eight in the morning, to be killed in a row. This was horrible, and gave me a sickening idea of London; the more so as the Lord Chief Justice's proprietor wore (from his hat down to his boots and up again to his pocket-handkerchief inclusive) mildewed clothes which had evidently not belonged to him originally, and which I took it into my head he had bought cheap of the executioner. Under these circumstances I thought myself well rid of him for a shilling.

I dropped into the office to ask if Mr. Jaggers had come in yet, and I found he had not, and I strolled out again. This time, I made the tour of Little Britain, and turned into Bartholomew Close; and now I became aware that other people were waiting about for Mr. Jaggers, as well as I. There were two men of secret appearance lounging in Bartholomew Close, and thoughtfully fitting their feet into the cracks of the pavement as they talked together, one of whom said to the other when they first passed me, that "Jaggers would do it if it was to be done." There was a knot of three men and two women standing at a corner, and one of the women was crying on her dirty shawl, and the other comforted her by saying, as she pulled her own shawl over her shoulders, "Jaggers is for him, 'Melia, and what more *could* you have?" There was a red-eyed little Jew who came into the Close while I was loitering there, in company with a second little Jew whom he sent upon an errand; and while the messenger was gone, I remarked this Jew, who was of a highly excitable temperament, performing a jig of anxiety under a lamp-post and accompanying himself, in a kind of frenzy, with the

words, "O Jaggerth, Jaggerth, Jaggerth! all otherth ith Cag-Maggerth, give me Jaggerth!" These testimonies to the popularity of my guardian made a deep impression on me, and I admired and wondered more than ever.

At length, as I was looking out at the iron gate of Bartholomew Close into Little Britain, I saw Mr. Jaggers coming across the road towards me. All the others who were waiting saw him at the same time, and there was quite a rush at him. Mr. Jaggers, putting a hand on my shoulder and walking me on at his side without saying anything to me, addressed himself to his followers.

First, he took the two secret men.

"Now, I have nothing to say to *you*," said Mr. Jaggers, throwing his finger at them. "I want to know no more than I know. As to the result, it's a toss-up. I told you from the first it was a toss-up. Have you paid Wemmick?"

"We made the money up this morning, sir," said one of the men, submissively, while the other perused Mr. Jaggers's face.

"I don't ask you when you made it up, or where, or whether you made it up at all. Has Wemmick got it?"

"Yes, sir," said both the men together.

"Very well; then you may go. Now, I won't have it!" said Mr. Jaggers, waving his hand at them to put them behind him. "If you say a word to me, I'll throw up the case."

"We thought, Mr. Jaggers—" one of the men began, pulling off his hat.

"That's what I told you not to do," said Mr. Jaggers. "*You* thought! I think for you; that's enough for you. If I want you, I know where to find you; I don't want you to find me. Now I won't have it. I won't hear a word."

The two men looked at one another as Mr. Jaggers waved them behind again, and humbly fell back and were heard no more.

"And now *you*!" said Mr. Jaggers, suddenly stopping, and turning on the two women with the shawls, from whom the three men had meekly separated,—"*Oh! Amelia, is it?*"

"Yes, Mr. Jaggers."

"And do you remember," retorted Mr. Jaggers, "that but for me you wouldn't be here and couldn't be here?"

"O yes, sir!" exclaimed both women together. "Lord bless you, sir, well we knows that!"

"Then why," said Mr. Jaggers, "do you come here?"

"My Bill, sir!" the crying woman pleaded.

"Now, I tell you what!" said Mr. Jaggers. "Once for all. If you don't know that your Bill's in good hands, I know it. And if you come here bothering about your Bill, I'll make an example of both your Bill and you, and let him slip through my fingers. Have you paid Wemmick?"

"O yes, sir! Every farden."

"Very well. Then you have done all you have got to do. Say another word—one single word—and Wemmick shall give you your money back."

This terrible threat caused the two women to fall off immediately. No one remained now but the excitable Jew, who had already raised the skirts of Mr. Jaggers's coat to his lips several times.

"I don't know this man!" said Mr. Jaggers, in the same devastating strain: "What does this fellow want?"

"Ma thear Mithter Jaggerth. Hown brother to Habraham Latharuth?"

"Who's he?" said Mr. Jaggers. "Let go of my coat."

The suitor, kissing the hem of the garment again before relinquishing it, replied, "Habraham Lath-aruth, on thuthpithion of plate."

"You're too late," said Mr. Jaggers. "I am over the way."

"Holy father, Mithter Jaggerth!" cried my excitable acquaintance, turning white, "don't thay you're again Habraham Latharuth!"

"I am," said Mr. Jaggers, "and there's an end of it. Get out of the way."

"Mithter Jaggerth! Half a moment! My hown cuthen'th gone to Mithter Wemmick at thith prethent minute, to hoffer him hany termth. Mithter Jaggerth! Half a quarter of a moment! If you'd have the condethenthun to be bought off from the t'other thide—at hany thuperior prithe!—money no object!—Mithter Jaggerth—Mithter —!"

My guardian threw his supplicant off with supreme indifference, and left him dancing on the pavement as if it were red hot. Without further interruption, we reached the front office, where we found the clerk and the man in velvet with the fur cap.

"Here's Mike," said the clerk, getting down from his stool, and approaching Mr. Jaggers confidentially.

"Oh!" said Mr. Jaggers, turning to the man, who was pulling a lock of hair in the middle of his forehead, like the Bull in Cock Robin pulling at the bell-rope; "your man comes on this afternoon. Well?"

"Well, Mas'r Jaggers," returned Mike, in the voice of a sufferer from a constitutional cold; "arter a deal o' trouble, I've found one, sir, as might do."

"What is he prepared to swear?"

"Well, Mas'r Jaggers," said Mike, wiping his nose on his fur cap this time; "in a general way, anythink."

Mr. Jaggers suddenly became most irate. "Now, I warned you before," said he, throwing his forefinger at the terrified client, "that if you ever presumed to talk in that way here, I'd make an example of you. You infernal scoundrel, how dare you tell ME that?"

The client looked scared, but bewildered too, as if he were unconscious what he had done.

"Spooney!" said the clerk, in a low voice, giving him a stir with his elbow. "Soft Head! Need you say it face to face?"

"Now, I ask you, you blundering booby," said my guardian, very sternly, "once more and for the last time, what the man you have brought here is prepared to swear?"

Mike looked hard at my guardian, as if he were trying to learn a lesson from his face, and slowly replied, "Ayther to character, or to having been in his company and never left him all the night in question."

"Now, be careful. In what station of life is this man?"

Mike looked at his cap, and looked at the floor, and looked at the ceiling, and looked at the clerk, and even looked at me, before beginning to reply in a nervous manner, "We've dressed him up like—" when my guardian blustered out,—

"What? You WILL, will you?"

("Spooney!" added the clerk again, with another stir.)

After some helpless casting about, Mike brightened and began again:—

"He is dressed like a 'spectable pieman. A sort of a pastry-cook."

"Is he here?" asked my guardian.

"I left him," said Mike, "a setting on some doorsteps round the corner."

"Take him past that window, and let me see him."

The window indicated was the office window. We all three went to it, behind the wire blind, and presently saw the client go by in an accidental manner, with a murderous-looking tall individual, in a short suit of white linen and a paper cap. This guileless confectioner was not by any means sober, and had a black eye in the green stage of recovery, which was painted over.

"Tell him to take his witness away directly," said my guardian to the clerk, in extreme disgust, "and ask him what he means by bringing such a fellow as that."

My guardian then took me into his own room, and while he lunched, standing, from a sandwich-box and a pocket-flask of sherry (he seemed to bully his very sandwich as he ate it), informed me what arrangements he had made for me. I was to go to "Barnard's Inn," to young Mr. Pocket's rooms, where a bed had been sent in for my accommodation; I was to remain with young Mr. Pocket until Monday; on Monday I was to go with him to his father's house on a visit, that I might try how I liked it. Also, I was told what my allowance was to be,—it was a very liberal one,—and had handed to me from one of my guardian's drawers, the cards of certain tradesmen with

whom I was to deal for all kinds of clothes, and such other things as I could in reason want. "You will find your credit good, Mr. Pip," said my guardian, whose flask of sherry smelt like a whole caskful, as he hastily refreshed himself, "but I shall by this means be able to check your bills, and to pull you up if I find you outrunning the constable. Of course you'll go wrong somehow, but that's no fault of mine."

After I had pondered a little over this encouraging sentiment, I asked Mr. Jaggers if I could send for a coach? He said it was not worth while, I was so near my destination; Wemmick should walk round with me, if I pleased.

I then found that Wemmick was the clerk in the next room. Another clerk was rung down from upstairs to take his place while he was out, and I accompanied him into the street, after shaking hands with my guardian. We found a new set of people lingering outside, but Wemmick made a way among them by saying coolly yet decisively, "I tell you it's no use; he won't have a word to say to one of you;" and we soon got clear of them, and went on side by side.

Chapter XXI

Casting my eyes on Mr. Wemmick as we went along, to see what he was like in the light of day, I found him to be a dry man, rather short in stature, with a square wooden face, whose expression seemed to have been imperfectly chipped out with a dull-edged chisel. There were some marks in it that might have been dimples, if the material had been softer and the instrument finer, but which, as it was, were only dints. The chisel had made three or four of these attempts at embellishment over his nose, but had given them up without an effort to smooth them off. I judged him to be a bachelor from the frayed condition of his linen, and he appeared to have sustained a good many bereavements; for he wore at least four mourning rings, besides a brooch representing a lady and a weeping willow at a tomb with an urn on it. I noticed, too, that several rings and seals hung at his watch-chain, as if he were quite laden with remembrances of departed friends. He had glittering eyes,—small, keen, and black,—and thin wide mottled lips. He had had them, to the best of my belief, from forty to fifty years.

"So you were never in London before?" said Mr. Wemmick to me.

"No," said I.

"I was new here once," said Mr. Wemmick. "Rum to think of now!"

"You are well acquainted with it now?"

"Why, yes," said Mr. Wemmick. "I know the moves of it."

"Is it a very wicked place?" I asked, more for the sake of saying something than for information.

"You may get cheated, robbed, and murdered in London. But there are plenty of people anywhere, who'll do that for you."

"If there is bad blood between you and them," said I, to soften it off a little.

"O! I don't know about bad blood," returned Mr. Wemmick; "there's not much bad blood about. They'll do it, if there's anything to be got by it."

"That makes it worse."

"You think so?" returned Mr. Wemmick. "Much about the same, I should say."

He wore his hat on the back of his head, and looked straight before him: walking in a self-contained way as if there were nothing in the streets to claim his attention. His mouth was such a post-office of a mouth that he had a mechanical appearance of smiling. We had got to the top of Holborn Hill before I knew that it was merely a mechanical appearance, and that he was not smiling at all.

"Do you know where Mr. Matthew Pocket lives?" I asked Mr. Wemmick.

"Yes," said he, nodding in the direction. "At Hammersmith, west of London."

"Is that far?"

"Well! Say five miles."

"Do you know him?"

"Why, you're a regular cross-examiner!" said Mr. Wemmick, looking at me with an approving air. "Yes, I know him. *I* know him!"

There was an air of toleration or depreciation about his utterance of these words that rather depressed me; and I was still looking sideways at his block of a face in search of any encouraging note to the text, when he said here we were at Barnard's Inn. My depression was not alleviated by the announcement, for, I had supposed that establishment to be an hotel kept by Mr. Barnard, to which the Blue Boar in our town was a mere public-house. Whereas I now found Barnard to be a disembodied spirit, or a fiction, and his inn the dingiest collection of shabby buildings ever squeezed together in a rank corner as a club for Tom-cats.

We entered this haven through a wicket-gate, and were disgorged by an introductory passage into a melancholy little square that looked to me like a flat burying-ground. I thought it had the most dismal trees in it, and the most dismal sparrows, and the most dismal cats, and the most dismal houses (in number half a dozen or so), that I had ever seen. I thought the windows of the sets of chambers into which those houses were divided were in every stage of dilapidated blind and curtain, crippled flower-pot, cracked glass, dusty decay, and miserable makeshift; while To Let, To Let, To Let, glared at me from empty rooms,

as if no new wretches ever came there, and the vengeance of the soul of Barnard were being slowly appeased by the gradual suicide of the present occupants and their unholy interment under the gravel. A frowzy mourning of soot and smoke attired this forlorn creation of Barnard, and it had strewn ashes on its head, and was undergoing penance and humiliation as a mere dust-hole. Thus far my sense of sight; while dry rot and wet rot and all the silent rots that rot in neglected roof and cellar,—rot of rat and mouse and bug and coaching-stables near at hand besides—addressed themselves faintly to my sense of smell, and moaned, "Try Barnard's Mixture."

So imperfect was this realisation of the first of my great expectations, that I looked in dismay at Mr. Wemmick. "Ah!" said he, mistaking me; "the retirement reminds you of the country. So it does me."

He led me into a corner and conducted me up a flight of stairs,—which appeared to me to be slowly collapsing into sawdust, so that one of those days the upper lodgers would look out at their doors and find themselves without the means of coming down,—to a set of chambers on the top floor. MR. POCKET, JUN., was painted on the door, and there was a label on the letter-box, "Return shortly."

"He hardly thought you'd come so soon," Mr. Wemmick explained. "You don't want me any more?"

"No, thank you," said I.

"As I keep the cash," Mr. Wemmick observed, "we shall most likely meet pretty often. Good day."

"Good day."

I put out my hand, and Mr. Wemmick at first looked at it as if he thought I wanted something. Then he looked at me, and said, correcting himself,—

"To be sure! Yes. You're in the habit of shaking hands?"

I was rather confused, thinking it must be out of the London fashion, but said yes.

"I have got so out of it!" said Mr. Wemmick,— "except at last. Very glad, I'm sure, to make your acquaintance. Good day!"

When we had shaken hands and he was gone, I opened the staircase window and had nearly beheaded myself, for, the lines had rotted away, and it came down like the guillotine. Happily it was so quick that I had not put my head out. After this escape, I was content to take a foggy view of the Inn through the window's encrusting dirt, and to stand dolefully looking out, saying to myself that London was decidedly overrated.

Mr. Pocket, Junior's, idea of Shortly was not mine, for I had nearly maddened myself with looking out for half an hour, and had written my name with my finger several times in the dirt of every pane in the window, before I heard footsteps on the stairs. Gradually there arose before me the hat, head, neckcloth, waistcoat, trousers, boots, of

a member of society of about my own standing. He had a paper-bag under each arm and a pottle of strawberries in one hand, and was out of breath.

"Mr. Pip?" said he.

"Mr. Pocket?" said I.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "I am extremely sorry; but I knew there was a coach from your part of the country at midday, and I thought you would come by that one. The fact is, I have been out on your account,—not that that is any excuse,—for I thought, coming from the country, you might like a little fruit after dinner, and I went to Covent Garden Market to get it good."

For a reason that I had, I felt as if my eyes would start out of my head. I acknowledged his attention incoherently, and began to think this was a dream.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Pocket, Junior. "This door sticks so!"

As he was fast making jam of his fruit by wrestling with the door while the paper-bags were under his arms, I begged him to allow me to hold them. He relinquished them with an agreeable smile, and combated with the door as if it were a wild beast. It yielded so suddenly at last, that he staggered back upon me, and I staggered back upon the opposite door, and we both laughed. But still I felt as if my eyes must start out of my head, and as if this must be a dream.

"Pray come in," said Mr. Pocket, Junior. "Allow me to lead the way. I am rather bare here, but I hope you'll be able to make out tolerably well till Monday. My father thought you would get on more agreeably through to-morrow with me than with him, and might like to take a walk about London. I am sure I shall be very happy to show London to you. As to our table, you won't find that bad, I hope, for it will be supplied from our coffee-house here, and (it is only right I should add) at your expense, such being Mr. Jagger's directions. As to our lodging, it's not by any means splendid, because I have my own bread to earn, and my father hasn't anything to give me, and I shouldn't be willing to take it, if he had. This is our sitting-room,—just such chairs and tables and carpet and so forth, you see, as they could spare from home. You mustn't give me credit for the tablecloth and spoons and castors, because they come for you from the coffee-house. This is my little bedroom; rather musty, but Barnard's is musty. This is your bedroom; the furniture's hired for the occasion, but I trust it will answer the purpose; if you should want anything, I'll go and fetch it. The chambers are retired, and we shall be alone together, but we shan't fight, I dare say. But dear me, I beg your pardon, you're holding the fruit all this time. Pray let me take these bags from you. I am quite ashamed."

As I stood opposite to Mr. Pocket, Junior, delivering him the bags, One, Two, I saw the starting appearance

come into his own eyes that I knew to be in mine, and he said, falling back,—

"Lord bless me, you're the prowling boy!"

"And you," said I, "are the pale young gentleman!"

Chapter XXII

The pale young gentleman and I stood contemplating one another in Barnard's Inn, until we both burst out laughing. "The idea of its being you!" said he. "The idea of its being *you*!" said I. And then we contemplated one another afresh, and laughed again. "Well!" said the pale young gentleman, reaching out his hand good-humouredly, "it's all over now, I hope, and it will be magnanimous in you if you'll forgive me for having knocked you about so."

I derived from this speech that Mr. Herbert Pocket (for Herbert was the pale young gentleman's name) still rather confounded his intention with his execution. But I made a modest reply, and we shook hands warmly.

"You hadn't come into your good fortune at that time?" said Herbert Pocket.

"No," said I.

"No," he acquiesced: "I heard it had happened very lately. I was rather on the lookout for good fortune then."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Miss Havisham had sent for me, to see if she could take a fancy to me. But she couldn't,—at all events, she didn't."

I thought it polite to remark that I was surprised to hear that.

"Bad taste," said Herbert, laughing, "but a fact. Yes, she had sent for me on a trial visit, and if I had come out of it successfully, I suppose I should have been provided for; perhaps I should have been what-you-may-called it to Estella."

"What's that?" I asked, with sudden gravity.

He was arranging his fruit in plates while we talked, which divided his attention, and was the cause of his having made this lapse of a word. "Affianced," he explained, still busy with the fruit. "Betrothed. Engaged. What's-his-named. Any word of that sort."

"How did you bear your disappointment?" I asked.

"Pooh!" said he, "I didn't care much for it. *She's* a Tartar."

"Miss Havisham?"

"I don't say no to that, but I meant Estella. That girl's hard and haughty and capricious to the last degree, and has been brought up by Miss Havisham to wreak revenge on all the male sex."

"What relation is she to Miss Havisham?"

"None," said he. "Only adopted."

"Why should she wreak revenge on all the male sex? What revenge?"

"Lord, Mr. Pip!" said he. "Don't you know?"

"No," said I.

"Dear me! It's quite a story, and shall be saved till dinner-time. And now let me take the liberty of asking you a question. How did you come there, that day?"

I told him, and he was attentive until I had finished, and then burst out laughing again, and asked me if I was sore afterwards? I didn't ask him if *he* was, for my conviction on that point was perfectly established.

"Mr. Jaggers is your guardian, I understand?" he went on.

"Yes."

"You know he is Miss Havisham's man of business and solicitor, and has her confidence when nobody else has?"

This was bringing me (I felt) towards dangerous ground. I answered with a constraint I made no attempt to disguise, that I had seen Mr. Jaggers in Miss Havisham's house on the very day of our combat, but never at any other time, and that I believed he had no recollection of having ever seen me there.

"He was so obliging as to suggest my father for your tutor, and he called on my father to propose it. Of course he knew about my father from his connection with Miss Havisham. My father is Miss Havisham's cousin; not that that implies familiar intercourse between them, for he is a bad courtier and will not propitiate her."

Herbert Pocket had a frank and easy way with him that was very taking. I had never seen any one then, and I have never seen any one since, who more strongly expressed to me, in every look and tone, a natural incapacity to do anything secret and mean. There was something wonderfully hopeful about his general air, and something that at the same time whispered to me he would never be very successful or rich. I don't know how this was. I became imbued with the notion on that first occasion before we sat down to dinner, but I cannot define by what means.

He was still a pale young gentleman, and had a certain conquered languor about him in the midst of his spirits and briskness, that did not seem indicative of natural strength. He had not a handsome face, but it was better than handsome: being extremely amiable and cheerful. His figure was a little ungainly, as in the days when my knuckles had taken such liberties with it, but it looked as if it would always be light and young. Whether Mr. Trabb's local work would have sat more gracefully on him than on me, may be a question; but I am conscious that he

carried off his rather old clothes much better than I carried off my new suit.

As he was so communicative, I felt that reserve on my part would be a bad return unsuited to our years. I therefore told him my small story, and laid stress on my being forbidden to inquire who my benefactor was. I further mentioned that as I had been brought up a blacksmith in a country place, and knew very little of the ways of politeness, I would take it as a great kindness in him if he would give me a hint whenever he saw me at a loss or going wrong.

"With pleasure," said he, "though I venture to prophesy that you'll want very few hints. I dare say we shall be often together, and I should like to banish any needless restraint between us. Will you do me the favour to begin at once to call me by my Christian name, Herbert?"

I thanked him and said I would. I informed him in exchange that my Christian name was Philip.

"I don't take to Philip," said he, smiling, "for it sounds like a moral boy out of the spelling-book, who was so lazy that he fell into a pond, or so fat that he couldn't see out of his eyes, or so avaricious that he locked up his cake till the mice ate it, or so determined to go a bird's-nesting that he got himself eaten by bears who lived handy in the neighbourhood. I tell you what I should like. We are so harmonious, and you have been a blacksmith,—would you mind it?"

"I shouldn't mind anything that you propose," I answered, "but I don't understand you."

"Would you mind Handel for a familiar name? There's a charming piece of music by Handel, called the Harmonious Blacksmith."

"I should like it very much."

"Then, my dear Handel," said he, turning round as the door opened, "here is the dinner, and I must beg of you to take the top of the table, because the dinner is of your providing."

This I would not hear of, so he took the top, and I faced him. It was a nice little dinner,—seemed to me then a very Lord Mayor's Feast,—and it acquired additional relish from being eaten under those independent circumstances, with no old people by, and with London all around us. This again was heightened by a certain gypsy character that set the banquet off; for while the table was, as Mr. Pumblechook might have said, the lap of luxury,—being entirely furnished forth from the coffee-house,—the circumjacent region of sitting-room was of a comparatively pastureless and shifty character; imposing on the waiter the wandering habits of putting the covers on the floor (where he fell over them), the melted butter in the arm-chair, the bread on the bookshelves, the cheese in the coal-scuttle, and the boiled fowl into my bed in the next room,—where I found much of its parsley and butter

in a state of congelation when I retired for the night. All this made the feast delightful, and when the waiter was not there to watch me, my pleasure was without alloy.

We had made some progress in the dinner, when I reminded Herbert of his promise to tell me about Miss Havisham.

"True," he replied. "I'll redeem it at once. Let me introduce the topic, Handel, by mentioning that in London it is not the custom to put the knife in the mouth,—for fear of accidents,—and that while the fork is reserved for that use, it is not put further in than necessary. It is scarcely worth mentioning, only it's as well to do as other people do. Also, the spoon is not generally used over-hand, but under. This has two advantages. You get at your mouth better (which after all is the object), and you save a good deal of the attitude of opening oysters, on the part of the right elbow."

He offered these friendly suggestions in such a lively way, that we both laughed and I scarcely blushed.

"Now," he pursued, "concerning Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham, you must know, was a spoilt child. Her mother died when she was a baby, and her father denied her nothing. Her father was a country gentleman down in your part of the world, and was a brewer. I don't know why it should be a crack thing to be a brewer; but it is indisputable that while you cannot possibly be genteel and bake, you may be as genteel as never was and brew. You see it every day."

"Yet a gentleman may not keep a public-house; may he?" said I.

"Not on any account," returned Herbert; "but a public-house may keep a gentleman. Well! Mr. Havisham was very rich and very proud. So was his daughter."

"Miss Havisham was an only child?" I hazarded.

"Stop a moment, I am coming to that. No, she was not an only child; she had a half-brother. Her father privately married again—his cook, I rather think."

"I thought he was proud," said I.

"My good Handel, so he was. He married his second wife privately, because he was proud, and in course of time *she* died. When she was dead, I apprehend he first told his daughter what he had done, and then the son became a part of the family, residing in the house you are acquainted with. As the son grew a young man, he turned out riotous, extravagant, undutiful, — altogether bad. At last his father disinherited him; but he softened when he was dying, and left him well off, though not nearly so well off as Miss Havisham.—Take another glass of wine, and excuse my mentioning that society as a body does not expect one to be so strictly conscientious in emptying one's glass, as to turn it bottom upwards with the rim on one's nose."

I had been doing this, in an excess of attention to his recital. I thanked him, and apologised. He said, "Not at all," and resumed.

"Miss Havisham was now an heiress, and you may suppose was looked after as a great match. Her half-brother had now ample means again, but what with debts and what with new madness wasted them most fearfully again. There were stronger differences between him and her than there had been between him and his father, and it is suspected that he cherished a deep and mortal grudge against her as having influenced the father's anger. Now, I come to the cruel part of the story,—merely breaking off, my dear Handel, to remark that a dinner-napkin will not go into a tumbler."

Why I was trying to pack mine into my tumbler, I am wholly unable to say. I only know that I found myself, with a perseverance worthy of a much better cause, making the most strenuous exertions to compress it within those limits. Again I thanked him and apologised, and again he said in the cheerfullest manner, "Not at all, I am sure!" and resumed.

"There appeared upon the scene—say at the races, or the public balls, or anywhere else you like—a certain man, who made love to Miss Havisham. I never saw him (for this happened five-and-twenty years ago, before you and I were, Handel), but I have heard my father mention that he was a showy man, and the kind of man for the purpose. But that he was not to be, without ignorance or prejudice, mistaken for a gentleman, my father most strongly asseverates; because it is a principle of his that no man who was not a true gentleman at heart ever was, since the world began, a true gentleman in manner. He says, no varnish can hide the grain of the wood; and that the more varnish you put on, the more the grain will express itself. Well! This man pursued Miss Havisham closely, and professed to be devoted to her. I believe she had not shown much susceptibility up to that time; but all the susceptibility she possessed certainly came out then, and she passionately loved him. There is no doubt that she perfectly idolized him. He practised on her affection in that systematic way, that he got great sums of money from her, and he induced her to buy her brother out of a share in the brewery (which had been weakly left him by his father) at an immense price, on the plea that when he was her husband he must hold and manage it all. Your guardian was not at that time in Miss Havisham's counsels, and she was too haughty and too much in love to be advised by any one. Her relations were poor and scheming, with the exception of my father; he was poor enough, but not time-serving or jealous. The only independent one among them, he warned her that she was doing too much for this man, and was placing herself too unreservedly in his power. She took the first opportunity of angrily ordering my father out of the house, in his presence, and my father has never seen her since."

I thought of her having said, "Matthew will come and see me at last when I am laid dead upon that table;" and I asked Herbert whether his father was so inveterate against her?

"It's not that," said he, "but she charged him, in the presence of her intended husband, with being disappointed in the hope of fawning upon her for his own advancement, and, if he were to go to her now, it would look true—even to him—and even to her. To return to the man and make an end of him. The marriage day was fixed, the wedding dresses were bought, the wedding tour was planned out, the wedding guests were invited. The day came, but not the bridegroom. He wrote her a letter—"

"Which she received," I struck in, "when she was dressing for her marriage? At twenty minutes to nine?"

"At the hour and minute," said Herbert, nodding, "at which she afterwards stopped all the clocks. What was in it, further than that it most heartlessly broke the marriage off, I can't tell you, because I don't know. When she recovered from a bad illness that she had, she laid the whole place waste, as you have seen it, and she has never since looked upon the light of day."

"Is that all the story?" I asked, after considering it.

"All I know of it; and indeed I only know so much, through piecing it out for myself; for my father always avoids it, and, even when Miss Havisham invited me to go there, told me no more of it than it was absolutely requisite I should understand. But I have forgotten one thing. It has been supposed that the man to whom she gave her misplaced confidence acted throughout in concert with her half-brother; that it was a conspiracy between them; and that they shared the profits."

"I wonder he didn't marry her and get all the property," said I.

"He may have been married already, and her cruel mortification may have been a part of her half-brother's scheme," said Herbert. "Mind! I don't know that."

"What became of the two men?" I asked, after again considering the subject.

"They fell into deeper shame and degradation—if there can be deeper—and ruin."

"Are they alive now?"

"I don't know."

"You said just now that Estella was not related to Miss Havisham, but adopted. When adopted?"

Herbert shrugged his shoulders. "There has always been an Estella, since I have heard of a Miss Havisham. I know no more. And now, Handel," said he, finally throwing off the story as it were, "there is a perfectly open understanding between us. All that I know about Miss Havisham, you know."

"And all that I know," I retorted, "you know."

"I fully believe it. So there can be no competition or perplexity between you and me. And as to the condition on which you hold your advancement in life,—namely, that you are not to inquire or discuss to whom you owe it,—you may be very sure that it will never be encroached upon, or even approached, by me, or by any one belonging to me."

In truth, he said this with so much delicacy, that I felt the subject done with, even though I should be under his father's roof for years and years to come. Yet he said it with so much meaning, too, that I felt he as perfectly understood Miss Havisham to be my benefac-tress, as I understood the fact myself.

It had not occurred to me before, that he had led up to the theme for the purpose of clearing it out of our way; but we were so much the lighter and easier for having broached it, that I now perceived this to be the case. We were very gay and sociable, and I asked him, in the course of conversation, what he was? He replied, "A capitalist,—an Insurer of Ships." I suppose he saw me glancing about the room in search of some tokens of Shipping, or capital, for he added, "In the City."

I had grand ideas of the wealth and importance of Insurers of Ships in the City, and I began to think with awe of having laid a young Insurer on his back, blackened his enterprising eye, and cut his responsible head open. But again there came upon me, for my relief, that odd impression that Herbert Pocket would never be very successful or rich.

"I shall not rest satisfied with merely employing my capital in insuring ships. I shall buy up some good Life Assurance shares, and cut into the Direction. I shall also do a little in the mining way. None of these things will interfere with my chartering a few thousand tons on my own account. I think I shall trade," said he, leaning back in his chair, "to the East Indies, for silks, shawls, spices, dyes, drugs, and precious woods. It's an interesting trade."

"And the profits are large?" said I.

"Tremendous!" said he.

I wavered again, and began to think here were greater expectations than my own.

"I think I shall trade, also," said he, putting his thumbs in his waist-coat pockets, "to the West Indies, for sugar, tobacco, and rum. Also to Ceylon, especially for elephants' tusks."

"You will want a good many ships," said I.

"A perfect fleet," said he.

Quite overpowered by the magnificence of these transactions, I asked him where the ships he insured mostly traded to at present?

"I haven't begun insuring yet," he replied. "I am looking about me."

Somehow, that pursuit seemed more in keeping with Barnard's Inn. I said (in a tone of conviction), "Ah-h!"

"Yes. I am in a counting-house, and looking about me."

"Is a counting-house profitable?" I asked.

"To—do you mean to the young fellow who's in it?" he asked, in reply.

"Yes; to you."

"Why, n-no; not to me." He said this with the air of one carefully reckoning up and striking a balance. "Not directly profitable. That is, it doesn't pay me anything, and I have to—keep myself."

This certainly had not a profitable appearance, and I shook my head as if I would imply that it would be difficult to lay by much accumulative capital from such a source of income.

"But the thing is," said Herbert Pocket, "that you look about you. *That's* the grand thing. You are in a counting-house, you know, and you look about you."

It struck me as a singular implication that you couldn't be out of a counting-house, you know, and look about you; but I silently deferred to his experience.

"Then the time comes," said Herbert, "when you see your opening. And you go in, and you swoop upon it and you make your capital, and then there you are! When you have once made your capital, you have nothing to do but employ it."

This was very like his way of conducting that encounter in the garden; very like. His manner of bearing his poverty, too, exactly corresponded to his manner of bearing that defeat. It seemed to me that he took all blows and buffets now with just the same air as he had taken mine then. It was evident that he had nothing around him but the simplest necessities, for everything that I remarked upon turned out to have been sent in on my account from the coffee-house or somewhere else.

Yet, having already made his fortune in his own mind, he was so unassuming with it that I felt quite grateful to him for not being puffed up. It was a pleasant addition to his naturally pleasant ways, and we got on famously. In the evening we went out for a walk in the streets, and went half-price to the Theatre; and next day we went to church at Westminster Abbey, and in the afternoon we walked in the Parks; and I wondered who shod all the horses there, and wished Joe did.

On a moderate computation, it was many months, that Sunday, since I had left Joe and Biddy. The space interposed between myself and them partook of that expansion, and our marshes were any distance off. That I could have been at our old church in my old church-going clothes, on the very last Sunday that ever was, seemed a combination of impossibilities, geographical and social, solar and lunar. Yet in the London streets so

crowded with people and so brilliantly lighted in the dusk of evening, there were depressing hints of reproaches for that I had put the poor old kitchen at home so far away; and in the dead of night, the footsteps of some incapable impostor of a porter mooning about Barnard's Inn, under pretence of watching it, fell hollow on my heart.

On the Monday morning at a quarter before nine, Herbert went to the counting-house to report himself,

—to look about him, too, I suppose,—and I bore him company. He was to come away in an hour or two to attend me to Hammersmith, and I was to wait about for him. It appeared to me that the eggs from which young Insurers were hatched were incubated in dust and heat, like the eggs of ostriches, judging from the places to which those incipient giants repaired on a Monday morning. Nor did the counting-house where Herbert assisted, show in my eyes as at all a good Observatory; being a back second floor up a yard, of a grimy presence in all particulars, and with a look into another back second floor, rather than a look out.

I waited about until it was noon, and I went upon 'Change, and I saw fluey men sitting there under the bills about shipping, whom I took to be great merchants, though I couldn't understand why they should all be out of spirits. When Herbert came, we went and had lunch at a celebrated house which I then quite venerated, but now believe to have been the most abject superstition in Europe, and where I could not help noticing, even then, that there was much more gravy on the tablecloths and knives and waiters' clothes, than in the steaks. This collation disposed of at a moderate price (considering the grease, which was not charged for), we went back to Barnard's Inn and got my little portmanteau, and then took coach for Hammersmith. We arrived there at two or three o'clock in the afternoon, and had very little way to walk to Mr. Pocket's house. Lifting the latch of a gate, we passed direct into a little garden overlooking the river, where Mr. Pocket's children were playing about. And unless I deceive myself on a point where my interests or prepossessions are certainly not concerned, I saw that Mr. and Mrs. Pocket's children were not growing up or being brought up, but were tumbling up.

Mrs. Pocket was sitting on a garden chair under a tree, reading, with her legs upon another garden chair; and Mrs. Pocket's two nurse-maids were looking about them while the children played. "Mamma," said Herbert, "this is young Mr. Pip." Upon which Mrs. Pocket received me with an appearance of amiable dignity.

"Master Alick and Miss Jane," cried one of the nurses to two of the children, "if you go a bouncing up against them bushes you'll fall over into the river and be drowned, and what'll your pa say then?"

At the same time this nurse picked up Mrs. Pocket's handkerchief, and said, "If that don't make six times

you've dropped it, Mum!" Upon which Mrs. Pocket laughed and said, "Thank you, Flopson," and settling herself in one chair only, resumed her book. Her countenance immediately assumed a knitted and intent expression as if she had been reading for a week, but before she could have read half a dozen lines, she fixed her eyes upon me, and said, "I hope your mamma is quite well?" This unexpected inquiry put me into such a difficulty that I began saying in the absurdest way that if there had been any such person I had no doubt she would have been quite well and would have been very much obliged and would have sent her compliments, when the nurse came to my rescue.

"Well!" she cried, picking up the pocket-handkerchief, "if that don't make seven times! What ARE you a-doing of this afternoon, Mum!" Mrs. Pocket received her property, at first with a look of unutterable surprise as if she had never seen it before, and then with a laugh of recognition, and said, "Thank you, Flopson," and forgot me, and went on reading.

I found, now I had leisure to count them, that there were no fewer than six little Pockets present, in various stages of tumbling up. I had scarcely arrived at the total when a seventh was heard, as in the region of air, wailing dolefully.

"If there ain't Baby!" said Flopson, appearing to think it most surprising. "Make haste up, Millers."

Millers, who was the other nurse, retired into the house, and by degrees the child's wailing was hushed and stopped, as if it were a young ventriloquist with something in its mouth. Mrs. Pocket read all the time, and I was curious to know what the book could be.

We were waiting, I supposed, for Mr. Pocket to come out to us; at any rate we waited there, and so I had an opportunity of observing the remarkable family phenomenon that whenever any of the children strayed near Mrs. Pocket in their play, they always tripped themselves up and tumbled over her,—always very much to her momentary astonishment, and their own more enduring lamentation. I was at a loss to account for this surprising circumstance, and could not help giving my mind to speculations about it, until by and by Millers came down with the baby, which baby was handed to Flopson, which Flopson was handing it to Mrs. Pocket, when she too went fairly head foremost over Mrs. Pocket, baby and all, and was caught by Herbert and myself.

"Gracious me, Flopson!" said Mrs. Pocket, looking off her book for a moment, "everybody's tumbling!"

"Gracious you, indeed, Mum!" returned Flopson, very red in the face; "what have you got there?"

"I got here, Flopson?" asked Mrs. Pocket.

"Why, if it ain't your footstool!" cried Flopson. "And if you keep it under your skirts like that, who's to help tumbling? Here! Take the baby, Mum, and give me your book."

Mrs. Pocket acted on the advice, and inexpertly danced the infant a little in her lap, while the other children played about it. This had lasted but a very short time, when Mrs. Pocket issued summary orders that they were all to be taken into the house for a nap. Thus I made the second discovery on that first occasion, that the nurture of the little Pockets consisted of alternately tumbling up and lying down.

Under these circumstances, when Flopson and Millers had got the children into the house, like a little flock of sheep, and Mr. Pocket came out of it to make my acquaintance, I was not much surprised to find that Mr. Pocket was a gentleman with a rather perplexed expression of face, and with his very grey hair disordered on his head, as if he didn't quite see his way to putting anything straight.

Chapter XXIII

Mr. Pocket said he was glad to see me, and he hoped I was not sorry to see him. "For, I really am not," he added, with his son's smile, "an alarming personage." He was a young-looking man, in spite of his perplexities and his very grey hair, and his manner seemed quite natural. I use the word natural, in the sense of its being unaffected; there was something comic in his distraught way, as though it would have been downright ludicrous but for his own perception that it was very near being so. When he had talked with me a little, he said to Mrs. Pocket, with a rather anxious contraction of his eyebrows, which were black and handsome, "Belinda, I hope you have welcomed Mr. Pip?" And she looked up from her book, and said, "Yes." She then smiled upon me in an absent state of mind, and asked me if I liked the taste of orange-flower water? As the question had no bearing, near or remote, on any foregone or subsequent transaction, I consider it to have been thrown out, like her previous approaches, in general conversational condescension.

I found out within a few hours, and may mention at once, that Mrs. Pocket was the only daughter of a certain quite accidental deceased Knight, who had invented for himself a conviction that his deceased father would have been made a Baronet but for somebody's determined opposition arising out of entirely personal motives,—I forget whose, if I ever knew,—the Sovereign's, the Prime Minister's, the Lord Chancellor's, the Archbishop of Canterbury's, anybody's,—and had tacked himself on to the nobles of the earth in right of this quite supposititious fact. I believe he had been knighted himself for storming the English grammar at the point of the pen, in a desperate address engrossed on vellum, on the occasion of the laying of the first stone of some building or other, and for handing some Royal Personage either the trowel or the mortar. Be that as it may, he had directed Mrs. Pocket to be brought up from her cradle as one who in the nature of things must marry a title, and who was to be guarded from the acquisition of plebeian domestic knowledge.

So successful a watch and ward had been established over the young lady by this judicious parent, that she had grown up highly ornamental, but perfectly helpless and useless. With her character thus happily formed, in the first bloom of her youth she had encountered Mr. Pocket: who was also in the first bloom of youth, and not quite decided whether to mount to the Woolsack, or to roof himself in with a mitre. As his doing the one or the other was a mere question of time, he and Mrs. Pocket had taken Time by the forelock (when, to judge from its length, it would seem to have wanted cutting), and had married without the knowledge of the judicious parent. The judicious parent, having nothing to bestow or withhold but his blessing, had handsomely settled that dower upon them after a short struggle, and had informed Mr. Pocket that his wife was “a treasure for a Prince.” Mr. Pocket had invested the Prince’s treasure in the ways of the world ever since, and it was supposed to have brought him in but indifferent interest. Still, Mrs. Pocket was in general the object of a queer sort of respectful pity, because she had not married a title; while Mr. Pocket was the object of a queer sort of forgiving reproach, because he had never got one.

Mr. Pocket took me into the house and showed me my room: which was a pleasant one, and so furnished as that I could use it with comfort for my own private sitting-room. He then knocked at the doors of two other similar rooms, and introduced me to their occupants, by name Drummle and Startop. Drummle, an old-looking young man of a heavy order of architecture, was whistling. Startop, younger in years and appearance, was reading and holding his head, as if he thought himself in danger of exploding it with too strong a charge of knowledge.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Pocket had such a noticeable air of being in somebody else’s hands, that I wondered who really was in possession of the house and let them live there, until I found this unknown power to be the servants. It was a smooth way of going on, perhaps, in respect of saving trouble; but it had the appearance of being expensive, for the servants felt it a duty they owed to themselves to be nice in their eating and drinking, and to keep a deal of company downstairs. They allowed a very liberal table to Mr. and Mrs. Pocket, yet it always appeared to me that by far the best part of the house to have boarded in would have been the kitchen,—always supposing the boarder capable of self-defence, for, before I had been there a week, a neighbouring lady with whom the family were personally unacquainted, wrote in to say that she had seen Millers slapping the baby. This greatly distressed Mrs. Pocket, who burst into tears on receiving the note, and said that it was an extraordinary thing that the neighbours couldn’t mind their own business.

By degrees I learnt, and chiefly from Herbert, that Mr. Pocket had been educated at Harrow and at Cambridge, where he had distinguished himself; but that when he had had the happiness of marrying Mrs. Pocket very early in

life, he had impaired his prospects and taken up the calling of a Grinder. After grinding a number of dull blades,—of whom it was remarkable that their fathers, when influential, were always going to help him to preferment, but always forgot to do it when the blades had left the Grindstone,—he had wearied of that poor work and had come to London. Here, after gradually failing in loftier hopes, he had “read” with divers who had lacked opportunities or neglected them, and had refurbished divers others for special occasions, and had turned his acquirements to the account of literary compilation and correction, and on such means, added to some very moderate private resources, still maintained the house I saw.

Mr. and Mrs. Pocket had a toady neighbour; a widow lady of that highly sympathetic nature that she agreed with everybody, blessed everybody, and shed smiles and tears on everybody, according to circumstances. This lady’s name was Mrs. Coiler, and I had the honour of taking her down to dinner on the day of my installation. She gave me to understand on the stairs, that it was a blow to dear Mrs. Pocket that dear Mr. Pocket should be under the necessity of receiving gentlemen to read with him. That did not extend to me, she told me in a gush of love and confidence (at that time, I had known her something less than five minutes); if they were all like Me, it would be quite another thing.

“But dear Mrs. Pocket,” said Mrs. Coiler, “after her early disappointment (not that dear Mr. Pocket was to blame in that), requires so much luxury and elegance.”

“Yes, ma’am,” I said, to stop her, for I was afraid she was going to cry.

“And she is of so aristocratic a disposition—”

“Yes, ma’am,” I said again, with the same object as before.

“—That it *is* hard,” said Mrs. Coiler, “to have dear Mr. Pocket’s time and attention diverted from dear Mrs. Pocket.”

I could not help thinking that it might be harder if the butcher’s time and attention were diverted from dear Mrs. Pocket; but I said nothing, and indeed had enough to do in keeping a bashful watch upon my company manners.

It came to my knowledge, through what passed between Mrs. Pocket and Drummle while I was attentive to my knife and fork, spoon, glasses, and other instruments of self-destruction, that Drummle, whose Christian name was Bentley, was actually the next heir but one to a baronetcy. It further appeared that the book I had seen Mrs. Pocket reading in the garden was all about titles, and that she knew the exact date at which her grandpapa would have come into the book, if he ever had come at all. Drummle didn’t say much, but in his limited way (he struck me as a sulky kind of fellow) he spoke as one of the elect, and recognised Mrs. Pocket as a woman and a sister.

No one but themselves and Mrs. Coiler the toady neighbour showed any interest in this part of the conversation, and it appeared to me that it was painful to Herbert; but it promised to last a long time, when the page came in with the announcement of a domestic affliction. It was, in effect, that the cook had mislaid the beef. To my unutterable amazement, I now, for the first time, saw Mr. Pocket relieve his mind by going through a performance that struck me as very extraordinary, but which made no impression on anybody else, and with which I soon became as familiar as the rest. He laid down the carving-knife and fork,—being engaged in carving, at the moment,—put his two hands into his disturbed hair, and appeared to make an extraordinary effort to lift himself up by it. When he had done this, and had not lifted himself up at all, he quietly went on with what he was about.

Mrs. Coiler then changed the subject and began to flatter me. I liked it for a few moments, but she flattered me so very grossly that the pleasure was soon over. She had a serpentine way of coming close at me when she pretended to be vitally interested in the friends and localities I had left, which was altogether snaky and fork-tongued; and when she made an occasional bounce upon Startop (who said very little to her), or upon Drummle (who said less), I rather envied them for being on the opposite side of the table.

After dinner the children were introduced, and Mrs. Coiler made admiring comments on their eyes, noses, and legs,—a sagacious way of improving their minds. There were four little girls, and two little boys, besides the baby who might have been either, and the baby's next successor who was as yet neither. They were brought in by Flopson and Millers, much as though those two non-commissioned officers had been recruiting somewhere for children and had enlisted these, while Mrs. Pocket looked at the young Nobles that ought to have been as if she rather thought she had had the pleasure of inspecting them before, but didn't quite know what to make of them.

"Here! Give me your fork, Mum, and take the baby," said Flopson. "Don't take it that way, or you'll get its head under the table."

Thus advised, Mrs. Pocket took it the other way, and got its head upon the table; which was announced to all present by a prodigious concussion.

"Dear, dear! Give it me back, Mum," said Flopson; "and Miss Jane, come and dance to baby, do!"

One of the little girls, a mere mite who seemed to have prematurely taken upon herself some charge of the others, stepped out of her place by me, and danced to and from the baby until it left off crying, and laughed. Then, all the children laughed, and Mr. Pocket (who in the meantime had twice endeavoured to lift himself up by the hair) laughed, and we all laughed and were glad.

Flopson, by dint of doubling the baby at the joints like

a Dutch doll, then got it safely into Mrs. Pocket's lap, and gave it the nut-crackers to play with; at the same time recommending Mrs. Pocket to take notice that the handles of that instrument were not likely to agree with its eyes, and sharply charging Miss Jane to look after the same. Then, the two nurses left the room, and had a lively scuffle on the staircase with a dissipated page who had waited at dinner, and who had clearly lost half his buttons at the gaming-table.

I was made very uneasy in my mind by Mrs. Pocket's falling into a discussion with Drummle respecting two baronetcies, while she ate a sliced orange steeped in sugar and wine, and, forgetting all about the baby on her lap, who did most appalling things with the nut-crackers. At length little Jane, perceiving its young brains to be imperilled, softly left her place, and with many small artifices coaxed the dangerous weapon away. Mrs. Pocket finishing her orange at about the same time, and not approving of this, said to Jane,—

"You naughty child, how dare you? Go and sit down this instant!"

"Mamma dear," lisped the little girl, "baby ood have put hith eyeth out."

"How dare you tell me so?" retorted Mrs. Pocket. "Go and sit down in your chair this moment!"

Mrs. Pocket's dignity was so crushing, that I felt quite abashed, as if I myself had done something to rouse it.

"Belinda," remonstrated Mr. Pocket, from the other end of the table, "how can you be so unreasonable? Jane only interfered for the protection of baby."

"I will not allow anybody to interfere," said Mrs. Pocket. "I am surprised, Matthew, that you should expose me to the affront of interference."

"Good God!" cried Mr. Pocket, in an outbreak of desolate desperation. "Are infants to be nut-crackered into their tombs, and is nobody to save them?"

"I will not be interfered with by Jane," said Mrs. Pocket, with a majestic glance at that innocent little offender. "I hope I know my poor grandpapa's position. Jane, indeed!"

Mr. Pocket got his hands in his hair again, and this time really did lift himself some inches out of his chair. "Hear this!" he helplessly exclaimed to the elements. "Babies are to be nut-crackered dead, for people's poor grandpapa's positions!" Then he let himself down again, and became silent.

We all looked awkwardly at the tablecloth while this was going on. A pause succeeded, during which the honest and irrepressible baby made a series of leaps and crows at little Jane, who appeared to me to be the only member of the family (irrespective of servants) with whom it had any decided acquaintance.

"Mr. Drummle," said Mrs. Pocket, "will you ring for Flopson? Jane, you undutiful little thing, go and lie down. Now, baby darling, come with ma!"

The baby was the soul of honour, and protested with all its might. It doubled itself up the wrong way over Mrs. Pocket's arm, exhibited a pair of knitted shoes and dimpled ankles to the company in lieu of its soft face, and was carried out in the highest state of mutiny. And it gained its point after all, for I saw it through the window within a few minutes, being nursed by little Jane.

It happened that the other five children were left behind at the dinner-table, through Flopson's having some private engagement, and their not being anybody else's business. I thus became aware of the mutual relations between them and Mr. Pocket, which were exemplified in the following manner. Mr. Pocket, with the normal perplexity of his face heightened and his hair rumped, looked at them for some minutes, as if he couldn't make out how they came to be boarding and lodging in that establishment, and why they hadn't been billeted by Nature on somebody else. Then, in a distant Mission-ary way he asked them certain questions,—as why little Joe had that hole in his frill, who said, Pa, Flopson was going to mend it when she had time,—and how little Fanny came by that whitlow, who said, Pa, Millers was going to poultice it when she didn't forget. Then, he melted into parental tenderness, and gave them a shilling apiece and told them to go and play; and then as they went out, with one very strong effort to lift himself up by the hair he dismissed the hopeless subject.

In the evening there was rowing on the river. As Drummle and Startop had each a boat, I resolved to set up mine, and to cut them both out. I was pretty good at most exercises in which country boys are adepts, but as I was conscious of wanting elegance of style for the Thames,—not to say for other waters,—I at once engaged to place myself under the tuition of the winner of a prize-wherry who plied at our stairs, and to whom I was introduced by my new allies. This practical authority confused me very much by saying I had the arm of a blacksmith. If he could have known how nearly the compliment lost him his pupil, I doubt if he would have paid it.

There was a supper-tray after we got home at night, and I think we should all have enjoyed ourselves, but for a rather disagreeable domestic occurrence. Mr. Pocket was in good spirits, when a housemaid came in, and said, "If you please, sir, I should wish to speak to you."

"Speak to your master?" said Mrs. Pocket, whose dignity was roused again. "How can you think of such a thing? Go and speak to Flopson. Or speak to me—at some other time."

"Begging your pardon, ma'am," returned the housemaid, "I should wish to speak at once, and to speak to master."

Hereupon, Mr. Pocket went out of the room, and we made the best of ourselves until he came back.

"This is a pretty thing, Belinda!" said Mr. Pocket,

returning with a countenance expressive of grief and despair. "Here's the cook lying insensibly drunk on the kitchen floor, with a large bundle of fresh butter made up in the cupboard ready to sell for grease!"

Mrs. Pocket instantly showed much amiable emotion, and said, "This is that odious Sophia's doing!"

"What do you mean, Belinda?" demanded Mr. Pocket.

"Sophia has told you," said Mrs. Pocket. "Did I not see her with my own eyes and hear her with my own ears, come into the room just now and ask to speak to you?"

"But has she not taken me downstairs, Belinda," returned Mr. Pocket, "and shown me the woman, and the bundle too?"

"And do you defend her, Matthew," said Mrs. Pocket, "for making mischief?"

Mr. Pocket uttered a dismal groan.

"Am I, grandpapa's granddaughter, to be nothing in the house?" said Mrs. Pocket. "Besides, the cook has always been a very nice respectful woman, and said in the most natural manner when she came to look after the situation, that she felt I was born to be a Duchess."

There was a sofa where Mr. Pocket stood, and he dropped upon it in the attitude of the Dying Gladiator. Still in that attitude he said, with a hollow voice, "Good night, Mr. Pip," when I deemed it advisable to go to bed and leave him.

Chapter XXIV

After two or three days, when I had established myself in my room and had gone backwards and forwards to London several times, and had ordered all I wanted of my tradesmen, Mr. Pocket and I had a long talk together. He knew more of my intended career than I knew myself, for he referred to his having been told by Mr. Jaggers that I was not designed for any profession, and that I should be well enough educated for my destiny if I could "hold my own" with the average of young men in prosperous circumstances. I acquiesced, of course, knowing nothing to the contrary.

He advised my attending certain places in London, for the acquisition of such mere rudiments as I wanted, and my investing him with the functions of explainer and director of all my studies. He hoped that

with intelligent assistance I should meet with little to discourage me, and should soon be able to dispense with any aid but his. Through his way of saying this, and much more to similar purpose, he placed himself on confidential terms with me in an admirable manner; and I may state at once that he was always so zealous and honourable in fulfilling his compact with me, that he made me zealous and honourable in fulfilling mine with him. If he had shown indifference as a master, I have no doubt I should have returned the compliment as a pupil; he gave me no

such excuse, and each of us did the other justice. Nor did I ever regard him as having anything ludicrous about him—or anything but what was serious, honest, and good—in his tutor communication with me.

When these points were settled, and so far carried out as that I had begun to work in earnest, it occurred to me that if I could retain my bedroom in Barnard's Inn, my life would be agreeably varied, while my manners would be none the worse for Herbert's society. Mr. Pocket did not object to this arrangement, but urged that before any step could possibly be taken in it, it must be submitted to my guardian. I felt that this delicacy arose out of the consideration that the plan would save Herbert some expense, so I went off to Little Britain and imparted my wish to Mr. Jagers.

"If I could buy the furniture now hired for me," said I, "and one or two other little things, I should be quite at home there."

"Go it!" said Mr. Jagers, with a short laugh. "I told you you'd get on. Well! How much do you want?"

I said I didn't know how much.

"Come!" retorted Mr. Jagers. "How much? Fifty pounds?"

"O, not nearly so much."

"Five pounds?" said Mr. Jagers.

This was such a great fall, that I said in discomfiture, "O, more than that."

"More than that, eh!" retorted Mr. Jagers, lying in wait for me, with his hands in his pockets, his head on one side, and his eyes on the wall behind me; "how much more?"

"It is so difficult to fix a sum," said I, hesitating.

"Come!" said Mr. Jagers. "Let's get at it. Twice five; will that do? Three times five; will that do? Four times five; will that do?"

I said I thought that would do handsomely.

"Four times five will do handsomely, will it?" said Mr. Jagers, knitting his brows. "Now, what do you make of four times five?"

"What do I make of it?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Jagers; "how much?"

"I suppose you make it twenty pounds," said I, smiling.

"Never mind what I make it, my friend," observed Mr. Jagers, with a knowing and contradictory toss of his head. "I want to know what *you* make it."

"Twenty pounds, of course."

"Wemmick!" said Mr. Jagers, opening his office door. "Take Mr. Pip's written order, and pay him twenty pounds."

This strongly marked way of doing business made a

strongly marked impression on me, and that not of an agreeable kind. Mr. Jagers never laughed; but he wore great bright creaking boots, and, in poisoning himself on these boots, with his large head bent down and his eyebrows joined together, awaiting an answer, he sometimes caused the boots to creak, as if *they* laughed in a dry and suspicious way. As he happened to go out now, and as Wemmick was brisk and talkative, I said to Wemmick that I hardly knew what to make of Mr. Jagers's manner.

"Tell him that, and he'll take it as a compliment," answered Wemmick; "he don't mean that you *should* know what to make of it.—Oh!" for I looked surprised, "it's not personal; it's professional: only professional."

Wemmick was at his desk, lunching—and crunching—on a dry hard biscuit; pieces of which he threw from time to time into his slit of a mouth, as if he were posting them.

"Always seems to me," said Wemmick, "as if he had set a man-trap and was watching it. Suddenly—click—you're caught!"

Without remarking that man-traps were not among the amenities of life, I said I supposed he was very skilful?

"Deep," said Wemmick, "as Australia." Pointing with his pen at the office floor, to express that Australia was understood, for the purposes of the figure, to be symmetrically on the opposite spot of the globe. "If there was anything deeper," added Wemmick, bringing his pen to paper, "he'd be it."

Then, I said I supposed he had a fine business, and Wemmick said, "Ca-pi-tal!" Then I asked if there were many clerks? to which he replied,—

"We don't run much into clerks, because there's only one Jagers, and people won't have him at second hand. There are only four of us. Would you like to see 'em? You are one of us, as I may say."

I accepted the offer. When Mr. Wemmick had put all the biscuit into the post, and had paid me my money from a cash-box in a safe, the key of which safe he kept somewhere down his back and produced from his coat-collar like an iron-pigtail, we went upstairs.

The house was dark and shabby, and the greasy shoulders that had left their mark in Mr. Jagers's room seemed to have been shuffling up and down the staircase for years. In the front first floor, a clerk who looked something between a publican and a rat-catcher—a large pale, puffed, swollen man—was attentively engaged with three or four people of shabby appearance, whom he treated as unceremoniously as everybody seemed to be treated who contributed to Mr. Jagers's coffers. "Getting evidence together," said Mr. Wemmick, as we came out, "for the Bailey." In the room over that, a little flabby terrier of a clerk with dangling hair (his cropping seemed

to have been forgotten when he was a puppy) was similarly engaged with a man with weak eyes, whom Mr. Wemmick presented to me as a smelter who kept his pot always boiling, and who would melt me anything I pleased,—and who was in an excessive white-perspiration, as if he had been trying his art on himself. In a back room, a high-shouldered man with a face-ache tied up in dirty flannel, who was dressed in old black clothes that bore the appearance of having been waxed, was stooping over his work of making fair copies of the notes of the other two gentlemen, for Mr. Jaggers's own use.

This was all the establishment. When we went downstairs again, Wemmick led me into my guardian's room, and said, "This you've seen already."

"Pray," said I, as the two odious casts with the twitchy leer upon them caught my sight again, "whose likenesses are those?"

"These?" said Wemmick, getting upon a chair, and blowing the dust off the horrible heads before bringing them down. "These are two celebrated ones. Famous clients of ours that got us a world of credit. This chap (why you must have come down in the night and been peeping into the inkstand, to get this blot upon your eyebrow, you old rascal!) murdered his master, and, considering that he wasn't brought up to evidence, didn't plan it badly."

"Is it like him?" I asked, recoiling from the brute, as Wemmick spat upon his eyebrow and gave it a rub with his sleeve.

"Like him? It's himself, you know. The cast was made in Newgate, directly after he was taken down. You had a particular fancy for me, hadn't you, Old Artful?" said Wemmick. He then explained this affectionate apostrophe, by touching his brooch representing the lady and the weeping willow at the tomb with the urn upon it, and saying, "Had it made for me, express?"

"Is the lady anybody?" said I.

"No," returned Wemmick. "Only his game. (You liked your bit of game, didn't you?) No; deuce a bit of a lady in the case, Mr. Pip, except one,—and she wasn't of this slender lady-like sort, and you wouldn't have caught *her* looking after this urn, unless there was something to drink in it." Wemmick's attention being thus directed to his brooch, he put down the cast, and polished the brooch with his pocket-handkerchief.

"Did that other creature come to the same end?" I asked. "He has the same look."

"You're right," said Wemmick; "it's the genuine look. Much as if one nostril was caught up with a horse-hair and a little fish-hook. Yes, he came to the same end; quite the natural end here, I assure you. He forged wills, this blade did, if he didn't also put the supposed testators to sleep too. You were a gentlemanly Cove, though" (Mr. Wemmick was again apostrophising), "and you said you could write

Greek. Yah, Bounceable! What a liar you were! I never met such a liar as you!" Before putting his late friend on his shelf again, Wemmick touched the largest of his mourning rings and said, "Sent out to buy it for me, only the day before."

While he was putting up the other cast and coming down from the chair, the thought crossed my mind that all his personal jewelry was derived from like sources. As he had shown no diffidence on the subject, I ventured on the liberty of asking him the question, when he stood before me, dusting his hands.

"O yes," he returned, "these are all gifts of that kind. One brings another, you see; that's the way of it. I always take 'em. They're curiosities. And they're pro-property. They may not be worth much, but, after all, they're property and portable. It don't signify to you with your brilliant lookout, but as to myself, my guiding-star always is, 'Get hold of portable property'."

When I had rendered homage to this light, he went on to say, in a friendly manner:—

"If at any odd time when you have nothing better to do, you wouldn't mind coming over to see me at Walworth, I could offer you a bed, and I should consider it an honour. I have not much to show you; but such two or three curiosities as I have got you might like to look over; and I am fond of a bit of garden and a summer-house."

I said I should be delighted to accept his hospitality.

"Thankee," said he; "then we'll consider that it's to come off, when convenient to you. Have you dined with Mr. Jaggers yet?"

"Not yet."

"Well," said Wemmick, "he'll give you wine, and good wine. I'll give you punch, and not bad punch. And now I'll tell you something. When you go to dine with Mr. Jaggers, look at his housekeeper."

"Shall I see something very uncommon?"

"Well," said Wemmick, "you'll see a wild beast tamed. Not so very uncommon, you'll tell me. I reply, that depends on the original wildness of the beast, and the amount of taming. It won't lower your opinion of Mr. Jaggers's powers. Keep your eye on it."

I told him I would do so, with all the interest and curiosity that his preparation awakened. As I was taking my departure, he asked me if I would like to devote five minutes to seeing Mr. Jaggers "at it?"

For several reasons, and not least because I didn't clearly know what Mr. Jaggers would be found to be "at," I replied in the affirmative. We dived into the City, and came up in a crowded police-court, where a blood-relation (in the murderous sense) of the deceased, with the fanciful taste in brooches, was standing at the bar, uncomfortably chewing something; while my guardian had a woman

under examination or cross-examination,—I don't know which,—and was striking her, and the bench, and everybody present, with awe. If anybody, of whatsoever degree, said a word that he didn't approve of, he instantly required to have it "taken down." If anybody wouldn't make an admission, he said, "I'll have it out of you!" and if anybody made an admission, he said, "Now I have got you!" The magistrates shivered under a single bite of his finger. Thieves and thief-takers hung in dread rapture on his words, and shrank when a hair of his eyebrows turned in their direction. Which side he was on I couldn't make out, for he seemed to me to be grinding the whole place in a mill; I only know that when I stole out on tiptoe, he was not on the side of the bench; for, he was making the legs of the old gentleman who presided, quite convulsive under the table, by his denunciations of his conduct as the representative of British law and justice in that chair that day.

Chapter XXV

Bentley Drummle, who was so sulky a fellow that he even took up a book as if its writer had done him an injury, did not take up an acquaintance in a more agreeable spirit. Heavy in figure, movement, and comprehension,—in the sluggish complexion of his face, and in the large, awkward tongue that seemed to loll about in his mouth as he himself lolled about in a room,—he was idle, proud, niggardly, reserved, and suspicious. He came of rich people down in Somersetshire, who had nursed this combination of qualities until they made the discovery that it was just of age and a blockhead. Thus, Bentley Drummle had come to Mr. Pocket when he was a head taller than that gentleman, and half a dozen heads thicker than most gentlemen.

Startup had been spoilt by a weak mother and kept at home when he ought to have been at school, but he was devotedly attached to her, and admired her beyond measure. He had a woman's delicacy of feature, and was—"as you may see, though you never saw her," said Herbert to me—"exactly like his mother." It was but natural that I should take to him much more kindly than to Drummle, and that, even in the earliest evenings of our boating, he and I should pull homeward abreast of one another, conversing from boat to boat, while Bentley Drummle came up in our wake alone, under the overhanging banks and among the rushes. He would always creep in-shore like some uncomfortable amphibious creature, even when the tide would have sent him fast upon his way; and I always think of him as coming after us in the dark or by the back-water, when our own two boats were breaking the sunset or the moonlight in mid-stream.

Herbert was my intimate companion and friend. I presented him with a half-share in my boat, which was the occasion of his often coming down to Hammer-smith; and my possession of a half-share in his chambers

often took me up to London. We used to walk between the two places at all hours. I have an affection for the road yet (though it is not so pleasant a road as it was then), formed in the impressibility of untried youth and hope.

When I had been in Mr. Pocket's family a month or two, Mr. and Mrs. Camilla turned up. Camilla was Mr. Pocket's sister. Georgiana, whom I had seen at Miss Havisham's on the same occasion, also turned up. She was a cousin,—an indigestive single woman, who called her rigidity religion, and her liver love. These people hated me with the hatred of cupidity and disappointment. As a matter of course, they fawned upon me in my prosperity with the basest meanness. Towards Mr. Pocket, as a grown-up infant with no notion of his own interests, they showed the complacent forbearance I had heard them express. Mrs. Pocket they held in contempt; but they allowed the poor soul to have been heavily disappointed in life, because that shed a feeble reflected light upon themselves.

These were the surroundings among which I settled down, and applied myself to my education. I soon contracted expensive habits, and began to spend an amount of money that within a few short months I should have thought almost fabulous; but through good and evil I stuck to my books. There was no other merit in this, than my having sense enough to feel my deficiencies. Between Mr. Pocket and Herbert I got on fast; and, with one or the other always at my elbow to give me the start I wanted, and clear obstructions out of my road, I must have been as great a dolt as Drummle if I had done less.

I had not seen Mr. Wemmick for some weeks, when I thought I would write him a note and propose to go home with him on a certain evening. He replied that it would give him much pleasure, and that he would expect me at the office at six o'clock. Thither I went, and there I found him, putting the key of his safe down his back as the clock struck.

"Did you think of walking down to Walworth?" said he.

"Certainly," said I, "if you approve."

"Very much," was Wemmick's reply, "for I have had my legs under the desk all day, and shall be glad to stretch them. Now, I'll tell you what I have got for supper, Mr. Pip. I have got a stewed steak,—which is of home preparation,—and a cold roast fowl,—which is from the cook's-shop. I think it's tender, because the master of the shop was a Juryman in some cases of ours the other day, and we let him down easy. I reminded him of it when I bought the fowl, and I said, "Pick us out a good one, old Briton, because if we had chosen to keep you in the box another day or two, we could easily have done it." He said to that, "Let me make you a present of the best fowl in the shop." I let him, of course. As far as it goes, it's property and portable. You don't object to an aged parent, I hope?"

I really thought he was still speaking of the fowl, until he added, "Because I have got an aged parent at my place." I then said what politeness required.

"So, you haven't dined with Mr. Jaggers yet?" he pursued, as we walked along.

"Not yet."

"He told me so this afternoon when he heard you were coming. I expect you'll have an invitation to-morrow. He's going to ask your pals, too. Three of 'em; ain't there?"

Although I was not in the habit of counting Drummle as one of my intimate associates, I answered, "Yes."

"Well, he's going to ask the whole gang,"—I hardly felt complimented by the word,—“and whatever he gives you, he'll give you good. Don't look forward to variety, but you'll have excellence. And there's another rum thing in his house,” proceeded Wemmick, after a moment's pause, as if the remark followed on the housekeeper understood; “he never lets a door or window be fastened at night.”

"Is he never robbed?"

"That's it!" returned Wemmick. "He says, and gives it out publicly, "I want to see the man who'll rob *me*." Lord bless you, I have heard him, a hundred times, if I have heard him once, say to regular cracksmen in our front office, "You know where I live; now, no bolt is ever drawn there; why don't you do a stroke of business with me? Come; can't I tempt you?" Not a man of them, sir, would be bold enough to try it on, for love or money."

"They dread him so much?" said I.

"Dread him," said Wemmick. "I believe you they dread him. Not but what he's artful, even in his defiance of them. No silver, sir. Britannia metal, every spoon."

"So they wouldn't have much," I observed, "even if they —"

"Ah! But *he* would have much," said Wemmick, cutting me short, "and they know it. He'd have their lives, and the lives of scores of 'em. He'd have all he could get. And it's impossible to say what he couldn't get, if he gave his mind to it."

I was falling into meditation on my guardian's greatness, when Wemmick remarked:—

"As to the absence of plate, that's only his natural depth, you know. A river's its natural depth, and he's his natural depth. Look at his watch-chain. That's real enough."

"It's very massive," said I.

"Massive?" repeated Wemmick. "I think so. And his watch is a gold repeater, and worth a hundred pound if it's worth a penny. Mr. Pip, there are about seven hundred thieves in this town who know all about that watch; there's not a man, a woman, or a child, among them, who

wouldn't identify the smallest link in that chain, and drop it as if it was red hot, if inveigled into touching it."

At first with such discourse, and afterwards with conversation of a more general nature, did Mr. Wemmick and I beguile the time and the road, until he gave me to understand that we had arrived in the district of Walworth.

It appeared to be a collection of back lanes, ditches, and little gardens, and to present the aspect of a rather dull retirement. Wemmick's house was a little wooden cottage in the midst of plots of garden, and the top of it was cut out and painted like a battery mounted with guns.

"My own doing," said Wemmick. "Looks pretty; don't it?"

I highly commended it, I think it was the smallest house I ever saw; with the queerest gothic windows (by far the greater part of them sham), and a gothic door almost too small to get in at.

"That's a real flagstaff, you see," said Wemmick, "and on Sundays I run up a real flag. Then look here. After I have crossed this bridge, I hoist it up—so—and cut off the communication."

The bridge was a plank, and it crossed a chasm about four feet wide and two deep. But it was very pleasant to see the pride with which he hoisted it up and made it fast; smiling as he did so, with a relish and not merely mechanically.

"At nine o'clock every night, Greenwich time," said Wemmick, "the gun fires. There he is, you see! And when you hear him go, I think you'll say he's a Stinger."

The piece of ordnance referred to, was mounted in a separate fortress, constructed of lattice-work. It was protected from the weather by an ingenious little tarpaulin contrivance in the nature of an umbrella.

"Then, at the back," said Wemmick, "out of sight, so as not to impede the idea of fortifications,—for it's a principle with me, if you have an idea, carry it out and keep it up,—I don't know whether that's your opinion—"

I said, decidedly.

"—At the back, there's a pig, and there are fowls and rabbits; then, I knock together my own little frame, you see, and grow cucumbers; and you'll judge at supper what sort of a salad I can raise. So, sir," said Wemmick, smiling again, but seriously too, as he shook his head, "if you can suppose the little place besieged, it would hold out a devil of a time in point of provisions."

Then, he conducted me to a bower about a dozen yards off, but which was approached by such ingenious twists of path that it took quite a long time to get at; and in this retreat our glasses were already set forth. Our punch was cooling in an ornamental lake, on whose margin the bower was raised. This piece of water (with an island in the

middle which might have been the salad for supper) was of a circular form, and he had constructed a fountain in it, which, when you set a little mill going and took a cork out of a pipe, played to that powerful extent that it made the back of your hand quite wet.

"I am my own engineer, and my own carpenter, and my own plumber, and my own gardener, and my own Jack of all Trades," said Wemmick, in acknowledging my compliments. "Well; it's a good thing, you know. It brushes the Newgate cobwebs away, and pleases the Aged. You wouldn't mind being at once introduced to the Aged, would you? It wouldn't put you out?"

I expressed the readiness I felt, and we went into the castle. There we found, sitting by a fire, a very old man in a flannel coat: clean, cheerful, comfortable, and well cared for, but intensely deaf.

"Well aged parent," said Wemmick, shaking hands with him in a cordial and jocose way, "how am you?"

"All right, John; all right!" replied the old man.

"Here's Mr. Pip, aged parent," said Wemmick, "and I wish you could hear his name. Nod away at him, Mr. Pip; that's what he likes. Nod away at him, if you please, like winking!"

"This is a fine place of my son's, sir," cried the old man, while I nodded as hard as I possibly could. "This is a pretty pleasure-ground, sir. This spot and these beautiful works upon it ought to be kept together by the Nation, after my son's time, for the people's enjoyment."

"You're as proud of it as Punch; ain't you, Aged?" said Wemmick, contemplating the old man, with his hard face really softened; "*there's* a nod for you;" giving him a tremendous one; "*there's* another for you;" giving him a still more tremendous one; "you like that, don't you? If you're not tired, Mr. Pip—though I know it's tiring to strangers—will you tip him one more? You can't think how it pleases him."

I tipped him several more, and he was in great spirits. We left him bestirring himself to feed the fowls, and we sat down to our punch in the arbour; where Wemmick told me, as he smoked a pipe, that it had taken him a good many years to bring the property up to its present pitch of perfection.

"Is it your own, Mr. Wemmick?"

"O yes," said Wemmick, "I have got hold of it, a bit at a time. It's a freehold, by George!"

"Is it indeed? I hope Mr. Jaggers admires it?"

"Never seen it," said Wemmick. "Never heard of it. Never seen the Aged. Never heard of him. No; the office is one thing, and private life is another. When I go into the office, I leave the Castle behind me, and when I come into the Castle, I leave the office behind me. If it's not in any

way disagreeable to you, you'll oblige me by doing the same. I don't wish it professionally spoken about."

Of course I felt my good faith involved in the observance of his request. The punch being very nice, we sat there drinking it and talking, until it was almost nine o'clock. "Getting near gun-fire," said Wemmick then, as he laid down his pipe; "it's the Aged's treat."

Proceeding into the Castle again, we found the Aged heating the poker, with expectant eyes, as a preliminary to the performance of this great nightly ceremony. Wemmick stood with his watch in his hand until the moment was come for him to take the red-hot poker from the Aged, and repair to the battery. He took it, and went out, and presently the Stinger went off with a Bang that shook the crazy little box of a cottage as if it must fall to pieces, and made every glass and teacup in it ring. Upon this, the Aged—who I believe would have been blown out of his arm-chair but for holding on by the elbows—cried out exultingly, "He's fired! I heerd him!" and I nodded at the old gentleman until it is no figure of speech to declare that I absolutely could not see him.

The interval between that time and supper Wemmick devoted to showing me his collection of curiosities. They were mostly of a felonious character; comprising the pen with which a celebrated forgery had been committed, a distinguished razor or two, some locks of hair, and several manuscript confessions written under condemnation,—upon which Mr. Wemmick set particular value as being, to use his own words, "every one of 'em Lies, sir." These were agreeably dispersed among small specimens of china and glass, various neat trifles made by the proprietor of the museum, and some tobacco-stoppers carved by the Aged. They were all displayed in that chamber of the Castle into which I had been first inducted, and which served, not only as the general sitting-room but as the kitchen too, if I might judge from a saucepan on the hob, and a brazen bijou over the fireplace designed for the suspension of a roasting-jack.

There was a neat little girl in attendance, who looked after the Aged in the day. When she had laid the supper-cloth, the bridge was lowered to give her means of egress, and she withdrew for the night. The supper was excellent; and though the Castle was rather subject to dry-rot insomuch that it tasted like a bad nut, and though the pig might have been farther off, I was heartily pleased with my whole entertainment. Nor was there any drawback on my little turret bedroom, beyond there being such a very thin ceiling between me and the flagstaff, that when I lay down on my back in bed, it seemed as if I had to balance that pole on my forehead all night.

Wemmick was up early in the morning, and I am afraid I heard him cleaning my boots. After that, he fell to gardening, and I saw him from my gothic window pretending to employ the Aged, and nodding at him in a

most devoted manner. Our breakfast was as good as the supper, and at half-past eight precisely we started for Little Britain. By degrees, Wemmick got dryer and harder as we went along, and his mouth

tightened into a post-office again. At last, when we got to his place of business and he pulled out his key from his coat-collar, he looked as unconscious of his Walworth property as if the Castle and the drawbridge and the arbour and the lake and the fountain and the Aged, had all been blown into space together by the last discharge of the Stinger.

Chapter XXVI

It fell out as Wemmick had told me it would, that I had an early opportunity of comparing my guardian's establishment with that of his cashier and clerk. My guardian was in his room, washing his hands with his scented soap, when I went into the office from Walworth; and he called me to him, and gave me the invitation for myself and friends which Wemmick had prepared me to receive. "No ceremony," he stipulated, "and no dinner dress, and say to-morrow." I asked him where we should come to (for I had no idea where he lived), and I believe it was in his general objection to make anything like an admission, that he replied, "Come here, and I'll take you home with me." I embrace this opportunity of remarking that he washed his clients off, as if he were a surgeon or a dentist. He had a closet in his room, fitted up for the purpose, which smelt of the scented soap like a perfumer's shop. It had an unusually large jack-towel on a roller inside the door, and he would wash his hands, and wipe them and dry them all over this towel, whenever he came in from a police court or dismissed a client from his room. When I and my friends repaired to him at six o'clock next day, he seemed to have been engaged on a case of a darker complexion than usual, for we found him with his head butted into this closet, not only washing his hands, but laving his face and gargling his throat. And even when he had done all that, and had gone all round the jack-towel, he took out his penknife and scraped the case out of his nails before he put his coat on.

There were some people slinking about as usual when we passed out into the street, who were evidently anxious to speak with him; but there was something so conclusive in the halo of scented soap which encircled his presence, that they gave it up for that day. As we walked along westward, he was recognised ever and again by some face in the crowd of the streets, and whenever that happened he talked louder to me; but he never otherwise recognised anybody, or took notice that anybody recognised him.

He conducted us to Gerrard Street, Soho, to a house on the south side of that street. Rather a stately house of its kind, but dolefully in want of painting, and with dirty windows. He took out his key and opened the door, and we all went into a stone hall, bare, gloomy, and little used. So, up a dark brown staircase into a series of three dark

brown rooms on the first floor. There were carved garlands on the panelled walls, and as he stood among them giving us welcome, I know what kind of loops I thought they looked like.

Dinner was laid in the best of these rooms; the second was his dressing-room; the third, his bedroom. He told us that he held the whole house, but rarely used more of it than we saw. The table was comfortably laid—no silver in the service, of course—and at the side of his chair was a capacious dumb-waiter, with a variety of bottles and decanters on it, and four dishes of fruit for dessert. I noticed throughout, that he kept everything under his own hand, and distributed everything himself.

There was a bookcase in the room; I saw from the backs of the books, that they were about evidence, criminal law, criminal biography, trials, acts of Parliament, and such things. The furniture was all very solid and good, like his watch-chain. It had an official look, however, and there was nothing merely ornamental to be seen. In a corner was a little table of papers with a shaded lamp: so that he seemed to bring the office home with him in that respect too, and to wheel it out of an evening and fall to work.

As he had scarcely seen my three companions until now,—for he and I had walked together,—he stood on the hearth-rug, after ringing the bell, and took a searching look at them. To my surprise, he seemed at once to be principally if not solely interested in Drummle.

"Pip," said he, putting his large hand on my shoulder and moving me to the window, "I don't know one from the other. Who's the Spider?"

"The spider?" said I.

"The blotchy, sprawly, sulky fellow."

"That's Bentley Drummle," I replied; "the one with the delicate face is Startop."

Not making the least account of "the one with the delicate face," he returned, "Bentley Drummle is his name, is it? I like the look of that fellow."

He immediately began to talk to Drummle: not at all deterred by his replying in his heavy reticent way, but apparently led on by it to screw discourse out of him. I was looking at the two, when there came between me and them the housekeeper, with the first dish for the table.

She was a woman of about forty, I supposed,—but I may have thought her younger than she was. Rather tall, of a lithe nimble figure, extremely pale, with large faded eyes, and a quantity of streaming hair. I cannot say whether any diseased affection of the heart caused her lips to be parted as if she were panting, and her face to bear a curious expression of suddenness and flutter; but I know that I had been to see Macbeth at the theatre, a night or two before, and that her face looked to me as if it were all disturbed by fiery air, like the faces I had seen rise out of the Witches' caldron.

She set the dish on, touched my guardian quietly on the arm with a finger to notify that dinner was ready, and vanished. We took our seats at the round table, and my guardian kept Drummle on one side of him, while Startop sat on the other. It was a noble dish of fish that the housekeeper had put on table, and we had a joint of equally choice mutton afterwards, and then an equally choice bird. Sauces, wines, all the accessories we wanted, and all of the best, were given out by our host from his dumb-waiter; and when they had made the circuit of the table, he always put them back again. Similarly, he dealt us clean plates and knives and forks, for each course, and dropped those just disused into two baskets on the ground by his chair. No other attendant than the housekeeper appeared. She set on every dish; and I always saw in her face, a face rising out of the caldron. Years afterwards, I made a dreadful likeness of that woman, by causing a face that had no other natural resemblance to it than it derived from flowing hair to pass behind a bowl of flaming spirits in a dark room.

Induced to take particular notice of the housekeeper, both by her own striking appearance and by Wemmick's preparation, I observed that whenever she was in the room she kept her eyes attentively on my guardian, and that she would remove her hands from any dish she put before him, hesitatingly, as if she dreaded his calling her back, and wanted him to speak when she was nigh, if he had anything to say. I fancied that I could detect in his manner a consciousness of this, and a purpose of always holding her in suspense.

Dinner went off gayly, and although my guardian seemed to follow rather than originate subjects, I knew that he wrenched the weakest part of our dispositions out of us. For myself, I found that I was expressing my tendency to lavish expenditure, and to patronise Herbert, and to boast of my great prospects, before I quite knew that I had opened my lips. It was so with all of us, but with no one more than Drummle: the development of whose inclination to gird in a grudging and suspicious way at the rest, was screwed out of him before the fish was taken off.

It was not then, but when we had got to the cheese, that our conversation turned upon our rowing feats, and that Drummle was rallied for coming up behind of a night in that slow amphibious way of his. Drummle upon this, informed our host that he much preferred our room to our company, and that as to skill he was more than our master, and that as to

strength he could scatter us like chaff. By some invisible agency, my guardian wound him up to a pitch little short of ferocity about this trifle; and he fell to baring and spanning his arm to show how muscular it was, and we all fell to baring and spanning our arms in a ridiculous manner.

Now the housekeeper was at that time clearing the table; my guardian, taking no heed of her, but with the side of his face turned from her, was leaning back in his chair biting the side of his forefinger and showing an interest in Drummle, that, to me, was quite inexplicable.

Suddenly, he clapped his large hand on the housekeeper's, like a trap, as she stretched it across the table. So suddenly and smartly did he do this, that we all stopped in our foolish contention.

"If you talk of strength," said Mr. Jaggers, "I'll show you a wrist. Molly, let them see your wrist."

Her entrapped hand was on the table, but she had already put her other hand behind her waist. "Master," she said, in a low voice, with her eyes attentively and entreatingly fixed upon him. "Don't."

"I'll show you a wrist," repeated Mr. Jaggers, with an immovable determination to show it. "Molly, let them see your wrist."

"Master," she again murmured. "Please!"

"Molly," said Mr. Jaggers, not looking at her, but obstinately looking at the opposite side of the room, "let them see *both* your wrists. Show them. Come!"

He took his hand from hers, and turned that wrist up on the table. She brought her other hand from behind her, and held the two out side by side. The last wrist was much disfigured,—deeply scarred and scarred across and across. When she held her hands out she took her eyes from Mr. Jaggers, and turned them watchfully on every one of the rest of us in succession.

"There's power here," said Mr. Jaggers, coolly tracing out the sinews with his forefinger. "Very few men have the power of wrist that this woman has. It's remarkable what mere force of grip there is in these hands. I have had occasion to notice many hands; but I never saw stronger in that respect, man's or woman's, than these."

While he said these words in a leisurely, critical style, she continued to look at every one of us in regular succession as we sat. The moment he ceased, she looked at him again. "That'll do, Molly," said Mr. Jaggers, giving her a slight nod; "you have been admired, and can go." She withdrew her hands and went out of the room, and Mr. Jaggers, putting the decanters on from his dumb-waiter, filled his glass and passed round the wine.

"At half-past nine, gentlemen," said he, "we must break up. Pray make the best use of your time. I am glad to see you all. Mr. Drummle, I drink to you."

If his object in singling out Drummle were to bring him out still more, it perfectly succeeded. In a sulky triumph, Drummle showed his morose depreciation of the rest of us, in a more and more offensive degree, until he became downright intolerable. Through all his stages, Mr. Jaggers followed him with the same strange interest. He actually seemed to serve as a zest to Mr. Jaggers's wine.

In our boyish want of discretion I dare say we took too much to drink, and I know we talked too much. We became particularly hot upon some boorish sneer of Drummle's, to the effect that we were too free with our money. It led to my remarking, with more zeal than discretion, that it came with a bad grace from him, to whom Startop had lent money in my presence but a week or so before.

"Well," retorted Drummle; "he'll be paid."

"I don't mean to imply that he won't," said I, "but it might make you hold your tongue about us and our money, I should think."

"You should think!" retorted Drummle. "Oh Lord!"

"I dare say," I went on, meaning to be very severe, "that you wouldn't lend money to any of us if we wanted it."

"You are right," said Drummle. "I wouldn't lend one of you a sixpence. I wouldn't lend anybody a sixpence."

"Rather mean to borrow under those circumstances, I should say."

"You should say," repeated Drummle. "Oh Lord!"

This was so very aggravating—the more especially as I found myself making no way against his surly obtuseness—that I said, disregarding Herbert's efforts to check me,—

"Come, Mr. Drummle, since we are on the subject, I'll tell you what passed between Herbert here and me, when you borrowed that money."

"I don't want to know what passed between Herbert there and you," growled Drummle. And I think he added in a lower growl, that we might both go to the devil and shake ourselves.

"I'll tell you, however," said I, "whether you want to know or not. We said that as you put it in your pocket very glad to get it, you seemed to be immensely amused at his being so weak as to lend it."

Drummle laughed outright, and sat laughing in our faces, with his hands in his pockets and his round shoulders raised; plainly signifying that it was quite true, and that he despised us as asses all.

Hereupon Startop took him in hand, though with a much better grace than I had shown, and exhorted him to be a little more agreeable. Startop, being a lively, bright young fellow, and Drummle being the exact opposite, the latter was always disposed to resent him as a direct personal affront. He now retorted in a coarse, lumpish way, and Startop tried to turn the discussion aside with some small pleasantry that made us all laugh. Resenting this little success more than anything, Drummle, without any threat or warning, pulled his hands out of his pockets, dropped his round shoulders, swore, took up a large glass, and would have flung it at his adversary's head, but for our enter-tainer's dexterously seizing it at the instant when it was raised for that purpose.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Jaggers, deliberately putting down the glass, and hauling out his gold repeater by its massive chain, "I am exceedingly sorry to announce that it's half past nine."

On this hint we all rose to depart. Before we got to the street door, Startop was cheerily calling Drummle "old boy," as if nothing had happened. But the old boy was so far from responding, that he would not even walk to Hammersmith on the same side of the way; so Herbert and I, who remained in town, saw them going down the street on opposite sides; Startop leading, and Drummle lagging behind in the shadow of the houses, much as he was wont to follow in his boat.

As the door was not yet shut, I thought I would leave Herbert there for a moment, and run upstairs again to say a word to my guardian. I found him in his dressing-room surrounded by his stock of boots, already hard at it, washing his hands of us.

I told him I had come up again to say how sorry I was that anything disagreeable should have occurred, and that I hoped he would not blame me much.

"Pooh!" said he, sluicing his face, and speaking through the water-drops; "it's nothing, Pip. I like that Spider though."

He had turned towards me now, and was shaking his head, and blowing, and towelling himself.

"I am glad you like him, sir," said I—"but I don't."

"No, no," my guardian assented; "don't have too much to do with him. Keep as clear of him as you can. But I like the fellow, Pip; he is one of the true sort. Why, if I was a fortune-teller—"

Looking out of the towel, he caught my eye.

"But I am not a fortune-teller," he said, letting his head drop into a festoon of towel, and towelling away at his two ears. "You know what I am, don't you? Good night, Pip."

"Good night, sir."

In about a month after that, the Spider's time with Mr. Pocket was up for good, and, to the great relief of all the house but Mrs. Pocket, he went home to the family hole.

Chapter XXVII

"MY DEAR MR PIP:—

"I write this by request of Mr. Gargery, for to let you know that he is going to London in company with Mr. Wopsle and would be glad if agreeable to be allowed to see you. He would call at Barnard's Hotel Tuesday morning at nine o'clock, when if not agreeable please leave word. Your poor sister is much the same as when you left. We talk of you in the kitchen every night, and wonder what you are saying and doing. If now considered in the light of a liberty, excuse it for the love of poor old days.

No more, dear Mr. Pip, from "Your ever obliged, and affectionate servant, "BIDDY."

"P.S. He wishes me most particular to write what larks. He says you will understand. I hope and do not doubt it will be agreeable to see him, even though a gentleman, for you had ever a good heart, and he is a worthy, worthy man. I have read him all, excepting only the last little sentence, and he wishes me most particular to write again what larks."

I received this letter by the post on Monday morning, and therefore its appointment was for next day. Let me confess exactly with what feelings I looked forward to Joe's coming.

Not with pleasure, though I was bound to him by so many ties; no; with considerable disturbance, some mortification, and a keen sense of incongruity. If I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money. My greatest reassurance was that he was coming to Barnard's Inn, not to Hammersmith, and consequently would not fall in Bentley Drummle's way. I had little objection to his being seen by Herbert or his father, for both of whom I had a respect; but I had the sharpest sensitiveness as to his being seen by Drummle, whom I held in contempt. So, throughout life, our worst weaknesses and meannesses are usually committed for the sake of the people whom we most despise.

I had begun to be always decorating the chambers in some quite unnecessary and inappropriate way or other, and very expensive those wrestles with Barnard proved to be. By this time, the rooms were vastly different from what I had found them, and I enjoyed

the honour of occupying a few prominent pages in the books of a neighbouring upholsterer. I had got on so fast of late, that I had even started a boy in boots,—top boots,—in bondage and slavery to whom I might have been said to pass my days. For, after I had made the monster (out of the refuse of my washerwoman's family), and had clothed him with a blue coat, canary waistcoat, white cravat, creamy breeches, and the boots already mentioned, I had to find him a little to do and a great deal to eat; and with both of those horrible requirements he haunted my existence.

This avenging phantom was ordered to be on duty at eight on Tuesday morning in the hall, (it was two feet square, as charged for floorcloth,) and Herbert suggested certain things for breakfast that he thought Joe would like. While I felt sincerely obliged to him for being so interested and considerate, I had an odd half-provoked sense of suspicion upon me, that if Joe had been coming to see *him*, he wouldn't have been quite so brisk about it.

However, I came into town on the Monday night to be ready for Joe, and I got up early in the morning, and caused the sitting-room and breakfast-table to assume their most splendid appearance. Unfortunately the morning was drizzly, and an angel could not have concealed the fact that Barnard was shedding sooty tears outside the window, like some weak giant of a Sweep.

As the time approached I should have liked to run away, but the Avenger pursuant to orders was in the hall, and presently I heard Joe on the staircase. I knew it was Joe, by his clumsy manner of coming upstairs,—his state boots being always too big for him,—and by the time it took him to read the names on the other floors in the course of

his ascent. When at last he stopped outside our door, I could hear his finger tracing over the painted letters of my name, and I afterwards distinctly heard him breathing in at the keyhole. Finally he gave a faint single rap, and Pepper—such was the compromising name of the avenging boy—announced “Mr. Gargery!” I thought he never would have done wiping his feet, and that I must have gone out to lift him off the mat, but at last he came in.

“Joe, how are you, Joe?”

“Pip, how AIR you, Pip?”

With his good honest face all glowing and shining, and his hat put down on the floor between us, he caught both my hands and worked them straight up and down, as if I had been the last-patented Pump.

“I am glad to see you, Joe. Give me your hat.”

But Joe, taking it up carefully with both hands, like a bird's-nest with eggs in it, wouldn't hear of parting with that piece of property, and persisted in standing talking over it in a most uncomfortable way.

“Which you have that growed,” said Joe, “and that swelled, and that gentle-folke;” Joe considered a little before he discovered this word; “as to be sure you are a honour to your king and country.”

“And you, Joe, look wonderfully well.”

“Thank God,” said Joe, “I'm ekerval to most. And your sister, she's no worse than she were. And Biddy, she's ever right and ready. And all friends is no backerder, if not no forarder. 'Ceptin Wopsle; he's had a drop.”

All this time (still with both hands taking great care of the bird's-nest), Joe was rolling his eyes round and round the room, and round and round the flowered pattern of my dressing-gown.

“Had a drop, Joe?”

“Why yes,” said Joe, lowering his voice, “he's left the Church and went into the playacting. Which the playacting have likeways brought him to London along with me. And his wish were,” said Joe, getting the bird's-nest under his left arm for the moment, and groping in it for an egg with his right; “if no offence, as I would 'and you that.”

I took what Joe gave me, and found it to be the crumpled play-bill of a small metropolitan theatre, announcing the first appearance, in that very week, of “the celebrated Provincial Amateur of Roscian renown, whose unique performance in the highest tragic walk of our National Bard has lately occasioned so great a sensation in local dramatic circles.”

“Were you at his performance, Joe?” I inquired.

“I *were*,” said Joe, with emphasis and solemnity.

“Was there a great sensation?”

"Why," said Joe, "yes, there certainly were a peck of orange-peel. Partickler when he see the ghost. Though I put it to yourself, sir, whether it were calc'lated to keep a man up to his work with a good hart, to be continiually cutting in betwixt him and the Ghost with "Amen!" A man may have had a misfortun' and been in the Church," said Joe, lowering his voice to an argumentative and feeling tone, "but that is no reason why you should put him out at such a time. Which I meanter say, if the ghost of a man's own father cannot be allowed to claim his attention, what can, Sir? Still more, when his mourning 'at is unfortunately made so small as that the weight of the black feathers brings it off, try to keep it on how you may."

A ghost-seeing effect in Joe's own countenance informed me that Herbert had entered the room. So, I presented Joe to Herbert, who held out his hand; but Joe backed from it, and held on by the bird's-nest.

"Your servant, Sir," said Joe, "which I hope as you and Pip"—here his eye fell on the Avenger, who was putting some toast on table, and so plainly denoted an intention to make that young gentleman one of the family, that I frowned it down and confused him more—"I meanter say, you two gentlemen,—which I hope as you get your elths in this close spot? For the present may be a werry good inn, according to London opinions," said Joe, confidentially, "and I believe its character do stand it; but I wouldn't keep a pig in it myself,—not in the case that I wished him to fatten wholesome and to eat with a meller flavour on him."

Having borne this flattering testimony to the merits of our dwelling-place, and having incidentally shown this tendency to call me "sir," Joe, being invited to sit down to table, looked all round the room for a suitable spot on which to deposit his hat,—as if it were only on some very few rare substances in nature that it could find a resting place,—and ultimately stood it on an extreme corner of the chimney-piece, from which it ever afterwards fell off at intervals.

"Do you take tea, or coffee, Mr. Gargery?" asked Herbert, who always presided of a morning.

"Thankee, Sir," said Joe, stiff from head to foot, "I'll take whichever is most agreeable to yourself."

"What do you say to coffee?"

"Thankee, Sir," returned Joe, evidently dispirited by the proposal, "since you *are* so kind as make chice of coffee, I will not run contrairy to your own opinions. But don't you never find it a little 'eating?"

"Say tea then," said Herbert, pouring it out.

Here Joe's hat tumbled off the mantel-piece, and he started out of his chair and picked it up, and fitted it to the same exact spot. As if it were an absolute point of good breeding that it should tumble off again soon.

"When did you come to town, Mr. Gargery?"

"Were it yesterday afternoon?" said Joe, after coughing behind his hand, as if he had had time to catch the whooping-cough since he came. "No it were not. Yes it were. Yes. It were yesterday afternoon" (with an appearance of mingled wisdom, relief, and strict impartiality).

"Have you seen anything of London yet?"

"Why, yes, Sir," said Joe, "me and Wopsle went off straight to look at the Blacking Ware'us. But we didn't find that it come up to its likeness in the red bills at the shop doors; which I meanter say," added Joe, in an explanatory manner, "as it is there drawd too architectooralooral."

I really believe Joe would have prolonged this word (mightily expressive to my mind of some architecture that I know) into a perfect Chorus, but for his attention being providentially attracted by his hat, which was toppling. Indeed, it demanded from him a constant attention, and a quickness of eye and hand, very like that exacted by wicket-keeping. He made extraordinary play with it, and showed the greatest skill; now, rushing at it and catching it neatly as it dropped; now, merely stopping it midway, beating it up, and humouring it in various parts of the room and against a good deal of the pattern of the paper on the wall, before he felt it safe to close with it; finally splashing it into the slop-basin, where I took the liberty of laying hands upon it.

As to his shirt-collar, and his coat-collar, they were perplexing to reflect upon,—insoluble mysteries both. Why should a man scrape himself to that extent, before he could consider himself full dressed? Why should he suppose it necessary to be purified by suffering for his holiday clothes? Then he fell into such unaccountable fits of meditation, with his fork midway between his plate and his mouth; had his eyes attracted in such strange directions; was afflicted with such remarkable coughs; sat so far from the table, and dropped so much more than he ate, and pretended that he hadn't dropped it; that I was heartily glad when Herbert left us for the City.

I had neither the good sense nor the good feeling to know that this was all my fault, and that if I had been easier with Joe, Joe would have been easier with me. I felt impatient of him and out of temper with him; in which condition he heaped coals of fire on my head.

"Us two being now alone, sir,"—began Joe.

"Joe," I interrupted, pettishly, "how can you call me, sir?"

Joe looked at me for a single instant with something faintly like reproach. Utterly preposterous as his cravat was, and as his collars were, I was conscious of a sort of dignity in the look.

"Us two being now alone," resumed Joe, "and me having the intentions and abilities to stay not many minutes more, I will now conclude—leastways begin—to mention what have led to my having had the present honour. For was it not," said Joe, with his old air of lucid exposition, "that my only wish were to be useful to you, I should not have had the honour of breaking wittles in the company and abode of gentlemen."

I was so unwilling to see the look again, that I made no remonstrance against this tone.

"Well, sir," pursued Joe, "this is how it were. I were at the Bargemen t'other night, Pip;"—whenever he subsided into affection, he called me Pip, and whenever he relapsed into politeness he called me sir; "when there come up in his shay-cart, Pumblechook. Which that same identical," said Joe, going down a new track, "do comb my 'air the wrong way sometimes, awful, by giving out up and down town as it were him which ever had your infant companion-ation and were looked upon as a playfellow by yourself."

"Nonsense. It was you, Joe."

"Which I fully believed it were, Pip," said Joe, slightly tossing his head, "though it signify little now, sir. Well, Pip; this same identical, which his manners is given to blustering, come to me at the Bargemen (wot a pipe and a pint of beer do give refreshment to the workingman, sir, and do not over stimulate), and his word were, 'Joseph, Miss Havisham she wish to speak to you.'"

"Miss Havisham, Joe?"

"She wish,' were Pumblechook's word, 'to speak to you.'" Joe sat and rolled his eyes at the ceiling.

"Yes, Joe? Go on, please."

"Next day, sir," said Joe, looking at me as if I were a long way off, "having cleaned myself, I go and I see Miss A."

"Miss A., Joe? Miss Havisham?"

"Which I say, sir," replied Joe, with an air of legal formality, as if he were making his will, "Miss A., or otherways Havisham. Her expression air then as follering: 'Mr. Gargery. You air in correspondence with Mr. Pip?' Having had a letter from you, I were able to say 'I am.' (When I married your sister, sir, I said 'I will,' and when I answered your friend, Pip, I said 'I am.')" 'Would you tell him, then,' said she, 'that which Estella has come home and would be glad to see him.'"

I felt my face fire up as I looked at Joe. I hope one remote cause of its firing may have been my consciousness that if I had known his errand, I should have given him more encouragement.

"Biddy," pursued Joe, "when I got home and asked her fur to write the message to you, a little hung back. Biddy says, 'I know he will be very glad to have it by word of

mouth, it is holiday time, you want to see him, go!' I have now concluded, sir," said Joe, rising from his chair, "and, Pip, I wish you ever well and ever prospering to a greater and a greater height."

"But you are not going now, Joe?"

"Yes I am," said Joe.

"But you are coming back to dinner, Joe?"

"No I am not," said Joe.

Our eyes met, and all the "Sir" melted out of that manly heart as he gave me his hand.

"Pip, dear old chap, life is made of ever so many partings welded together, as I may say, and one man's a blacksmith, and one's a whitesmith, and one's a goldsmith, and one's a coppersmith. Divisions among such must come, and must be met as they come. If there's been any fault at all to-day, it's mine. You and me is not two figures to be together in London; nor yet anywheres else but what is private, and bekknown, and understood among friends. It ain't that I am proud, but that I want to be right, as you shall never see me no more in these clothes. I'm wrong in these clothes. I'm wrong out of the forge, the kitchen, or off th' meshes. You won't find half so much fault in me if you think of me in my forge dress, with my hammer in my hand, or even my pipe. You won't find half so much fault in me if, supposing as you should ever wish to see me, you come and put your head in at the forge window and see Joe the blacksmith, there, at the old

anvil, in the old burnt apron, sticking to the old work. I'm awful dull, but I hope I've beat out something nigh the rights of this at last. And so GOD bless you, dear old Pip, old chap, GOD bless you!"

I had not been mistaken in my fancy that there was a simple dignity in him. The fashion of his dress could no more come in its way when he spoke these words than it could come in its way in Heaven. He touched me gently on the forehead, and went out. As soon as I could recover myself sufficiently, I hurried out after him and looked for him in the neighbouring streets; but he was gone.

Chapter XXVIII

It was clear that I must repair to our town next day, and in the first flow of my repentance, it was equally clear that I must stay at Joe's. But, when I had secured my box-place by to-morrow's coach, and had been down to Mr. Pocket's and back, I was not by any means convinced on the last point, and began to invent reasons and make excuses for putting up at the Blue Boar. I should be an inconvenience at Joe's; I was not expected, and my bed would not be ready; I should be too far from Miss Havisham's, and she was exacting and mightn't like it. All other swindlers upon earth are nothing to the self-swindlers, and with such pretences did I cheat myself. Surely a curious thing. That I should innocently take a bad half-crown of

somebody else's manufacture is reasonable enough; but that I should knowingly reckon the spurious coin of my own make as good money! An obliging stranger, under pretence of compactly folding up my bank-notes for security's sake, abstracts the notes and gives me nutshells; but what is his sleight of hand to mine, when I fold up my own nutshells and pass them on myself as notes!

Having settled that I must go to the Blue Boar, my mind was much disturbed by indecision whether or not to take the Avenger. It was tempting to think of that expensive Mercenary publicly airing his boots in the archway of the Blue Boar's posting-yard; it was almost solemn to imagine him casually produced in the tailor's shop, and confounding the disrespectful senses of Trabb's boy. On the other hand, Trabb's boy might worm himself into his intimacy and tell him things; or, reckless and desperate wretch as I knew he could be, might hoot him in the High Street. My patroness, too, might hear of him, and not approve. On the whole, I resolved to leave the Avenger behind.

It was the afternoon coach by which I had taken my place, and, as winter had now come round, I should not arrive at my destination until two or three hours after dark. Our time of starting from the Cross Keys was two o'clock. I arrived on the ground with a quarter of an hour to spare, attended by the Avenger,—if I may connect that expression with one who never attended on me if he could possibly help it.

At that time it was customary to carry Convicts down to the dock-yards by stage-coach. As I had often heard of them in the capacity of outside passengers, and had more than once seen them on the high road dangling their ironed legs over the coach roof, I had no cause to be surprised when Herbert, meeting me in the yard, came up and told me there were two convicts going down with me. But I had a reason that was an old reason now for constitutionally faltering whenever I heard the word "convict."

"You don't mind them, Handel?" said Herbert.

"O no!"

"I thought you seemed as if you didn't like them?"

"I can't pretend that I do like them, and I suppose you don't particularly. But I don't mind them."

"See! There they are," said Herbert, "coming out of the Tap. What a degraded and vile sight it is!"

They had been treating their guard, I suppose, for they had a gaoler with them, and all three came out wiping their mouths on their hands. The two convicts were handcuffed together, and had irons on their legs,—irons of a pattern that I knew well. They wore the dress that I likewise knew well. Their keeper had a brace of pistols, and carried a thick-knobbed bludgeon under his arm; but he was on terms of good understanding with them, and

stood with them beside him, looking on at the putting-to of the horses, rather with an air as if the convicts were an interesting Exhibition not formally open at the moment, and he the Curator. One was a taller and stouter man than the other, and appeared as a matter of course, according to the mysterious ways of the world, both convict and free, to have had allotted to him the smaller suit of clothes. His arms and legs were like great pincushions of those shapes, and his attire disguised him absurdly; but I knew his half-closed eye at one glance. There stood the man whom I had seen on the settle at the Three Jolly Bargemen on a Saturday night, and who had brought me down with his invisible gun!

It was easy to make sure that as yet he knew me no more than if he had never seen me in his life. He looked across at me, and his eye appraised my watch-chain, and then he incidentally spat and said something to the other convict, and they laughed and slued themselves round with a clink of their coupling manacle, and looked at something else. The great numbers on their backs, as if they were street doors; their coarse mangy ungainly outer surface, as if they were lower animals; their ironed legs, apologetically garlanded with pocket-handkerchiefs; and the way in which all present looked at them and kept from them; made them (as Herbert had said) a most disagreeable and degraded spectacle.

But this was not the worst of it. It came out that the whole of the back of the coach had been taken by a family removing from London, and that there were no places for the two prisoners but on the seat in front behind the coachman. Hereupon, a choleric gentle-man, who had taken the fourth place on that seat, flew into a most violent passion, and said that it was a breach of contract to mix him up with such villainous company, and that it was poisonous, and pernicious, and infamous, and shameful, and I don't know what else. At this time the coach was ready and the coachman impatient, and we were all preparing to get up, and the prisoners had come over with their keeper,—bringing with them that curious flavour of bread-poultice, baize, rope-yarn, and hearthstone, which attends the convict presence.

"Don't take it so much amiss, sir," pleaded the keeper to the angry passenger; "I'll sit next you myself. I'll put 'em on the outside of the row. They won't interfere with you, sir. You needn't know they're there."

"And don't blame *me*," growled the convict I had recognised. "*I* don't want to go. *I* am quite ready to stay behind. As fur as I am concerned any one's welcome to *my* place."

"Or mine," said the other, gruffly. "*I* wouldn't have incommoded none of you, if I'd had *my* way." Then they both laughed, and began cracking nuts, and spitting the shells about.—As I really think I should have liked to do myself, if I had been in their place and so despired.

At length, it was voted that there was no help for the angry gentleman, and that he must either go in his chance company or remain behind. So he got into his place, still making complaints, and the keeper got into the place next him, and the convicts hauled themselves up as well as they could, and the convict I had recognised sat behind me with his breath on the hair of my head.

“Good-bye, Handel!” Herbert called out as we started. I thought what a blessed fortune it was, that he had found another name for me than Pip.

It is impossible to express with what acuteness I felt the convict’s breathing, not only on the back of my head, but all along my spine. The sensation was like being touched in the marrow with some pungent and searching acid, it set my very teeth on edge. He seemed to have more breathing business to do than another man, and to make more noise in doing it; and I was conscious of growing high-shouldered on one side, in my shrinking endeavours to fend him off.

The weather was miserably raw, and the two cursed the cold. It made us all lethargic before we had gone far, and when we had left the Half-way House behind, we habitually dozed and shivered and were silent. I dozed off, myself, in considering the question whether I ought to restore a couple of pounds sterling to this creature before losing sight of him, and how it could best be done. In the act of dipping forward as if I were going to bathe among the horses, I woke in a fright and took the question up again.

But I must have lost it longer than I had thought, since, although I could recognise nothing in the darkness and the fitful lights and shadows of our lamps, I traced marsh country in the cold damp wind that blew at us. Cowering forward for warmth and to make me a screen against the wind, the convicts were closer to me than before. The very first words I heard them interchange as I became conscious, were the words of my own thought, “Two One Pound notes.”

“How did he get ’em?” said the convict I had never seen.

“How should I know?” returned the other. “He had ’em stowed away somehow. Giv him by friends, I expect.”

“I wish,” said the other, with a bitter curse upon the cold, “that I had ’em here.”

“Two one pound notes, or friends?”

“Two one pound notes. I’d sell all the friends I ever had for one, and think it a blessed good bargain. Well? So he says—?”

“So he says,” resumed the convict I had recognised, —“it was all said and done in half a minute, behind a pile of timber in the Dock-yard,—‘You’re a-going to be discharged?’ Yes, I was. Would I find out that boy that had fed him and kep his secret, and give him them two one pound notes? Yes, I would. And I did.”

“More fool you,” growled the other. “I’d have spent ’em on a Man, in wittles and drink. He must have been a green one. Mean to say he knowed nothing of you?”

“Not a ha’porth. Different gangs and different ships. He was tried again for prison breaking, and got made a Lifer.”

“And was that—Honour!—the only time you worked out, in this part of the country?”

“The only time.”

“What might have been your opinion of the place?”

“A most beastly place. Mudbank, mist, swamp, and work; work, swamp, mist, and mudbank.”

They both execrated the place in very strong language, and gradually growled themselves out, and had nothing left to say.

After overhearing this dialogue, I should assuredly have got down and been left in the solitude and darkness of the highway, but for feeling certain that the man had no suspicion of my identity. Indeed, I was not only so changed in the course of nature, but so differently dressed and so differently circumstanced, that it was not at all likely he could have known me without accidental help. Still, the coincidence of our being together on the coach, was sufficiently strange to fill me with a dread that some other coincidence might at any moment connect me, in his hearing, with my name. For this reason, I resolved to alight as soon as we touched the town, and put myself out of his hearing. This device I executed successfully. My little portmanteau was in the boot under my feet; I had but to turn a hinge to get it out; I threw it down before me, got down after it, and was left at the first lamp on the first stones of the town pavement. As to the convicts, they went their way with the coach, and I knew at what point they would be spirited off to the river. In my fancy, I saw the boat with its convict crew waiting for them at the slime-washed stairs,—again heard the gruff “Give way, you!” like and order to dogs,—again saw the wicked Noah’s Ark lying out on the black water.

I could not have said what I was afraid of, for my fear was altogether undefined and vague, but there was

great fear upon me. As I walked on to the hotel, I felt that a dread, much exceeding the mere apprehension of a painful or disagreeable recognition, made me tremble. I am confident that it took no distinctness of shape, and that it was the revival for a few minutes of the terror of childhood.

The coffee-room at the Blue Boar was empty, and I had not only ordered my dinner there, but had sat down to it, before the waiter knew me. As soon as he had apologised for the remissness of his memory, he asked me if he should send Boots for Mr. Pumblechook?

“No,” said I, “certainly not.”

The waiter (it was he who had brought up the Great Remonstrance from the Commercials, on the day when I was bound) appeared surprised, and took the earliest opportunity of putting a dirty old copy of a local newspaper so directly in my way, that I took it up and read this paragraph:—

Our readers will learn, not altogether without interest, in reference to the recent romantic rise in fortune of a young artificer in iron of this neighbourhood (what a theme, by the way, for the magic pen of our as yet not universally acknowledged townsman TOOBY, the poet of our columns!) that the youth's earliest patron, companion, and friend, was a highly respected individual not entirely unconnected with the corn and seed trade, and whose eminently convenient and commodious business premises are situate within a hundred miles of the High Street. It is not wholly irrespective of our personal feelings that we record HIM as the Mentor of our young Telemachus, for it is good to know that our town produced the founder of the latter's fortunes. Does the thought-contracted brow of the local Sage or the lustrous eye of local Beauty inquire whose fortunes? We believe that Quintin Matsys was the BLACKSMITH of Antwerp. VERB. SAP.

I entertain a conviction, based upon large experience, that if in the days of my prosperity I had gone to the North Pole, I should have met somebody there, wandering Esquimaux or civilized man, who would have told me that Pumblechook was my earliest patron and the founder of my fortunes.

Chapter XXIX

Betimes in the morning I was up and out. It was too early yet to go to Miss Havisham's, so I loitered into the country on Miss Havisham's side of town,—which was not Joe's side; I could go there to-morrow,—thinking about my patroness, and painting brilliant pictures of her plans for me.

She had adopted Estella, she had as good as adopted me, and it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together. She reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a-going and the cold hearths a-blazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin,—in short, do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance, and marry the Princess. I had stopped to look at the house as I passed; and its seared red brick walls, blocked windows, and strong green ivy clasping even the stacks of chimneys with its twigs and tendons, as if with sinewy old arms, had made up a rich attractive mystery, of which I was the hero. Estella was the inspiration of it, and the heart of it, of course. But, though she had taken such strong possession of me, though my fancy and my hope were so set upon her, though her influence on my boyish life and character had been all-powerful, I did not, even that romantic

morning, invest her with any attributes save those she possessed. I mention this in this place, of a fixed purpose, because it is the clue by which I am to be followed into my poor labyrinth. According to my experience, the conventional notion of a lover cannot be always true. The unqualified truth is, that when I loved Estella with the love of a man, I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. Once for all; I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always, that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be. Once for all; I loved her none the less because I knew it, and it had no more influence in restraining me than if I had devoutly believed her to be human perfection.

I so shaped out my walk as to arrive at the gate at my old time. When I had rung at the bell with an unsteady hand, I turned my back upon the gate, while I tried to get my breath and keep the beating of my heart moderately quiet. I heard the side-door open, and steps come across the courtyard; but I pretended not to hear, even when the gate swung on its rusty hinges.

Being at last touched on the shoulder, I started and turned. I started much more naturally then, to find myself confronted by a man in a sober grey dress. The last man I should have expected to see in that place of porter at Miss Havisham's door.

“Orlick!”

“Ah, young master, there's more changes than yours. But come in, come in. It's opposed to my orders to hold the gate open.”

I entered and he swung it, and locked it, and took the key out. “Yes!” said he, facing round, after doggedly preceding me a few steps towards the house. “Here I am!”

“How did you come here?”

“I come here,” he retorted, “on my legs. I had my box brought alongside me in a barrow.”

“Are you here for good?”

“I ain't here for harm, young master, I suppose?”

I was not so sure of that. I had leisure to entertain the retort in my mind, while he slowly lifted his heavy glance from the pavement, up my legs and arms, to my face.

“Then you have left the forge?” I said.

“Do this look like a forge?” replied Orlick, sending his glance all round him with an air of injury. “Now, do it look like it?”

I asked him how long he had left Gargery's forge?

“One day is so like another here,” he replied, “that I don't know without casting it up. However, I come here some time since you left.”

“I could have told you that, Orlick.”

"Ah!" said he, dryly. "But then you've got to be a scholar."

By this time we had come to the house, where I found his room to be one just within the side-door, with a little window in it looking on the courtyard. In its small proportions, it was not unlike the kind of place usually assigned to a gate-porter in Paris. Certain keys were hanging on the wall, to which he now added the gate key; and his patchwork-covered bed was in a little inner division or recess. The whole had a slovenly, confined, and sleepy look, like a cage for a human dormouse; while he, looming dark and heavy in the shadow of a corner by the window, looked like the human dormouse for whom it was fitted up,—as indeed he was.

"I never saw this room before," I remarked; "but there used to be no Porter here."

"No," said he; "not till it got about that there was no protection on the premises, and it come to be considered dangerous, with convicts and Tag and Rag and Bobtail going up and down. And then I was recommended to the place as a man who could give another man as good as he brought, and I took it. It's easier than bellowsing and hammering.—That's loaded, that is."

My eye had been caught by a gun with a brass-bound stock over the chimney-piece, and his eye had followed mine.

"Well," said I, not desirous of more conversation, "shall I go up to Miss Havisham?"

"Burn me, if I know!" he retorted, first stretching himself and then shaking himself; "my orders ends here, young master. I give this here bell a rap with this here hammer, and you go on along the passage till you meet somebody."

"I am expected, I believe?"

"Burn me twice over, if I can say!" said he.

Upon that, I turned down the long passage which I had first trodden in my thick boots, and he made his bell sound. At the end of the passage, while the bell was still reverberating, I found Sarah Pocket, who appeared to have now become constitutionally green and yellow by reason of me.

"Oh!" said she. "You, is it, Mr. Pip?"

"It is, Miss Pocket. I am glad to tell you that Mr. Pocket and family are all well."

"Are they any wiser?" said Sarah, with a dismal shake of the head; "they had better be wiser, than well. Ah, Matthew, Matthew! You know your way, sir?"

Tolerably, for I had gone up the staircase in the dark, many a time. I ascended it now, in lighter boots than of yore, and tapped in my old way at the door of Miss Havisham's room. "Pip's rap," I heard her say, immediately; "come in, Pip."

She was in her chair near the old table, in the old dress, with her two hands crossed on her stick, her chin resting on them, and her eyes on the fire. Sitting near her, with the white shoe, that had never been worn, in her hand, and her head bent as she looked at it, was an elegant lady whom I had never seen.

"Come in, Pip," Miss Havisham continued to mutter, without looking round or up; "come in, Pip, how do you do, Pip? so you kiss my hand as if I were a queen, eh?—Well?"

She looked up at me suddenly, only moving her eyes, and repeated in a grimly playful manner,—

"Well?"

"I heard, Miss Havisham," said I, rather at a loss, "that you were so kind as to wish me to come and see you, and I came directly."

"Well?"

The lady whom I had never seen before, lifted up her eyes and looked archly at me, and then I saw that the eyes were Estella's eyes. But she was so much changed, was so much more beautiful, so much more womanly, in all things winning admiration, had made such wonderful advance, that I seemed to have made none. I fancied, as I looked at her, that I slipped hopelessly back into the coarse and common boy again. O the sense of distance and disparity that came upon me, and the inaccessibility that came about her!

She gave me her hand. I stammered something about the pleasure I felt in seeing her again, and about my having looked forward to it, for a long, long time.

"Do you find her much changed, Pip?" asked Miss Havisham, with her greedy look, and striking her stick upon a chair that stood between them, as a sign to me to sit down there.

"When I came in, Miss Havisham, I thought there was nothing of Estella in the face or figure; but now it all settles down so curiously into the old—"

"What? You are not going to say into the old Estella?" Miss Havisham interrupted. "She was proud and insulting, and you wanted to go away from her. Don't you remember?"

I said confusedly that that was long ago, and that I knew no better then, and the like. Estella smiled with perfect composure, and said she had no doubt of my having been quite right, and of her having been very disagreeable.

"Is *he* changed?" Miss Havisham asked her.

"Very much," said Estella, looking at me.

"Less coarse and common?" said Miss Havisham, playing with Estella's hair.

Estella laughed, and looked at the shoe in her hand,

and laughed again, and looked at me, and put the shoe down. She treated me as a boy still, but she lured me on.

We sat in the dreamy room among the old strange influences which had so wrought upon me, and I learnt that she had but just come home from France, and that she was going to London. Proud and wilful as of old, she had brought those qualities into such subjection to her beauty that it was impossible and out of nature—or I thought so—to separate them from her beauty. Truly it was impossible to dissociate her presence from all those wretched hankerings after money and gentility that had disturbed my boyhood,—from all those ill-regulated aspirations that had first made me ashamed of home and Joe,—from all those visions that had raised her face in the glowing fire, struck it out of the iron on the anvil, extracted it from the darkness of night to look in at the wooden window of the forge, and flit away. In a word, it was impossible for me to separate her, in the past or in the present, from the innermost life of my life.

It was settled that I should stay there all the rest of the day, and return to the hotel at night, and to London tomorrow. When we had conversed for a while, Miss Havisham sent us two out to walk in the neglected garden: on our coming in by and by, she said, I should wheel her about a little, as in times of yore.

So, Estella and I went out into the garden by the gate through which I had strayed to my encounter with the pale young gentleman, now Herbert; I, trembling in spirit and worshipping the very hem of her dress; she, quite composed and most decidedly not worshipping the hem of mine. As we drew near to the place of encounter, she stopped and said,—

“I must have been a singular little creature to hide and see that fight that day; but I did, and I enjoyed it very much.”

“You rewarded me very much.”

“Did I?” she replied, in an incidental and forgetful way. “I remember I entertained a great objection to your adversary, because I took it ill that he should be brought here to pester me with his company.”

“He and I are great friends now.”

“Are you? I think I recollect though, that you read with his father?”

“Yes.”

I made the admission with reluctance, for it seemed to have a boyish look, and she already treated me more than enough like a boy.

“Since your change of fortune and prospects, you have changed your companions,” said Estella.

“Naturally,” said I.

“And necessarily,” she added, in a haughty tone; “what

was fit company for you once, would be quite unfit company for you now.”

In my conscience, I doubt very much whether I had any lingering intention left of going to see Joe; but if I had, this observation put it to flight.

“You had no idea of your impending good fortune, in those times?” said Estella, with a slight wave of her hand, signifying in the fighting times.

“Not the least.”

The air of completeness and superiority with which she walked at my side, and the air of youthfulness and submission with which I walked at hers, made a contrast that I strongly felt. It would have rankled in me more than it did, if I had not regarded myself as eliciting it by being so set apart for her and assigned to her.

The garden was too overgrown and rank for walking in with ease, and after we had made the round of it twice or thrice, we came out again into the brewery yard. I showed her to a nicety where I had seen her walking on the casks, that first old day, and she said, with a cold and careless look in that direction, “Did I?” I reminded her where she had come out of the house and given me my meat and drink, and she said, “I don’t remember.” “Not remember that you made me cry?” said I. “No,” said she, and shook her head and looked about her. I verily believe that her not remembering and not minding in the least, made me cry again, inwardly,—and that is the sharpest crying of all.

“You must know,” said Estella, condescending to me as a brilliant and beautiful woman might, “that I have no heart,—if that has anything to do with my memory.”

I got through some jargon to the effect that I took the liberty of doubting that. That I knew better. That there could be no such beauty without it.

“Oh! I have a heart to be stabbed in or shot in, I have no doubt,” said Estella, “and of course if it ceased to beat I should cease to be. But you know what I mean. I have no softness there, no—sympathy—sentiment—nonsense.”

What *was* it that was borne in upon my mind when she stood still and looked attentively at me? Anything that I had seen in Miss Havisham? No. In some of her looks and gestures there was that tinge of resemblance to Miss Havisham which may often be noticed to have been acquired by children, from grown person with whom they have been much associated and secluded, and which, when childhood is passed, will produce a remarkable occasional likeness of expression between faces that are otherwise quite different. And yet I could not trace this to Miss Havisham. I looked again, and though she was still looking at me, the suggestion was gone.

What *was* it?

“I am serious,” said Estella, not so much with a frown (for her brow was smooth) as with a darkening of her face; “if we are to be thrown much together, you had better believe it at once. No!” imperiously stopping me as I

opened my lips. "I have not bestowed my tenderness anywhere. I have never had any such thing."

In another moment we were in the brewery, so long disused, and she pointed to the high gallery where I had seen her going out on that same first day, and told me she remembered to have been up there, and to have seen me standing scared below. As my eyes followed her white hand, again the same dim suggestion that I could not possibly grasp crossed me. My involuntary start occasioned her to lay her hand upon my arm. Instantly the ghost passed once more and was gone.

What *was* it?

"What is the matter?" asked Estella. "Are you scared again?"

"I should be, if I believed what you said just now," I replied, to turn it off.

"Then you don't? Very well. It is said, at any rate. Miss Havisham will soon be expecting you at your old post, though I think that might be laid aside now, with other old belongings. Let us make one more round of the garden, and then go in. Come! You shall not shed tears for my cruelty to-day; you shall be my Page, and give me your shoulder."

Her handsome dress had trailed upon the ground. She held it in one hand now, and with the other lightly touched my shoulder as we walked. We walked round the ruined garden twice or thrice more, and it was all in bloom for me. If the green and yellow growth of weed in the chinks of the old wall had been the most precious flowers that ever blew, it could not have been more cherished in my remembrance.

There was no discrepancy of years between us to remove her far from me; we were of nearly the same age, though of course the age told for more in her case than in mine; but the air of inaccessibility which her beauty and her manner gave her, tormented me in the midst of my delight, and at the height of the assurance I felt that our patroness had chosen us for one another. Wretched boy!

At last we went back into the house, and there I heard, with surprise, that my guardian had come down to see Miss Havisham on business, and would come back to dinner. The old wintry branches of chandeliers in the room where the mouldering table was spread had been lighted while we were out, and Miss Havisham was in her chair and waiting for me.

It was like pushing the chair itself back into the past, when we began the old slow circuit round about the ashes of the bridal feast. But, in the funereal room, with that figure of the grave fallen back in the chair fixing its eyes upon her, Estella looked more bright and beautiful than before, and I was under stronger enchantment.

The time so melted away, that our early dinner-hour drew close at hand, and Estella left us to prepare herself.

We had stopped near the centre of the long table, and Miss Havisham, with one of her withered arms stretched out of the chair, rested that clenched hand upon the yellow cloth. As Estella looked back over her shoulder before going out at the door, Miss Havisham kissed that hand to her, with a ravenous intensity that was of its kind quite dreadful.

Then, Estella being gone and we two left alone, she turned to me, and said in a whisper,—

"Is she beautiful, graceful, well-grown? Do you admire her?"

"Everybody must who sees her, Miss Havisham."

She drew an arm round my neck, and drew my head close down to hers as she sat in the chair. "Love her, love her, love her! How does she use you?"

Before I could answer (if I could have answered so difficult a question at all) she repeated, "Love her, love her, love her! If she favours you, love her. If she wounds you, love her. If she tears your heart to pieces,—and as it gets older and stronger it will tear deeper,—love her, love her, love her!"

Never had I seen such passionate eagerness as was joined to her utterance of these words. I could feel the muscles of the thin arm round my neck swell with the vehemence that possessed her.

"Hear me, Pip! I adopted her, to be loved. I bred her and educated her, to be loved. I developed her into what she is, that she might be loved. Love her!"

She said the word often enough, and there could be no doubt that she meant to say it; but if the often repeated word had been hate instead of love—despair—revenge—dire death—it could not have sounded from her lips more like a curse.

"I'll tell you," said she, in the same hurried passionate whisper, "what real love is. It is blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission, trust and belief against yourself and against the whole world, giving up your whole heart and soul to the smiter—as I did!"

When she came to that, and to a wild cry that followed that, I caught her round the waist. For she rose up in the chair, in her shroud of a dress, and struck at the air as if she would as soon have struck herself against the wall and fallen dead.

All this passed in a few seconds. As I drew her down into her chair, I was conscious of a scent that I knew, and turning, saw my guardian in the room.

He always carried (I have not yet mentioned it, I think) a pocket-handkerchief of rich silk and of imposing proportions, which was of great value to him in his profession. I have seen him so terrify a client or a witness by ceremoniously unfolding this pocket-handkerchief as

if he were immediately going to blow his nose, and then pausing, as if he knew he should not have time to do it before such client or witness committed himself, that the self-committal has followed directly, quite as a matter of course. When I saw him in the room he had this expressive pocket-handkerchief in both hands, and was looking at us. On meeting my eye, he said plainly, by a momentary and silent pause in that attitude, "Indeed? Singular!" and then put the handkerchief to its right use with wonderful effect.

Miss Havisham had seen him as soon as I, and was (like everybody else) afraid of him. She made a strong attempt to compose herself, and stammered that he was as punctual as ever.

"As punctual as ever," he repeated, coming up to us. "(How do you do, Pip? Shall I give you a ride, Miss Havisham? Once round?) And so you are here, Pip?"

I told him when I had arrived, and how Miss Havisham had wished me to come and see Estella. To which he replied, "Ah! Very fine young lady!" Then he pushed Miss Havisham in her chair before him, with one of his large hands, and put the other in his trousers-pocket as if the pocket were full of secrets.

"Well, Pip! How often have you seen Miss Estella before?" said he, when he came to a stop.

"How often?"

"Ah! How many times? Ten thousand times?"

"Oh! Certainly not so many."

"Twice?"

"Jaggers," interposed Miss Havisham, much to my relief, "leave my Pip alone, and go with him to your dinner."

He complied, and we groped our way down the dark stairs together. While we were still on our way to those detached apartments across the paved yard at the back, he asked me how often I had seen Miss Havisham eat and drink; offering me a breadth of choice, as usual, between a hundred times and once.

I considered, and said, "Never."

"And never will, Pip," he retorted, with a frowning smile. "She has never allowed herself to be seen doing either, since she lived this present life of hers. She wanders about in the night, and then lays hands on such food as she takes."

"Pray, sir," said I, "may I ask you a question?"

"You may," said he, "and I may decline to answer it. Put your question."

"Estella's name. Is it Havisham or—?" I had nothing to add.

"Or what?" said he.

"Is it Havisham?"

"It is Havisham."

This brought us to the dinner-table, where she and Sarah Pocket awaited us. Mr. Jaggers presided, Estella sat opposite to him, I faced my green and yellow friend. We dined very well, and were waited on by a maid-servant whom I had never seen in all my comings and goings, but who, for anything I know, had been in that mysterious house the whole time. After dinner a bottle of choice old port was placed before my guardian (he was evidently well acquainted with the vintage), and the two ladies left us.

Anything to equal the determined reticence of Mr. Jaggers under that roof I never saw elsewhere, even in him. He kept his very looks to himself, and scarcely directed his eyes to Estella's face once during dinner. When she spoke to him, he listened, and in due course answered, but never looked at her, that I could see. On the other hand, she often looked at him, with interest and curiosity, if not distrust, but his face never showed the least consciousness. Throughout dinner he took a dry delight in making Sarah Pocket greener and yellower, by often referring in conversation with me to my expectations; but here, again, he showed no consciousness, and even made it appear that he extorted—and even did extort, though I don't know how—those references out of my innocent self.

And when he and I were left alone together, he sat with an air upon him of general lying by in consequence of information he possessed, that really was too much for me. He cross-examined his very wine when he had nothing else in hand. He held it between himself and the candle, tasted the port, rolled it in his mouth, swallowed it, looked at his glass again, smelt the port, tried it, drank it, filled again, and cross-examined the glass again, until I was as nervous as if I had known the wine to be telling him something to my disadvantage. Three or four times I feebly thought I would start conversation; but whenever he saw me going to ask him anything, he looked at me with his glass in his hand, and rolling his wine about in his mouth, as if requesting me to take notice that it was of no use, for he couldn't answer.

I think Miss Pocket was conscious that the sight of me involved her in the danger of being goaded to madness, and perhaps tearing off her cap,—which was a very hideous one, in the nature of a muslin mop,—and strewing the ground with her hair,—which assuredly had never grown on *her* head. She did not appear when we afterwards went up to Miss Havisham's room, and we four played at whist. In the interval, Miss Havisham, in a fantastic way, had put some of the most beautiful jewels from her dressing-table into Estella's hair, and about her bosom and arms; and I saw even my guardian look at her from under his thick eyebrows, and raise them a little, when her loveliness was before him, with those rich flushes of glitter and colour in it.

Of the manner and extent to which he took our trumps

into custody, and came out with mean little cards at the ends of hands, before which the glory of our Kings and Queens was utterly abased, I say nothing; nor, of the feeling that I had, respecting his looking upon us personally in the light of three very obvious and poor riddles that he had found out long ago. What I suffered from, was the incompatibility between his cold presence and my feelings towards Estella. It was not that I knew I could never bear to speak to him about her, that I knew I could never bear to hear him creak his boots at her, that I knew I could never bear to see him wash his hands of her; it was, that my admiration should be within a foot or two of him,—it was, that my feelings should be in the same place with him,—*that*, was the agonizing circum-stance.

We played until nine o'clock, and then it was arranged that when Estella came to London I should be forewarned of her coming and should meet her at the coach; and then I took leave of her, and touched her and left her.

My guardian lay at the Boar in the next room to mine. Far into the night, Miss Havisham's words, "Love her, love her, love her!" sounded in my ears. I adapted them for my own repetition, and said to my pillow, "I love her, I love her, I love her!" hundreds of times. Then, a burst of gratitude came upon me, that she should be destined for me, once the blacksmith's boy. Then I thought if she were, as I feared, by no means rapturously grateful for that destiny yet, when would she begin to be interested in me? When should I awaken the heart within her that was mute and sleeping now?

Ah me! I thought those were high and great emotions. But I never thought there was anything low and small in my keeping away from Joe, because I knew she would be contemptuous of him. It was but a day gone, and Joe had brought the tears into my eyes; they had soon dried, God forgive me! soon dried.

Chapter XXX

After well considering the matter while I was dressing at the Blue Boar in the morning, I resolved to tell my guardian that I doubted Orlick's being the right sort of man to fill a post of trust at Miss Havisham's. "Why of course he is not the right sort of man, Pip," said my guardian, comfortably satisfied beforehand on the general head, "because the man who fills the post of trust never is the right sort of man." It seemed quite to put him into spirits to find that this particular post was not exceptionally held by the right sort of man, and he listened in a satisfied manner while I told him what knowledge I had of Orlick. "Very good, Pip," he observed, when I had concluded, "I'll go round presently, and pay our friend off." Rather alarmed by this summary action, I was for a little delay, and even hinted that our friend himself might be difficult to deal with. "Oh no he won't," said my guardian, making his pocket-handkerchief-

point, with perfect confidence; "I should like to see him argue the question with *me*."

As we were going back together to London by the midday coach, and as I breakfasted under such terrors of Pumblechook that I could scarcely hold my cup, this gave me an opportunity of saying that I wanted a walk, and that I would go on along the London road while Mr. Jaggers was occupied, if he would let the coachman know that I would get into my place when overtaken. I was thus enabled to fly from the Blue Boar immediately after breakfast. By then making a loop of about a couple of miles into the open country at the back of Pumblechook's premises, I got round into the High Street again, a little beyond that pitfall, and felt myself in comparative security.

It was interesting to be in the quiet old town once more, and it was not disagreeable to be here and there suddenly recognised and stared after. One or two of the tradespeople even darted out of their shops and went a little way down the street before me, that they might turn, as if they had forgotten something, and pass me face to face,—on which occasions I don't know whether they or I made the worse pretence; they of not doing it, or I of not seeing it. Still my position was a distinguished one, and I was not at all dissatisfied with it, until Fate threw me in the way of that unlimited miscreant, Trabb's boy.

Casting my eyes along the street at a certain point of my progress, I beheld Trabb's boy approaching, lashing himself with an empty blue bag. Deeming that a serene and unconscious contemplation of him would best beseech me, and would be most likely to quell his evil mind, I advanced with that expression of countenance, and was rather congratulating myself on my success, when suddenly the knees of Trabb's boy smote together, his hair uprose, his cap fell off, he trembled violently in every limb, staggered out into the road, and crying to the populace, "Hold me! I'm so frightened!" feigned to be in a paroxysm of terror and contrition, occasioned by the dignity of my appearance. As I passed him, his teeth loudly chattered in his head, and with every mark of extreme humiliation, he prostrated himself in the dust.

This was a hard thing to bear, but this was nothing. I had not advanced another two hundred yards when, to my inexpressible terror, amazement, and indignation, I again beheld Trabb's boy approaching. He was coming round a narrow corner. His blue bag was slung over his shoulder, honest industry beamed in his eyes, a determination to proceed to Trabb's with cheerful briskness was indicated in his gait. With a shock he became aware of me, and was severely visited as before; but this time his motion was rotatory, and he staggered round and round me with knees more afflicted, and with uplifted hands as if beseeching for mercy. His sufferings were hailed with the greatest joy by a knot of spectators, and I felt utterly confounded.

I had not got as much further down the street as the post-office, when I again beheld Trabb's boy shooting round by a back way. This time, he was entirely changed. He wore the blue bag in the manner of my great-coat, and was strutting along the pavement towards me on the opposite side of the street, attended by a company of delighted young friends to whom he from time to time exclaimed, with a wave of his hand, "Don't know yah!" Words cannot state the amount of aggravation and injury wreaked upon me by Trabb's boy, when passing abreast of me, he pulled up his shirt-collar, twined his side-hair, stuck an arm akimbo, and smirked extravagantly by, wriggling his elbows and body, and drawing to his attendants, "Don't know yah, don't know yah, 'pon my soul don't know yah!" The disgrace attendant on his immedi-atelly afterwards taking to crowing and pursuing me across the bridge with crows, as from an exceedingly dejected fowl who had known me when I was a blacksmith, culminated the disgrace with which I left the town, and was, so to speak, ejected by it into the open country.

But unless I had taken the life of Trabb's boy on that occasion, I really do not even now see what I could have done save endure. To have struggled with him in the street, or to have exacted any lower recompense from him than his heart's best blood, would have been futile and degrading. Moreover, he was a boy whom no man could hurt; an invulnerable and dodging serpent who, when chased into a corner, flew out again between his captor's legs, scornfully yelping. I wrote, however, to Mr. Trabb by next day's post, to say that Mr. Pip must decline to deal further with one who could so far forget what he owed to the best interests of society, as to employ a boy who excited Loathing in every respectable mind.

The coach, with Mr. Jaggers inside, came up in due time, and I took my box-seat again, and arrived in London safe,—but not sound, for my heart was gone. As soon as I arrived, I sent a penitential codfish and barrel of oysters to Joe (as reparation for not having gone myself), and then went on to Barnard's Inn.

I found Herbert dining on cold meat, and delighted to welcome me back. Having despatched The Avenger to the coffee-house for an addition to the dinner, I felt that I must open my breast that very evening to my friend and chum. As confidence was out of the question with The Avenger in the hall, which could merely be regarded in the light of an antechamber to the keyhole, I sent him to the Play. A better proof of the severity of my bondage to that taskmaster could scarcely be afforded, than the degrading shifts to which I was constantly driven to find him employment. So mean is extremity, that I sometimes sent him to Hyde Park corner to see what o'clock it was.

Dinner done and we sitting with our feet upon the fender, I said to Herbert, "My dear Herbert, I have something very particular to tell you."

"My dear Handel," he returned, "I shall esteem and respect your confidence."

"It concerns myself, Herbert," said I, "and one other person."

Herbert crossed his feet, looked at the fire with his head on one side, and having looked at it in vain for some time, looked at me because I didn't go on.

"Herbert," said I, laying my hand upon his knee, "I love—I adore—Estella."

Instead of being transfixed, Herbert replied in an easy matter-of-course way, "Exactly. Well?"

"Well, Herbert? Is that all you say? Well?"

"What next, I mean?" said Herbert. "Of course I know *that*."

"How do you know it?" said I.

"How do I know it, Handel? Why, from you."

"I never told you."

"Told me! You have never told me when you have got your hair cut, but I have had senses to perceive it. You have always adored her, ever since I have known you. You brought your adoration and your port-manteau here together. Told me! Why, you have always told me all day long. When you told me your own story, you told me plainly that you began adoring her the first time you saw her, when you were very young indeed."

"Very well, then," said I, to whom this was a new and not unwelcome light, "I have never left off adoring her. And she has come back, a most beautiful and most elegant creature. And I saw her yesterday. And if I adored her before, I now doubly adore her."

"Lucky for you then, Handel," said Herbert, "that you are picked out for her and allotted to her. Without encroaching on forbidden ground, we may venture to say that there can be no doubt between ourselves of that fact. Have you any idea yet, of Estella's views on the adoration question?"

I shook my head gloomily. "Oh! She is thousands of miles away, from me," said I.

"Patience, my dear Handel: time enough, time enough. But you have something more to say?"

"I am ashamed to say it," I returned, "and yet it's no worse to say it than to think it. You call me a lucky fellow. Of course, I am. I was a blacksmith's boy but yesterday; I am—what shall I say I am—to-day?"

"Say a good fellow, if you want a phrase," returned Herbert, smiling, and clapping his hand on the back of mine—"a good fellow, with impetuosity and hesitation, boldness and diffidence, action and dreaming, curiously mixed in him."

I stopped for a moment to consider whether there really was this mixture in my character. On the whole, I by no

means recognised the analysis, but thought it not worth disputing.

"When I ask what I am to call myself to-day, Herbert," I went on, "I suggest what I have in my thoughts. You say I am lucky. I know I have done nothing to raise myself in life, and that Fortune alone has raised me; that is being very lucky. And yet, when I think of Estella—"

("And when don't you, you know?" Herbert threw in, with his eyes on the fire; which I thought kind and sympathetic of him.)

"—Then, my dear Herbert, I cannot tell you how dependent and uncertain I feel, and how exposed to hundreds of chances. Avoiding forbidden ground, as you did just now, I may still say that on the constancy of one person (naming no person) all my expectations depend. And at the best, how indefinite and unsatisfactory, only to know so vaguely what they are!" In saying this, I relieved my mind of what had always been there, more or less, though no doubt most since yesterday.

"Now, Handel," Herbert replied, in his gay, hopeful way, "it seems to me that in the despondency of the tender passion, we are looking into our gift-horse's mouth with a magnifying-glass. Likewise, it seems to me that, concentrating our attention on the examination, we altogether overlook one of the best points of the animal. Didn't you tell me that your guardian, Mr. Jaggers, told you in the beginning, that you were not endowed with expectations only? And even if he had not told you so,—though that is a very large If, I grant,—could you believe that of all men in London, Mr. Jaggers is the man to hold his present relations towards you unless he were sure of his ground?"

I said I could not deny that this was a strong point. I said it (people often do so, in such cases) like a rather reluctant concession to truth and justice;—as if I wanted to deny it!

"I should think it *was* a strong point," said Herbert, "and I should think you would be puzzled to imagine a stronger; as to the rest, you must bide your guardian's time, and he must bide his client's time. You'll be one-and-twenty before you know where you are, and then perhaps you'll get some further enlightenment. At all events, you'll be nearer getting it, for it must come at last."

"What a hopeful disposition you have!" said I, gratefully admiring his cheery ways.

"I ought to have," said Herbert, "for I have not much else. I must acknowledge, by the by, that the good sense of what I have just said is not my own, but my father's. The only remark I ever heard him make on your story, was the final one, 'The thing is settled and done, or Mr. Jaggers would not be in it.' And now before I say anything more about my father, or my father's son, and repay confidence

with confidence, I want to make myself seriously disagreeable to you for a moment,—positively repulsive."

"You won't succeed," said I.

"O yes I shall!" said he. "One, two, three, and now I am in for it. Handel, my good fellow;"—though he spoke in this light tone, he was very much in earnest,—“I have been thinking since we have been talking with our feet on this fender, that Estella surely cannot be a condition of your inheritance, if she was never referred to by your guardian. Am I right in so understanding what you have told me, as that he never referred to her, directly or indirectly, in any way? Never even hinted, for instance, that your patron might have views as to your marriage ultimately?"

"Never."

"Now, Handel, I am quite free from the flavour of sour grapes, upon my soul and honour! Not being bound to her, can you not detach yourself from her?—I told you I should be disagreeable."

I turned my head aside, for, with a rush and a sweep, like the old marsh winds coming up from the sea, a feeling like that which had subdued me on the morning when I left the forge, when the mists were solemnly rising, and when I laid my hand upon the village finger-post, smote upon my heart again. There was silence between us for a little while.

"Yes; but my dear Handel," Herbert went on, as if we had been talking, instead of silent, "its having been so strongly rooted in the breast of a boy whom nature and circumstances made so romantic, renders it very serious. Think of her bringing-up, and think of Miss Havisham. Think of what she is herself (now I am repulsive and you abominate me). This may lead to miserable things."

"I know it, Herbert," said I, with my head still turned away, "but I can't help it."

"You can't detach yourself?"

"No. Impossible!"

"You can't try, Handel?"

"No. Impossible!"

"Well!" said Herbert, getting up with a lively shake as if he had been asleep, and stirring the fire, "now I'll endeavour to make myself agreeable again!"

So he went round the room and shook the curtains out, put the chairs in their places, tidied the books and

so forth that were lying about, looked into the hall, peeped into the letter-box, shut the door, and came back to his chair by the fire: where he sat down, nursing his left leg in both arms.

"I was going to say a word or two, Handel, concerning my father and my father's son. I am afraid it is scarcely necessary for my father's son to remark that my father's

establishment is not particularly brilliant in its housekeeping."

"There is always plenty, Herbert," said I, to say something encouraging.

"O yes! and so the dustman says, I believe, with the strongest approval, and so does the marine-store shop in the back street. Gravely, Handel, for the subject is grave enough, you know how it is as well as I do. I suppose there was a time once when my father had not given matters up; but if ever there was, the time is gone. May I ask you if you have ever had an opportunity of remarking, down in your part of the country, that the children of not exactly suitable marriages are always most particularly anxious to be married?"

This was such a singular question, that I asked him in return, "Is it so?"

"I don't know," said Herbert, "that's what I want to know. Because it is decidedly the case with us. My poor sister Charlotte, who was next me and died before she was fourteen, was a striking example. Little Jane is the same. In her desire to be matrimonially established, you might suppose her to have passed her short existence in the perpetual contemplation of domestic bliss. Little Alick in a frock has already made arrangements for his union with a suitable young person at Kew. And indeed, I think we are all engaged, except the baby."

"Then you are?" said I.

"I am," said Herbert; "but it's a secret."

I assured him of my keeping the secret, and begged to be favoured with further particulars. He had spoken so sensibly and feelingly of my weakness that I wanted to know something about his strength.

"May I ask the name?" I said.

"Name of Clara," said Herbert.

"Live in London?"

"Yes, perhaps I ought to mention," said Herbert, who had become curiously crestfallen and meek, since we entered on the interesting theme, "that she is rather below my mother's nonsensical family notions. Her father had to do with the victualling of passenger-ships. I think he was a species of purser."

"What is he now?" said I.

"He's an invalid now," replied Herbert.

"Living on—?"

"On the first floor," said Herbert. Which was not at all what I meant, for I had intended my question to apply to his means. "I have never seen him, for he has always kept his room overhead, since I have known Clara. But I have heard him constantly. He makes tremendous rows,—roars, and pegs at the floor with some frightful instrument." In looking at me and then laughing

heartily, Herbert for the time recovered his usual lively manner.

"Don't you expect to see him?" said I.

"O yes, I constantly expect to see him," returned Herbert, "because I never hear him, without expecting him to come tumbling through the ceiling. But I don't know how long the rafters may hold."

When he had once more laughed heartily, he became meek again, and told me that the moment he began to realise Capital, it was his intention to marry this young lady. He added as a self-evident proposition, engendering low spirits, "But you *can't* marry, you know, while you're looking about you."

As we contemplated the fire, and as I thought what a difficult vision to realise this same Capital sometimes was, I put my hands in my pockets. A folded piece of paper in one of them attracting my attention, I opened it and found it to be the play-bill I had received from Joe, relative to the celebrated provincial amateur of Roscian renown. "And bless my heart," I involuntarily added aloud, "it's to-night!"

This changed the subject in an instant, and made us hurriedly resolve to go to the play. So, when I had pledged myself to comfort and abet Herbert in the affair of his heart by all practicable and impracticable means, and when Herbert had told me that his affianced already knew me by reputation and that I should be presented to her, and when we had warmly shaken hands upon our mutual confidence, we blew out our candles, made up our fire, locked our door, and issued forth in quest of Mr. Wopsle and Denmark.

Chapter XXXI

On our arrival in Denmark, we found the king and queen of that country elevated in two arm-chairs on a kitchen-table, holding a Court. The whole of the Danish nobility were in attendance; consisting of a noble boy in the wash-leather boots of a gigantic ancestor, a venerable Peer with a dirty face who seemed to have risen from the people late in life, and the Danish chivalry with a comb in its hair and a pair of white silk legs, and presenting on the whole a feminine appearance. My gifted townsman stood gloomily apart, with folded arms, and I could have wished that his curls and forehead had been more probable.

Several curious little circumstances transpired as the action proceeded. The late king of the country not only appeared to have been troubled with a cough at the time of his decease, but to have taken it with him to the tomb, and to have brought it back. The royal phantom also carried a ghostly manuscript round its truncheon, to which it had the appearance of occasionally referring, and that too, with an air of anxiety and a tendency to lose the place of reference which were suggestive of a state of mortality. It was this, I conceive, which led to the Shade's

being advised by the gallery to “turn over!”—a recommendation which it took extremely ill. It was likewise to be noted of this majestic spirit, that whereas it always appeared with an air of having been out a long time and walked an immense distance, it perceptibly came from a closely contiguous wall. This occasioned its terrors to be received derisively. The Queen of Denmark, a very buxom lady, though no doubt historically brazen, was considered by the public to have too much brass about her; her chin being attached to her diadem by a broad band of that metal (as if she had a gorgeous toothache), her waist being encircled by another, and each of her arms by another, so that she was openly mentioned as “the kettle-drum.” The noble boy in the ancestral boots was inconsistent, representing himself, as it were in one breath, as an able seaman, a strolling actor, a gravedigger, a clergyman, and a person of the utmost importance at a Court fencing-match, on the authority of whose practised eye and nice discrimination the finest strokes were judged. This gradually led to a want of toleration for him, and even—on his being detected in holy orders, and declining to perform the funeral service—to the general indignation taking the form of nuts. Lastly, Ophelia was a prey to such slow musical madness, that when, in course of time, she had taken off her white muslin scarf, folded it up, and buried it, a sulky man who had been long cooling his impatient nose against an iron bar in the front row of the gallery, growled, “Now the baby’s put to bed let’s have supper!” Which, to say the least of it, was out of keeping.

Upon my unfortunate townsman all these incidents accumulated with playful effect. Whenever that undecided Prince had to ask a question or state a doubt, the public helped him out with it. As for example; on the question whether ’twas nobler in the mind to suffer, some roared yes, and some no, and some inclining to both opinions said “Toss up for it,” and quite a Debating Society arose. When he asked what should such fellows as he do crawling between earth and heaven, he was encouraged with loud cries of “Hear, hear!” When he appeared with his stocking disordered (its disorder expressed, according to usage,

by one very neat fold in the top, which I suppose to be always got up with a flat iron), a conversation took place in the gallery respecting the paleness of his leg, and whether it was occasioned by the turn the ghost had given him. On his taking the recorders,—very like a little black flute that had just been played in the orchestra and handed out at the door,—he was called upon unanimously for Rule Britannia. When he recommended the player not to saw the air thus, the sulky man said, “And don’t *you* do it, neither; you’re a deal worse than *him*!” And I grieve to add that peals of laughter greeted Mr. Wopsle on every one of these occasions.

But his greatest trials were in the churchyard, which had the appearance of a primeval forest, with a kind of small ecclesiastical wash-house on one side, and a turnpike

gate on the other. Mr. Wopsle in a comprehensive black cloak, being descried entering at the turnpike, the gravedigger was admonished in a friendly way, “Look out! Here’s the undertaker a coming, to see how you’re a getting on with your work!” I believe it is well known in a constitutional country that Mr. Wopsle could not possibly have returned the skull, after moralizing over it, without dusting his fingers on a white napkin taken from his breast; but even that innocent and indispensable action did not pass without the comment, “Wai-ter!” The arrival of the body for interment (in an empty black box with the lid tumbling open), was the signal for a general joy, which was much enhanced by the discovery, among the bearers, of an individual obnoxious to identification. The joy attended Mr. Wopsle through his struggle with Laertes on the brink of the orchestra and the grave, and slackened no more until he had tumbled the king off the kitchen-table, and had died by inches from the ankles upward.

We had made some pale efforts in the beginning to applaud Mr. Wopsle; but they were too hopeless to be persisted in. Therefore we had sat, feeling keenly for him, but laughing, nevertheless, from ear to ear. I laughed in spite of myself all the time, the whole thing was so droll; and yet I had a latent impression that there was something decidedly fine in Mr. Wopsle’s elocution,—not for old associations’ sake, I am afraid, but because it was very slow, very dreary, very uphill and downhill, and very unlike any way in which any man in any natural circumstances of life or death ever expressed himself about anything. When the tragedy was over, and he had been called for and hooted, I said to Herbert, “Let us go at once, or perhaps we shall meet him.”

We made all the haste we could downstairs, but we were not quick enough either. Standing at the door was a Jewish man with an unnatural heavy smear of eyebrow, who caught my eyes as we advanced, and said, when we came up with him,—

“Mr. Pip and friend?”

Identity of Mr. Pip and friend confessed.

“Mr. Waldengarver,” said the man, “would be glad to have the honour.”

“Waldengarver?” I repeated—when Herbert murmured in my ear, “Probably Wopsle.”

“Oh!” said I. “Yes. Shall we follow you?”

“A few steps, please.” When we were in a side alley, he turned and asked, “How did you think he looked?—I dressed him.”

I don’t know what he had looked like, except a funeral; with the addition of a large Danish sun or star hanging round his neck by a blue ribbon, that had given him the appearance of being insured in some extraordinary Fire Office. But I said he had looked very nice.

“When he come to the grave,” said our conductor, “he

showed his cloak beautiful. But, judging from the wing, it looked to me that when he see the ghost in the queen's apartment, he might have made more of his stockings."

I modestly assented, and we all fell through a little dirty swing door, into a sort of hot packing-case immediately behind it. Here Mr. Wopsle was divesting himself of his Danish garments, and here there was just room for us to look at him over one another's shoulders, by keeping the packing-case door, or lid, wide open.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Wopsle, "I am proud to see you. I hope, Mr. Pip, you will excuse my sending round. I had the happiness to know you in former times, and the Drama has ever had a claim which has ever been acknowledged, on the noble and the affluent."

Meanwhile, Mr. Waldengarver, in a frightful perspiration, was trying to get himself out of his princely sables.

"Skin the stockings off Mr. Waldengarver," said the owner of that property, "or you'll bust 'em. Bust 'em, and you'll bust five-and-thirty shillings. Shakspeare never was complimented with a finer pair. Keep quiet in your chair now, and leave 'em to me."

With that, he went upon his knees, and began to flay his victim; who, on the first stocking coming off, would certainly have fallen over backward with his chair, but for there being no room to fall anyhow.

I had been afraid until then to say a word about the play. But then, Mr. Waldengarver looked up at us complacently, and said,—

"Gentlemen, how did it seem to you, to go, in front?"

Herbert said from behind (at the same time poking me), "Capitally." So I said "Capitally."

"How did you like my reading of the character, gentlemen?" said Mr. Waldengarver, almost, if not quite, with patronage.

Herbert said from behind (again poking me), "Massive and concrete." So I said boldly, as if I had originated it, and must beg to insist upon it, "Massive and concrete."

"I am glad to have your approbation, gentlemen," said Mr. Waldengarver, with an air of dignity, in spite of his being ground against the wall at the time, and holding on by the seat of the chair.

"But I'll tell you one thing, Mr. Waldengarver," said the man who was on his knees, "in which you're out in your reading. Now mind! I don't care who says contrary; I tell you so. You're out in your reading of Hamlet when you get your legs in profile. The last Hamlet as I dressed, made the same mistakes in his reading at rehearsal, till I got him to put a large red wafer on each of his shins, and then at that rehearsal (which was the last) I went in front, sir, to the back of the pit, and whenever his reading brought him into profile, I called out "I don't see no wafers!" And at night his reading was lovely."

Mr. Waldengarver smiled at me, as much as to say "a faithful Dependent—I overlook his folly;" and then said aloud, "My view is a little classic and thoughtful for them here; but they will improve, they will improve."

Herbert and I said together, O, no doubt they would improve.

"Did you observe, gentlemen," said Mr. Waldengarver, "that there was a man in the gallery who endeavoured to cast derision on the service,—I mean, the representation?"

We basely replied that we rather thought we had noticed such a man. I added, "He was drunk, no doubt."

"O dear no, sir," said Mr. Wopsle, "not drunk. His employer would see to that, sir. His employer would not allow him to be drunk."

"You know his employer?" said I.

Mr. Wopsle shut his eyes, and opened them again; performing both ceremonies very slowly. "You must have observed, gentlemen," said he, "an ignorant and a blatant ass, with a rasping throat and a countenance expressive of low malignity, who went through—I will not say sustained—the rôle (if I may use a French expression) of Claudius, King of Denmark. That is his employer, gentlemen. Such is the profession!"

Without distinctly knowing whether I should have been more sorry for Mr. Wopsle if he had been in despair, I was so sorry for him as it was, that I took the opportunity of his turning round to have his braces put on,—which jostled us out at the doorway,—to ask Herbert what he thought of having him home to supper? Herbert said he thought it would be kind to do so; therefore I invited him, and he went to Barnard's with us, wrapped up to the eyes, and we did our best for him, and he sat until two o'clock in the morning, reviewing his success and developing his plans. I forget in detail what they were, but I have a general recollection that he was to begin with reviving the Drama, and to end with crushing it; inasmuch as his decease would leave it utterly bereft and without a chance or hope.

Miserably I went to bed after all, and miserably thought of Estella, and miserably dreamed that my expectations were all cancelled, and that I had to give my hand in marriage to Herbert's Clara, or play Hamlet to Miss Havisham's Ghost, before twenty thousand people, without knowing twenty words of it.



Chapter XXXII

One day when I was busy with my books and Mr. Pocket, I received a note by the post, the mere outside of which threw me into a great flutter; for, though I had never seen the handwriting in which it was addressed, I divined whose hand it was. It had no set beginning, as Dear Mr. Pip, or Dear Pip, or Dear Sir, or Dear Anything, but ran thus:—

"I am to come to London the day after to-morrow by the midday coach. I believe it was settled you should meet me? At all events Miss Havisham has that impression, and I write in obedience to it. She sends you her regard.

"Yours, ESTELLA."

If there had been time, I should probably have ordered several suits of clothes for this occasion; but as there was not, I was fain to be content with those I had. My appetite vanished instantly, and I knew no peace or rest until the day arrived. Not that its arrival brought me either; for, then I was worse than ever, and began haunting the coach-office in Wood Street, Cheapside, before the coach had left the Blue Boar in our town. For all that I knew this perfectly well, I still felt as if it were not safe to let the coach-office be out of my sight longer than five minutes at a time; and in this condition of unreason I had performed the first half-hour of a watch of four or five hours, when Wemmick ran against me.

"Halloa, Mr. Pip," said he; "how do you do? I should hardly have thought this was *your* beat."

I explained that I was waiting to meet somebody who was coming up by coach, and I inquired after the Castle and the Aged.

"Both flourishing thankye," said Wemmick, "and particularly the Aged. He's in wonderful feather. He'll be eighty-two next birthday. I have a notion of firing eighty-two times, if the neighbourhood shouldn't complain, and that cannon of mine should prove equal to the pressure. However, this is not London talk. Where do you think I am going to?"

"To the office?" said I, for he was tending in that direction.

"Next thing to it," returned Wemmick, "I am going to Newgate. We are in a banker's-parcel case just at present, and I have been down the road taking a squint at the scene of action, and thereupon must have a word or two with our client."

"Did your client commit the robbery?" I asked.

"Bless your soul and body, no," answered Wemmick, very drily. "But he is accused of it. So might you or I be. Either of us might be accused of it, you know."

"Only neither of us is," I remarked.

"Yah!" said Wemmick, touching me on the breast with his forefinger; "you're a deep one, Mr. Pip! Would you like to have a look at Newgate? Have you time to spare?"

I had so much time to spare, that the proposal came as a relief, notwithstanding its irreconcilability with my latent desire to keep my eye on the coach-office. Muttering that I would make the inquiry whether I had time to walk with him, I went into the office, and ascertained from the clerk with the nicest precision and much to the trying of his temper, the earliest moment at which the coach could be expected,—which I knew beforehand, quite as well as he. I then rejoined Mr. Wemmick, and affecting to consult my watch, and to be surprised by the information I had received, accepted his offer.

We were at Newgate in a few minutes, and we passed through the lodge where some fetters were hanging up on the bare walls among the prison rules, into the interior of the jail. At that time jails were much neglected, and the period of exaggerated reaction consequent on all public wrongdoing—and which is always its heaviest and longest punishment—was still far off. So, felons were not lodged and fed better than soldiers (to say nothing of paupers), and seldom set fire to their prisons with the excusable object of improving the flavour of their soup. It was visiting time when Wemmick took me in, and a potman was going his rounds with beer; and the prisoners, behind bars in yards, were buying beer, and talking to friends; and a frowzy, ugly, disorderly, depressing scene it was.

It struck me that Wemmick walked among the prisoners much as a gardener might walk among his plants. This was first put into my head by his seeing a shoot that had come up in the night, and saying, "What, Captain Tom? Are *you* there? Ah, indeed!" and also, "Is that Black Bill behind the cistern? Why I didn't look for you these two months; how do you find yourself?" Equally in his stopping at the bars and attending to anxious whisperers,—always singly,—Wemmick with his post-office in an immovable state, looked at them while in conference, as if he were taking particular notice of the advance they had made, since last observed, towards coming out in full blow at their trial.

He was highly popular, and I found that he took the familiar department of Mr. Jaggers's business; though something of the state of Mr. Jaggers hung about him too, forbidding approach beyond certain limits. His personal recognition of each successive client was comprised in a nod, and in his settling his hat a little easier on his head with both hands, and then tightening the post-office, and putting his hands in his pockets. In one or two instances there was a difficulty respecting the raising of fees, and then Mr. Wemmick, backing as far as possible from the insufficient money produced, said, "it's no use, my boy. I'm only a subordinate. I can't take it. Don't go on in that way with a subordinate. If you are unable to make up your

quantum, my boy, you had better address yourself to a principal; there are plenty of principals in the profession, you know, and what is not worth the while of one, may be worth the while of another; that's my recommendation to you, speaking as a subordinate. Don't try on useless measures. Why should you? Now, who's next?"

Thus, we walked through Wemmick's greenhouse, until he turned to me and said, "Notice the man I shall shake hands with." I should have done so, without the preparation, as he had shaken hands with no one yet.

Almost as soon as he had spoken, a portly upright man (whom I can see now, as I write) in a well-worn olive-coloured frock-coat, with a peculiar pallor overspreading the red in his complexion, and eyes that went wandering about when he tried to fix them, came up to a corner of the bars, and put his hand to his hat—which had a greasy and fatty surface like cold broth—with a half-serious and half-jocose military salute.

"Colonel, to you!" said Wemmick; "how are you, Colonel?"

"All right, Mr. Wemmick."

"Everything was done that could be done, but the evidence was too strong for us, Colonel."

"Yes, it was too strong, sir,—but *I* don't care."

"No, no," said Wemmick, coolly, "*you* don't care." Then, turning to me, "Served His Majesty this man. Was a soldier in the line and bought his discharge."

I said, "Indeed?" and the man's eyes looked at me, and then looked over my head, and then looked all round me, and then he drew his hand across his lips and laughed.

"I think I shall be out of this on Monday, sir," he said to Wemmick.

"Perhaps," returned my friend, "but there's no knowing."

"I am glad to have the chance of bidding you good-bye, Mr. Wemmick," said the man, stretching out his hand between two bars.

"Thankye," said Wemmick, shaking hands with him. "Same to you, Colonel."

"If what I had upon me when taken had been real, Mr. Wemmick," said the man, unwilling to let his hand go, "I should have asked the favour of your wearing another ring—in acknowledgment of your attentions."

"I'll accept the will for the deed," said Wemmick. "By the by; you were quite a pigeon-fancier." The man looked up at the sky. "I am told you had a remarkable breed of tumblers. *Could* you commission any friend of yours to bring me a pair, if you've no further use for 'em?"

"It shall be done, sir."

"All right," said Wemmick, "they shall be taken care of. Good-afternoon, Colonel. Good-bye!" They shook

hands again, and as we walked away Wemmick said to me, "A Coiner, a very good workman. The Recorder's report is made to-day, and he is sure to be executed on Monday. Still you see, as far as it goes, a pair of pigeons are portable property all the same." With that, he looked back, and nodded at this dead plant, and then cast his eyes about him in walking out of the yard, as if he were considering what other pot would go best in its place.

As we came out of the prison through the lodge, I found that the great importance of my guardian was appreciated by the turnkeys, no less than by those whom they held in charge. "Well, Mr. Wemmick," said the turnkey, who kept us between the two studded and spiked lodge gates, and who carefully locked one before he unlocked the other, "what's Mr. Jagers going to do with that water-side murder? Is he going to make it manslaughter, or what's he going to make of it?"

"Why don't you ask him?" returned Wemmick.

"O yes, I dare say!" said the turnkey.

"Now, that's the way with them here, Mr. Pip," remarked Wemmick, turning to me with his post-office elongated. "They don't mind what they ask of me, the subordinate; but you'll never catch 'em asking any questions of my principal."

"Is this young gentleman one of the 'prentices or articled ones of your office?" asked the turnkey, with a grin at Mr. Wemmick's humour.

"There he goes again, you see!" cried Wemmick, "I told you so! Asks another question of the subordinate before his first is dry! Well, supposing Mr. Pip is one of them?"

"Why then," said the turnkey, grinning again, "he knows what Mr. Jagers is."

"Yah!" cried Wemmick, suddenly hitting out at the turnkey in a facetious way, "you're dumb as one of your own keys when you have to do with my principal, you know you are. Let us out, you old fox, or I'll get him to bring an action against you for false imprisonment."

The turnkey laughed, and gave us good day, and stood laughing at us over the spikes of the wicket when we descended the steps into the street.

"Mind you, Mr. Pip," said Wemmick, gravely in my ear, as he took my arm to be more confidential; "I don't know that Mr. Jagers does a better thing than the way in which he keeps himself so high. He's always so high. His constant height is of a piece with his immense abilities. That Colonel durst no more take leave of *him*, than that turnkey durst ask him his intentions respecting a case. Then, between his height and them, he slips in his subordinate,—don't you see?—and so he has 'em, soul and body."

I was very much impressed, and not for the first time, by my guardian's subtlety. To confess the truth, I very

heartily wished, and not for the first time, that I had had some other guardian of minor abilities.

Mr. Wemmick and I parted at the office in Little Britain, where suppliants for Mr. Jaggers's notice were lingering about as usual, and I returned to my watch in the street of the coach-office, with some three hours on hand. I consumed the whole time in thinking how strange it was that I should be encompassed by all this taint of prison and crime; that, in my childhood out on our lonely marshes on a winter evening, I should have first encountered it; that, it should have reappeared on two occasions, starting out like a stain that was faded but not gone; that, it should in this new way pervade my fortune and advancement. While my mind was thus engaged, I thought of the beautiful young Estella, proud and refined, coming towards me, and I thought with absolute abhorrence of the contrast between the jail and her. I wished that Wemmick had not met me, or that I had not yielded to him and gone with him, so that, of all days in the year on this day, I might not have had Newgate in my breath and on my clothes. I beat the prison dust off my feet as I sauntered to and fro, and I shook it out of my dress, and I exhaled its air from my lungs. So contaminated did I feel, remembering who was coming, that the coach came quickly after all, and I was not yet free from the soiling consciousness of Mr. Wemmick's conservatory, when I saw her face at the coach window and her hand waving to me.

What *was* the nameless shadow which again in that one instant had passed?

Chapter XXXIII

In her furred travelling-dress, Estella seemed more delicately beautiful than she had ever seemed yet, even in my eyes. Her manner was more winning than she had cared to let it be to me before, and I thought I saw Miss Havisham's influence in the change.

We stood in the Inn Yard while she pointed out her luggage to me, and when it was all collected I remembered—having forgotten everything but herself in the meanwhile—that I knew nothing of her destination.

"I am going to Richmond," she told me. "Our lesson is, that there are two Richmonds, one in Surrey and one in Yorkshire, and that mine is the Surrey Richmond. The distance is ten miles. I am to have a carriage, and you are to take me. This is my purse, and you are to pay my charges out of it. O, you must take the purse! We have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions. We are not free to follow our own devices, you and I."

As she looked at me in giving me the purse, I hoped there was an inner meaning in her words. She said them slightly, but not with displeasure.

"A carriage will have to be sent for, Estella. Will you rest here a little?"

"Yes, I am to rest here a little, and I am to drink some tea, and you are to take care of me the while."

She drew her arm through mine, as if it must be done, and I requested a waiter who had been staring at the coach like a man who had never seen such a thing in his life, to show us a private sitting-room. Upon that, he pulled out a napkin, as if it were a magic clue without which he couldn't find the way upstairs, and led us to the black hole of the establishment, fitted up with a diminishing mirror (quite a superfluous article, considering the hole's proportions), an anchovy sauce-cruet, and somebody's pattens. On my objecting to this retreat, he took us into another room with a dinner-table for thirty, and in the grate a scorched leaf of a copy-book under a bushel of coal-dust. Having looked at this extinct conflagration and shaken his head, he took my order; which, proving to be merely, "Some tea for the lady," sent him out of the room in a very low state of mind.

I was, and I am, sensible that the air of this chamber, in its strong combination of stable with soup-stock, might have led one to infer that the coaching department was not doing well, and that the enterprising proprietor was boiling down the horses for the refreshment department. Yet the room was all in all to me, Estella being in it. I thought that with her I could have been happy there for life. (I was not at all happy there at the time, observe, and I knew it well.)

"Where are you going to, at Richmond?" I asked Estella.

"I am going to live," said she, "at a great expense, with a lady there, who has the power—or says she has—of taking me about, and introducing me, and showing people to me and showing me to people."

"I suppose you will be glad of variety and admiration?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

She answered so carelessly, that I said, "You speak of yourself as if you were some one else."

"Where did you learn how I speak of others? Come, come," said Estella, smiling delightfully, "you must not expect me to go to school to *you*; I must talk in my own way. How do you thrive with Mr. Pocket?"

"I live quite pleasantly there; at least—" It appeared to me that I was losing a chance.

"At least?" repeated Estella.

"As pleasantly as I could anywhere, away from you."

"You silly boy," said Estella, quite composedly, "how can you talk such nonsense? Your friend Mr. Matthew, I believe, is superior to the rest of his family?"

"Very superior indeed. He is nobody's enemy—"

"Don't add but his own," interposed Estella, "for I hate that class of man. But he really is disinterested, and above small jealousy and spite, I have heard?"

"I am sure I have every reason to say so."

"You have not every reason to say so of the rest of his people," said Estella, nodding at me with an expression of face that was at once grave and rallying, "for they beset Miss Havisham with reports and insinuations to your disadvantage. They watch you, misrepresent you, write letters about you (anonymous sometimes), and you are the torment and the occupation of their lives. You can scarcely realise to yourself the hatred those people feel for you."

"They do me no harm, I hope?"

Instead of answering, Estella burst out laughing. This was very singular to me, and I looked at her in considerable perplexity. When she left off—and she had not laughed languidly, but with real enjoyment—I said, in my diffident way with her,—

"I hope I may suppose that you would not be amused if they did me any harm."

"No, no you may be sure of that," said Estella. "You may be certain that I laugh because they fail. O, those people with Miss Havisham, and the tortures they undergo!" She laughed again, and even now when she had told me why, her laughter was very singular to me, for I could not doubt its being genuine, and yet it seemed too much for the occasion. I thought there must really be something more here than I knew; she saw the thought in my mind, and answered it.

"It is not easy for even you," said Estella, "to know what satisfaction it gives me to see those people thwarted, or what an enjoyable sense of the ridiculous I have when they are made ridiculous. For you were not brought up in that strange house from a mere baby. I was. You had not your little wits sharpened by their intriguing against you, suppressed and defenceless, under the mask of sympathy and pity and what not that is soft and soothing. I had. You did not gradually open your round childish eyes wider and wider to the discovery of that impostor of a woman who calculates her stores of peace of mind for when she wakes up in the night. I did."

It was no laughing matter with Estella now, nor was she summoning these remembrances from any shallow place. I would not have been the cause of that look of hers for all my expectations in a heap.

"Two things I can tell you," said Estella. "First, notwithstanding the proverb that constant dropping will wear away a stone, you may set your mind at rest that these people never will—never would in a hundred years—impair your ground with Miss Havisham, in any particular, great or small. Second, I am beholden to you as the cause of their being so busy and so mean in vain, and there is my hand upon it."

As she gave it to me playfully,—for her darker mood had been but momentary—I held it and put it to my lips. "You ridiculous boy," said Estella, "will you never take

warning? Or do you kiss my hand in the same spirit in which I once let you kiss my cheek?"

"What spirit was that?" said I.

"I must think a moment. A spirit of contempt for the fawners and plotters."

"If I say yes, may I kiss the cheek again?"

"You should have asked before you touched the hand. But, yes, if you like."

I leaned down, and her calm face was like a statue's. "Now," said Estella, gliding away the instant I touched her cheek, "you are to take care that I have some tea, and you are to take me to Richmond."

Her reverting to this tone as if our association were forced upon us, and we were mere puppets, gave me pain; but everything in our intercourse did give me pain. Whatever her tone with me happened to be, I could put no trust in it, and build no hope on it; and yet I went on against trust and against hope. Why repeat it a thousand times? So it always was.

I rang for the tea, and the waiter, reappearing with his magic clue, brought in by degrees some fifty adjuncts to that refreshment, but of tea not a glimpse. A teaboard, cups and saucers, plates, knives and forks (including carvers), spoons (various), salt-cellars, a meek little muffin confined with the utmost precaution under a strong iron cover, Moses in the bulrushes typified by a soft bit of butter in a quantity of parsley, a pale loaf with a powdered head, two proof impressions of the bars of the kitchen fireplace on triangular bits of bread, and ultimately a fat family urn; which the waiter staggered in with, expressing in his countenance burden and suffering. After a prolonged absence at this stage of the entertainment, he at length came back with a casket of precious appearance containing twigs. These I steeped in hot water, and so from the whole of these appliances extracted one cup of I don't know what for Estella.

The bill paid, and the waiter remembered, and the ostler not forgotten, and the chambermaid taken into consideration,—in a word, the whole house bribed into a state of contempt and animosity, and Estella's purse much lightened,—we got into our post-coach and drove away. Turning into Cheapside and rattling up Newgate Street, we were soon under the walls of which I was so ashamed.

"What place is that?" Estella asked me.

I made a foolish pretence of not at first recognising it, and then told her. As she looked at it, and drew in her head again, murmuring, "Wretches!" I would not have confessed to my visit for any consideration.

"Mr. Jaggers," said I, by way of putting it neatly on somebody else, "has the reputation of being more in the secrets of that dismal place than any man in London."

"He is more in the secrets of every place, I think," said Estella, in a low voice.

"You have been accustomed to see him often, I suppose?"

"I have been accustomed to see him at uncertain intervals, ever since I can remember. But I know him no better now, than I did before I could speak plainly. What is your own experience of him? Do you advance with him?"

"Once habituated to his distrustful manner," said I, "I have done very well."

"Are you intimate?"

"I have dined with him at his private house."

"I fancy," said Estella, shrinking "that must be a curious place."

"It is a curious place."

I should have been chary of discussing my guardian too freely even with her; but I should have gone on with the subject so far as to describe the dinner in Gerrard Street, if we had not then come into a sudden glare of gas. It seemed, while it lasted, to be all alight and alive with that inexplicable feeling I had had before; and when we were out of it, I was as much dazed for a few moments as if I had been in lightning.

So we fell into other talk, and it was principally about the way by which we were travelling, and about what parts of London lay on this side of it, and what on that. The great city was almost new to her, she told me, for she had never left Miss Havisham's neighbourhood until she had gone to France, and she had merely passed through London then in going and returning. I asked her if my guardian had any charge of her while she remained here? To that she emphatically said "God forbid!" and no more.

It was impossible for me to avoid seeing that she cared to attract me; that she made herself winning, and would have won me even if the task had needed pains. Yet this made me none the happier, for even if she had not taken that tone of our being disposed of by others, I should have felt that she held my heart in her hand because she wilfully chose to do it, and not because it would have wrung any tenderness in her to crush it and throw it away.

When we passed through Hammersmith, I showed her where Mr. Matthew Pocket lived, and said it was no great way from Richmond, and that I hoped I should see her sometimes.

"O yes, you are to see me; you are to come when you think proper; you are to be mentioned to the family; indeed you are already mentioned."

I inquired was it a large household she was going to be a member of?

"No; there are only two; mother and daughter. The mother is a lady of some station, though not averse to increasing her income."

"I wonder Miss Havisham could part with you again so soon."

"It is a part of Miss Havisham's plans for me, Pip," said Estella, with a sigh, as if she were tired; "I am to write to her constantly and see her regularly and report how I go on,—I and the jewels,—for they are nearly all mine now."

It was the first time she had ever called me by my name. Of course she did so purposely, and knew that I should treasure it up.

We came to Richmond all too soon, and our destination there was a house by the green,—a staid old house, where hoops and powder and patches, embroidered coats, rolled stockings, ruffles and swords, had had their court days many a time. Some ancient trees before the house were still cut into fashions as formal and unnatural as the hoops and wigs and stiff skirts; but their own allotted places in the great procession of the dead were not far off, and they would soon drop into them and go the silent way of the rest.

A bell with an old voice—which I dare say in its time had often said to the house, Here is the green farthingale, Here is the diamond-hilted sword, Here are the shoes with red heels and the blue solitaire—sounded gravely in the moonlight, and two cherry-coloured maids came fluttering out to receive Estella. The doorway soon absorbed her boxes, and she gave me her hand and a smile, and said good-night, and was absorbed likewise. And still I stood looking at the house, thinking how happy I should be if I lived there with her, and knowing that I never was happy with her, but always miserable.

I got into the carriage to be taken back to Hammersmith, and I got in with a bad heart-ache, and I got out with a worse heart-ache. At our own door, I found little Jane Pocket coming home from a little party escorted by her little lover; and I envied her little lover, in spite of his being subject to Flopson.

Mr. Pocket was out lecturing; for, he was a most delightful lecturer on domestic economy, and his treatises on the management of children and servants were considered the very best text-books on those themes. But Mrs. Pocket was at home, and was in a little difficulty, on account of the baby's having been accommodated with a needle-case to keep him quiet during the unaccountable absence (with a relative in the Foot Guards) of Millers. And more needles were missing than it could be regarded as quite wholesome for a patient of such tender years either to apply externally or to take as a tonic.

Mr. Pocket being justly celebrated for giving most excellent practical advice, and for having a clear and sound perception of things and a highly judicious mind, I had some notion in my heart-ache of begging him to accept my confidence. But happening to look up at Mrs. Pocket as she sat reading her book of dignities after prescribing Bed as a sovereign remedy for baby, I thought—Well—No, I wouldn't.

Chapter XXXIV

As I had grown accustomed to my expectations, I had insensibly begun to notice their effect upon myself and those around me. Their influence on my own character I disguised from my recognition as much as possible, but I knew very well that it was not all good. I lived in a state of chronic uneasiness respecting my behaviour to Joe. My conscience was not by any means comfortable about Biddy. When I woke up in the night,—like Camilla,—I used to think, with a weariness on my spirits, that I should have been happier and better if I had never seen Miss Havisham's face, and had risen to manhood content to be partners with Joe in the honest old forge. Many a time of an evening, when I sat alone looking at the fire, I thought, after all there was no fire like the forge fire and the kitchen fire at home.

Yet Estella was so inseparable from all my restlessness and disquiet of mind, that I really fell into confusion as to the limits of my own part in its production. That is to say, supposing I had had no expectations, and yet had had Estella to think of, I could not make out to my satisfaction that I should have done much better. Now, concerning the influence of my position on others, I was in no such difficulty, and so I perceived—though dimly enough perhaps—that it was not beneficial to anybody, and, above all, that it was not beneficial to Herbert. My lavish habits led his easy nature into expenses that he could not afford, corrupted the simplicity of his life, and disturbed his peace with anxieties and regrets. I was not at all remorseful for having unwittingly set those other branches of the Pocket family to the poor arts they practised; because such littlenesses were their natural bent, and would have been evoked by anybody else, if I had left them slumbering. But Herbert's was a very different case, and it often caused me a twinge to think that I had done him evil service in crowding his sparsely furnished chambers with incongruous upholstery work, and placing the Canary-breasted Avenger at his disposal.

So now, as an infallible way of making little ease great ease, I began to contract a quantity of debt. I could hardly begin but Herbert must begin too, so he soon followed. At Startop's suggestion, we put ourselves down for election into a club called The Finches of the Grove: the object of which institution I have never divined, if it were not that the members should dine expensively once a fortnight, to quarrel among themselves as much as possible after dinner, and to cause six waiters to get drunk on the stairs. I know that these gratifying social ends were so invariably accomplished, that Herbert and I understood nothing else to be referred to in the first standing toast of the society: which ran "Gentlemen, may the present promotion of good feeling ever reign predominant among the Finches of the Grove."

The Finches spent their money foolishly (the Hotel we dined at was in Covent Garden), and the first Finch I saw when I had the honour of joining the Grove was Bentley Drummle, at that time floundering about town in a cab of his own, and doing a great deal of damage to the posts at the street corners. Occasionally, he shot himself out of his equipage headforemost over the apron; and I saw him on one occasion deliver himself at the door of the Grove in this unintentional way—like coals. But here I anticipate a little, for I was not a Finch, and could not be, according to the sacred laws of the society, until I came of age.

In my confidence in my own resources, I would willingly have taken Herbert's expenses on myself; but Herbert was proud, and I could make no such proposal to him. So he got into difficulties in every direction, and continued to look about him. When we gradually fell into keeping late hours and late company, I noticed that he looked about him with a desponding eye at breakfast-time; that he began to look about him more hopefully about midday; that he drooped when he came into dinner; that he seemed to descry Capital in the distance, rather clearly, after dinner; that he all but realised Capital towards midnight; and that at about two o'clock in the morning, he became so deeply despondent again as to talk of buying a rifle and going to America, with a general purpose of compelling buffaloes to make his fortune.

I was usually at Hammersmith about half the week, and when I was at Hammersmith I haunted Richmond, whereof separately by and by. Herbert would often come to Hammersmith when I was there, and I think at those seasons his father would occasionally have some passing perception that the opening he was looking for, had not appeared yet. But in the general tumbling up of the family, his tumbling out in life somewhere, was a thing to transact itself somehow. In the meantime Mr. Pocket grew greyer, and tried oftener to lift himself out of his perplexities by the hair. While Mrs. Pocket tripped up the family with her footstool, read her book of dignities, lost her pocket-handkerchief, told us about her grandpapa, and taught the young idea how to shoot, by shooting it into bed whenever it attracted her notice.

As I am now generalising a period of my life with the object of clearing my way before me, I can scarcely do so better than by at once completing the description of our usual manners and customs at Barnard's Inn.

We spent as much money as we could, and got as little for it as people could make up their minds to give us. We were always more or less miserable, and most of our acquaintance were in the same condition. There was a gay fiction among us that we were constantly enjoying ourselves, and a skeleton truth that we never did. To the best of my belief, our case was in the last aspect a rather common one.

Every morning, with an air ever new, Herbert went into the City to look about him. I often paid him a visit in the dark back-room in which he consorted with an ink-jar, a hat-peg, a coal-box, a string-box, an almanac, a desk and stool, and a ruler; and I do not remember that I ever saw him do anything else but look about him. If we all did what we undertake to do, as faithfully as Herbert did, we might live in a Republic of the Virtues. He had nothing else to do, poor fellow, except at a certain hour of every afternoon to “go to Lloyd’s”—in observance of a ceremony of seeing his principal, I think. He never did anything else in connection with Lloyd’s that I could find out, except come back again. When he felt his case unusually serious, and that he positively must find an opening, he would go on ’Change at a busy time, and walk in and out, in a kind of gloomy country dance figure, among the assembled magnates. “For,” says Herbert to me, coming home to dinner on one of those special occasions, “I find the truth to be, Handel, that an opening won’t come to one, but one must go to it,—so I have been.”

If we had been less attached to one another, I think we must have hated one another regularly every morning. I detested the chambers beyond expression at that period of repentance, and could not endure the sight of the Avenger’s livery; which had a more expensive and a less remunerative appearance than at any other time in the four-and-twenty hours. As we got more and more into debt, breakfast became a hollower and hollower form, and, being on one occasion at breakfast-time threatened (by letter) with legal proceedings, “not unwholly unconnected,” as my local paper might put it, “with jewelry,” I went so far as to seize the Avenger by his blue collar and shake him off his feet,—so that he was actually in the air, like a booted Cupid,—for presuming to suppose that we wanted a roll.

At certain times—meaning at uncertain times, for they depended on our humour—I would say to Herbert, as if it were a remarkable discovery,—

“My dear Herbert, we are getting on badly.”

“My dear Handel,” Herbert would say to me, in all sincerity, “if you will believe me, those very words were on my lips, by a strange coincidence.”

“Then, Herbert,” I would respond, “let us look into our affairs.”

We always derived profound satisfaction from making an appointment for this purpose. I always thought this was business, this was the way to confront the thing, this was the way to take the foe by the throat. And I know Herbert thought so too.

We ordered something rather special for dinner, with a bottle of something similarly out of the common way, in order that our minds might be fortified for the occasion, and we might come well up to the mark. Dinner over, we

produced a bundle of pens, a copious supply of ink, and a goodly show of writing and blotting paper. For there was something very comfortable in having plenty of stationery.

I would then take a sheet of paper, and write across the top of it, in a neat hand, the heading, “Memorandum of Pip’s debts”; with Barnard’s Inn and the date very carefully added. Herbert would also take a sheet of paper, and write across it with similar formalities, “Memorandum of Herbert’s debts.”

Each of us would then refer to a confused heap of papers at his side, which had been thrown into drawers, worn into holes in pockets, half burnt in lighting candles, stuck for weeks into the looking-glass, and otherwise damaged. The sound of our pens going refreshed us exceedingly, insomuch that I sometimes found it difficult to distinguish between this edifying business proceeding and actually paying the money. In point of meritorious character, the two things seemed about equal.

When we had written a little while, I would ask Herbert how he got on? Herbert probably would have been scratching his head in a most rueful manner at the sight of his accumulating figures.

“They are mounting up, Handel,” Herbert would say; “upon my life, they are mounting up.”

“Be firm, Herbert,” I would retort, plying my own pen with great assiduity. “Look the thing in the face. Look into your affairs. Stare them out of countenance.”

“So I would, Handel, only they are staring *me* out of countenance.”

However, my determined manner would have its effect, and Herbert would fall to work again. After a time he would give up once more, on the plea that he had not got Cobbs’s bill, or Lobbs’s, or Nobbs’s, as the case might be.

“Then, Herbert, estimate; estimate it in round numbers, and put it down.”

“What a fellow of resource you are!” my friend would reply, with admiration. “Really your business powers are very remarkable.”

I thought so too. I established with myself, on these occasions, the reputation of a first-rate man of business,—prompt, decisive, energetic, clear, cool-headed. When I had got all my responsibilities down upon my list, I compared each with the bill, and ticked it off. My self-approval when I ticked an entry was quite a luxurious sensation. When I had no more ticks to make, I folded all my bills up uniformly, docketed each on the back, and tied the whole into a symmetrical bundle. Then I did the same for Herbert (who modestly said he had not my administrative genius), and felt that I had brought his affairs into a focus for him.

My business habits had one other bright feature, which I called "leaving a Margin." For example; supposing Herbert's debts to be one hundred and sixty-four pounds four-and-twopence, I would say, "Leave a margin, and put them down at two hundred." Or, supposing my own to be four times as much, I would leave a margin, and put them down at seven hundred. I had the highest opinion of the wisdom of this same Margin, but I am bound to acknowledge that on looking back, I deem it to have been an expensive device. For, we always ran into new debt immediately, to the full extent of the margin, and sometimes, in the sense of freedom and solvency it imparted, got pretty far on into another margin.

But there was a calm, a rest, a virtuous hush, consequent on these examinations of our affairs that gave me, for the time, an admirable opinion of myself. Soothed by my exertions, my method, and Herbert's compliments, I would sit with his symmetrical bundle and my own on the table before me among the stationery, and feel like a Bank of some sort, rather than a private individual.

We shut our outer door on these solemn occasions, in order that we might not be interrupted. I had fallen into my serene state one evening, when we heard a letter dropped through the slit in the said door, and fall on the ground. "It's for you, Handel," said Herbert, going out and coming back with it, "and I hope there is nothing the matter." This was in allusion to its heavy black seal and border.

The letter was signed Trabb & Co., and its contents were simply, that I was an honoured sir, and that they begged to inform me that Mrs. J. Gargery had departed this life on Monday last at twenty minutes past six in the evening, and that my attendance was requested at the interment on Monday next at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Chapter XXXV

It was the first time that a grave had opened in my road of life, and the gap it made in the smooth ground was wonderful. The figure of my sister in her chair by the kitchen fire, haunted me night and day. That the place could possibly be, without her, was something my mind seemed unable to compass; and whereas she had seldom or never been in my thoughts of late, I had now the strangest ideas that she was coming towards me in the street, or that she would presently knock at the door. In my rooms too, with which she had never been at all associated, there was at once the blankness of death and a perpetual suggestion of the sound of her voice or the turn of her face or figure, as if she were still alive and had been often there.

Whatever my fortunes might have been, I could scarcely have recalled my sister with much tenderness. But I suppose there is a shock of regret which may exist

without much tenderness. Under its influence (and perhaps to make up for the want of the softer feeling) I was seized with a violent indignation against the assailant from whom she had suffered so much; and I felt that on sufficient proof I could have revengefully pursued Orlick, or any one else, to the last extremity.

Having written to Joe, to offer him consolation, and to assure him that I would come to the funeral, I passed the intermediate days in the curious state of mind I have glanced at. I went down early in the morning, and alighted at the Blue Boar in good time to walk over to the forge.

It was fine summer weather again, and, as I walked along, the times when I was a little helpless creature, and my sister did not spare me, vividly returned. But they returned with a gentle tone upon them that softened even the edge of Tickler. For now, the very breath of the beans and clover whispered to my heart that the day must come when it would be well for my memory that others walking in the sunshine should be softened as they thought of me.

At last I came within sight of the house, and saw that Trabb and Co. had put in a funereal execution and taken possession. Two dismally absurd persons, each ostentatiously exhibiting a crutch done up in a black bandage,—as if that instrument could possibly communicate any comfort to anybody,—were posted at the front door; and in one of them I recognised a postboy discharged from the Boar for turning a young couple into a sawpit on their bridal morning, in consequence of intoxication rendering it necessary for him to ride his horse clasped round the neck with both arms. All the children of the village, and most of the women, were admiring these sable warders and the closed windows of the house and forge; and as I came up, one of the two warders (the postboy) knocked at the door,—implying that I was far too much exhausted by grief to have strength remaining to knock for myself.

Another sable warder (a carpenter, who had once eaten two geese for a wager) opened the door, and showed me into the best parlour. Here, Mr. Trabb had taken unto himself the best table, and had got all the leaves up, and was holding a kind of black Bazaar, with the aid of a quantity of black pins. At the moment of my arrival, he had just finished putting somebody's hat into black long-clothes, like an African baby; so he held out his hand for mine. But I, misled by the action, and confused by the occasion, shook hands with him with every testimony of warm affection.

Poor dear Joe, entangled in a little black cloak tied in a large bow under his chin, was seated apart at the upper end of the room; where, as chief mourner, he had evidently been stationed by Trabb. When I bent down and said to

him, "Dear Joe, how are you?" he said, "Pip, old chap, you knowed her when she were a fine figure of a—" and clasped my hand and said no more.

Biddy, looking very neat and modest in her black dress, went quietly here and there, and was very helpful. When I had spoken to Biddy, as I thought it not a time for talking I went and sat down near Joe, and there began to wonder in what part of the house it—she—my sister—was. The air of the parlour being faint with the smell of sweet-cake, I looked about for the table of refreshments; it was scarcely visible until one had got accustomed to the gloom, but there was a cut-up plum cake upon it, and there were cut-up oranges, and sandwiches, and biscuits, and two decanters that I knew very well as ornaments, but had never seen used in all my life; one full of port, and one of sherry. Standing at this table, I became conscious of the servile Pumblechook in a black cloak and several yards of hatband, who was alternately stuffing himself, and making obsequious movements to catch my attention. The moment he succeeded, he came over to me (breathing sherry and crumbs), and said in a subdued voice, "May I, dear sir?" and did. I then descried Mr. and Mrs. Hubble; the last-named in a decent speechless paroxysm in a corner. We were all going to "follow," and were all in course of being tied up separately (by Trabb) into ridiculous bundles.

"Which I meanter say, Pip," Joe whispered me, as we were being what Mr. Trabb called "formed" in the parlour, two and two,—and it was dreadfully like a preparation for some grim kind of dance; "which I meanter say, sir, as I would in preference have carried her to the church myself, along with three or four friendly ones wot come to it with willing harts and arms, but it were considered wot the neighbours would look down on such and would be of opinions as it were wanting in respect."

"Pocket-handkerchiefs out, all!" cried Mr. Trabb at this point, in a depressed business-like voice. "Pocket-handkerchiefs out! We are ready!"

So we all put our pocket-handkerchiefs to our faces, as if our noses were bleeding, and filed out two and two; Joe and I; Biddy and Pumblechook; Mr. and Mrs. Hubble. The remains of my poor sister had been brought round by the kitchen door, and, it being a point of Undertaking ceremony that the six bearers must be stifled and blinded under a horrible black velvet housing with a white border, the whole looked like a blind monster with twelve human legs, shuffling and blundering along, under the guidance of two keepers,—the postboy and his comrade.

The neighbourhood, however, highly approved of these arrangements, and we were much admired as we went through the village; the more youthful and vigorous part of the community making dashes now and then to cut us

off, and lying in wait to intercept us at points of vantage. At such times the more exuberant among them called out in an excited manner on our emergence round some corner of expectancy, "*Here they come!*" "*Here they are!*" and we were all but cheered. In this progress I was much annoyed by the abject Pumblechook, who, being behind me, persisted all the way as a delicate attention in arranging my streaming hatband, and smoothing my cloak. My thoughts were further distracted by the excessive pride of Mr. and Mrs. Hubble, who were surpassingly conceited and vainglorious in being members of so distinguished a procession.

And now the range of marshes lay clear before us, with the sails of the ships on the river growing out of it; and we went into the churchyard, close to the graves of my unknown parents, Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and Also Georgiana, Wife of the Above. And there, my sister was laid quietly in the earth, while the larks sang high above it, and the light wind strewed it with beautiful shadows of clouds and trees.

Of the conduct of the worldly minded Pumblechook while this was doing, I desire to say no more than it was all addressed to me; and that even when those noble passages were read which remind humanity how it brought nothing into the world and can take nothing out, and how it fleeth like a shadow and never continueth long in one stay, I heard him cough a reservation of the case of a young gentleman who came unexpectedly into large property. When we got back, he had the hardihood to tell me that he wished my sister could have known I had done her so much honour, and to hint that she would have considered it reasonably purchased at the price of her death. After that, he drank all the rest of the sherry, and Mr. Hubble drank the port, and the two talked (which I have since observed to be customary in such cases) as if they were of quite another race from the deceased, and were notoriously immortal. Finally, he went away with Mr. and Mrs. Hubble,—to make an evening of it, I felt sure, and to tell the Jolly Bargemen that he was the founder of my fortunes and my earliest benefactor.

When they were all gone, and when Trabb and his men—but not his Boy; I looked for him—had crammed their mummery into bags, and were gone too, the house felt wholesomer. Soon afterwards, Biddy, Joe, and I, had a cold dinner together; but we dined in the best parlour, not in the old kitchen, and Joe was so exceedingly particular what he did with his knife and fork and the saltcellar and what not, that there was great restraint upon us. But after dinner, when I made him take his pipe, and when I had loitered with him about the forge, and when we sat down together on the great block of stone outside it, we got on better. I noticed that after the funeral Joe changed his clothes so far, as to make a compromise between his Sunday dress and working dress; in which the dear fellow looked natural, and like the Man he was.

He was very much pleased by my asking if I might sleep in my own little room, and I was pleased too; for I felt that I had done rather a great thing in making the request. When the shadows of evening were closing in, I took an opportunity of getting into the garden with Biddy for a little talk.

"Biddy," said I, "I think you might have written to me about these sad matters."

"Do you, Mr. Pip?" said Biddy. "I should have written if I had thought that."

"Don't suppose that I mean to be unkind, Biddy, when I say I consider that you ought to have thought that."

"Do you, Mr. Pip?"

She was so quiet, and had such an orderly, good, and pretty way with her, that I did not like the thought of making her cry again. After looking a little at her downcast eyes as she walked beside me, I gave up that point.

"I suppose it will be difficult for you to remain here now, Biddy dear?"

"Oh! I can't do so, Mr. Pip," said Biddy, in a tone of regret but still of quiet conviction. "I have been speaking to Mrs. Hubble, and I am going to her to-morrow. I hope we shall be able to take some care of Mr. Gargery, together, until he settles down."

"How are you going to live, Biddy? If you want any more—"

"How am I going to live?" repeated Biddy, striking in, with a momentary flush upon her face. "I'll tell you, Mr. Pip. I am going to try to get the place of mistress in the new school nearly finished here. I can be well recommended by all the neighbours, and I hope I can be industrious and patient, and teach myself while I teach others. You know, Mr. Pip," pursued Biddy, with a smile, as she raised her eyes to my face, "the new schools are not like the old, but I learnt a good deal from you after that time, and have had time since then to improve."

"I think you would always improve, Biddy, under any circumstances."

"Ah! Except in my bad side of human nature," murmured Biddy.

It was not so much a reproach as an irresistible thinking aloud. Well! I thought I would give up that point too. So, I walked a little further with Biddy, looking silently at her downcast eyes.

"I have not heard the particulars of my sister's death, Biddy."

"They are very slight, poor thing. She had been in one of her bad states—though they had got better of

late, rather than worse—for four days, when she came out of it in the evening, just at tea-time, and said quite

plainly, 'Joe.' As she had never said any word for a long while, I ran and fetched in Mr. Gargery from the forge. She made signs to me that she wanted him to sit down close to her, and wanted me to put her arms round his neck. So I put them round his neck, and she laid her head down on his shoulder quite content and satisfied. And so she presently said 'Joe' again, and once 'Pardon,' and once 'Pip.' And so she never lifted her head up any more, and it was just an hour later when we laid it down on her own bed, because we found she was gone."

Biddy cried; the darkening garden, and the lane, and the stars that were coming out, were blurred in my own sight.

"Nothing was ever discovered, Biddy?"

"Nothing."

"Do you know what is become of Orlick?"

"I should think from the colour of his clothes that he is working in the quarries."

"Of course you have seen him then?—Why are you looking at that dark tree in the lane?"

"I saw him there, on the night she died."

"That was not the last time either, Biddy?"

"No; I have seen him there, since we have been walking here.—It is of no use," said Biddy, laying her hand upon my arm, as I was for running out, "you know I would not deceive you; he was not there a minute, and he is gone."

It revived my utmost indignation to find that she was still pursued by this fellow, and I felt inveterate against him. I told her so, and told her that I would spend any money or take any pains to drive him out of that country. By degrees she led me into more temperate talk, and she told me how Joe loved me, and how Joe never complained of anything,—she didn't say, of me; she had no need; I knew what she meant,—but ever did his duty in his way of life, with a strong hand, a quiet tongue, and a gentle heart.

"Indeed, it would be hard to say too much for him," said I; "and Biddy, we must often speak of these things, for of course I shall be often down here now. I am not going to leave poor Joe alone."

Biddy said never a single word.

"Biddy, don't you hear me?"

"Yes, Mr. Pip."

"Not to mention your calling me Mr. Pip,—which appears to me to be in bad taste, Biddy,—what do you mean?"

"What do I mean?" asked Biddy, timidly.

"Biddy," said I, in a virtuously self-asserting manner, "I must request to know what you mean by this?"

"By this?" said Biddy.

"Now, don't echo," I retorted. "You used not to echo, Biddy."

"Used not!" said Biddy. "O Mr. Pip! Used!"

Well! I rather thought I would give up that point too. After another silent turn in the garden, I fell back on the main position.

"Biddy," said I, "I made a remark respecting my coming down here often, to see Joe, which you received with a marked silence. Have the goodness, Biddy, to tell me why."

"Are you quite sure, then, that you WILL come to see him often?" asked Biddy, stopping in the narrow garden walk, and looking at me under the stars with a clear and honest eye.

"O dear me!" said I, as if I found myself compelled to give up Biddy in despair. "This really is a very bad side of human nature! Don't say any more, if you please, Biddy. This shocks me very much."

For which cogent reason I kept Biddy at a distance during supper, and when I went up to my own old little room, took as stately a leave of her as I could, in my murmuring soul, deem reconcilable with the churchyard and the event of the day. As often as I was restless in the night, and that was every quarter of an hour, I reflected what an unkindness, what an injury, what an injustice, Biddy had done me.

Early in the morning I was to go. Early in the morning I was out, and looking in, unseen, at one of the wooden windows of the forge. There I stood, for minutes, looking at Joe, already at work with a glow of health and strength upon his face that made it show as if the bright sun of the life in store for him were shining on it.

"Good-bye, dear Joe!—No, don't wipe it off—for God's sake, give me your blackened hand!—I shall be down soon and often."

"Never too soon, sir," said Joe, "and never too often, Pip!"

Biddy was waiting for me at the kitchen door, with a mug of new milk and a crust of bread. "Biddy," said I, when I gave her my hand at parting, "I am not angry, but I am hurt."

"No, don't be hurt," she pleaded quite pathetically; "let only me be hurt, if I have been ungenerous."

Once more, the mists were rising as I walked away. If they disclosed to me, as I suspect they did, that I should *not* come back, and that Biddy was quite right, all I can say is,—they were quite right too.



Chapter XXXVI

Herbert and I went on from bad to worse, in the way of increasing our debts, looking into our affairs, leaving Margins, and the like exemplary transactions; and Time went on, whether or no, as he has a way of doing; and I came of age,—in fulfillment of Herbert's prediction, that I should do so before I knew where I was.

Herbert himself had come of age eight months before me. As he had nothing else than his majority to come into, the event did not make a profound sensation in Barnard's Inn. But we had looked forward to my one-and-twentieth birthday, with a crowd of speculations and anticipations, for we had both considered that my guardian could hardly help saying something definite on that occasion.

I had taken care to have it well understood in Little Britain when my birthday was. On the day before it, I received an official note from Wemmick, informing me that Mr. Jaggers would be glad if I would call upon him at five in the afternoon of the auspicious day. This convinced us that something great was to happen, and threw me into an unusual flutter when I repaired to my guardian's office, a model of punctuality.

In the outer office Wemmick offered me his congratulations, and incidentally rubbed the side of his nose with a folded piece of tissue-paper that I liked the look of. But he said nothing respecting it, and motioned me with a nod into my guardian's room. It was November, and my guardian was standing before his fire leaning his back against the chimney-piece, with his hands under his coattails.

"Well, Pip," said he, "I must call you Mr. Pip to-day. Congratulations, Mr. Pip."

We shook hands,—he was always a remarkably short shaker,—and I thanked him.

"Take a chair, Mr. Pip," said my guardian.

As I sat down, and he preserved his attitude and bent his brows at his boots, I felt at a disadvantage, which reminded me of that old time when I had been put upon a tombstone. The two ghastly casts on the shelf were not far from him, and their expression was as if they were making a stupid apoplectic attempt to attend to the conversation.

"Now my young friend," my guardian began, as if I were a witness in the box, "I am going to have a word or two with you."

"If you please, sir."

"What do you suppose," said Mr. Jaggers, bending forward to look at the ground, and then throwing his head back to look at the ceiling,— "what do you suppose you are living at the rate of?"

"At the rate of, sir?"

"At," repeated Mr. Jaggers, still looking at the ceiling, "the—rate—of?" And then looked all round the room, and paused with his pocket-handkerchief in his hand, half-way to his nose.

I had looked into my affairs so often, that I had thoroughly destroyed any slight notion I might ever have had of their bearings. Reluctantly, I confessed myself quite unable to answer the question. This reply seemed agreeable to Mr. Jaggers, who said, "I thought so!" and blew his nose with an air of satisfaction.

"Now, I have asked *you* a question, my friend," said Mr. Jaggers. "Have you anything to ask *me*?"

"Of course it would be a great relief to me to ask you several questions, sir; but I remember your prohibition."

"Ask one," said Mr. Jaggers.

"Is my benefactor to be made known to me to-day?"

"No. Ask another."

"Is that confidence to be imparted to me soon?"

"Waive that, a moment," said Mr. Jaggers, "and ask another."

I looked about me, but there appeared to be now no possible escape from the inquiry, "Have-I—anything to receive, sir?" On that, Mr. Jaggers said, triumphantly, "I thought we should come to it!" and called to Wemmick to give him that piece of paper. Wemmick appeared, handed it in, and disappeared.

"Now, Mr. Pip," said Mr. Jaggers, "attend, if you please. You have been drawing pretty freely here; your name occurs pretty often in Wemmick's cash-book; but you are in debt, of course?"

"I am afraid I must say yes, sir."

"You know you must say yes; don't you?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Yes, sir."

"I don't ask you what you owe, because you don't know; and if you did know, you wouldn't tell me; you would say less. Yes, yes, my friend," cried Mr. Jaggers, waving his forefinger to stop me as I made a show of protesting: "it's likely enough that you think you wouldn't, but you would. You'll excuse me, but I know better than you. Now, take this piece of paper in your hand. You have got it? Very good. Now, unfold it and tell me what it is."

"This is a bank-note," said I, "for five hundred pounds."

"That is a bank-note," repeated Mr. Jaggers, "for five hundred pounds. And a very handsome sum of money too, I think. You consider it so?"

"How could I do otherwise?"

"Ah! But answer the question," said Mr. Jaggers.

"Undoubtedly."

"You consider it, undoubtedly, a handsome sum of money. Now, that handsome sum of money, Pip, is your own. It is a present to you on this day, in earnest of your expectations. And at the rate of that handsome sum of money per annum, and at no higher rate, you are to live until the donor of the whole appears. That is to say, you will now take your money affairs entirely into your own hands, and you will draw from Wemmick one hundred and twenty-five pounds per quarter, until you are in communication with the fountain-head, and no longer with the mere agent. As I have told you before, I am the mere agent. I execute my instructions, and I am paid for doing so. I think them injudicious, but I am not paid for giving any opinion on their merits."

I was beginning to express my gratitude to my benefactor for the great liberality with which I was treated, when Mr. Jaggers stopped me. "I am not paid, Pip," said he, coolly, "to carry your words to any one;" and then gathered up his coat-tails, as he had gathered up the subject, and stood frowning at his boots as if he suspected them of designs against him.

After a pause, I hinted,—

"There was a question just now, Mr. Jaggers, which you desired me to waive for a moment. I hope I am doing nothing wrong in asking it again?"

"What is it?" said he.

I might have known that he would never help me out; but it took me aback to have to shape the question afresh, as if it were quite new. "Is it likely," I said, after hesitating, "that my patron, the fountain-head you have spoken of, Mr. Jaggers, will soon—" there I delicately stopped.

"Will soon what?" asked Mr. Jaggers. "That's no question as it stands, you know."

"Will soon come to London," said I, after casting about for a precise form of words, "or summon me anywhere else?"

"Now, here," replied Mr. Jaggers, fixing me for the first time with his dark deep-set eyes, "we must revert to the evening when we first encountered one another in your village. What did I tell you then, Pip?"

"You told me, Mr. Jaggers, that it might be years hence when that person appeared."

"Just so," said Mr. Jaggers, "that's my answer."

As we looked full at one another, I felt my breath come quicker in my strong desire to get something out of him. And as I felt that it came quicker, and as I felt that he saw that it came quicker, I felt that I had less chance than ever of getting anything out of him.

"Do you suppose it will still be years hence, Mr. Jaggers?"

Mr. Jaggers shook his head,—not in negating the question, but in altogether negating the notion that he could anyhow be got to answer it,—and the two horrible casts of the twitched faces looked, when my eyes strayed up to them, as if they had come to a crisis in their suspended attention, and were going to sneeze.

“Come!” said Mr. Jaggers, warming the backs of his legs with the backs of his warmed hands, “I’ll be plain with you, my friend Pip. That’s a question I must not be asked. You’ll understand that better, when I tell you it’s a question that might compromise *me*. Come! I’ll go a little further with you; I’ll say something more.”

He bent down so low to frown at his boots, that he was able to rub the calves of his legs in the pause he made.

“When that person discloses,” said Mr. Jaggers, straightening himself, “you and that person will settle your own affairs. When that person discloses, my part in this business will cease and determine. When that person discloses, it will not be necessary for me to know anything about it. And that’s all I have got to say.”

We looked at one another until I withdrew my eyes, and looked thoughtfully at the floor. From this last speech I derived the notion that Miss Havisham, for some reason or no reason, had not taken him into her confidence as to her designing me for Estella; that he resented this, and felt a jealousy about it; or that he really did object to that scheme, and would have nothing to do with it. When I raised my eyes again, I found that he had been shrewdly looking at me all the time, and was doing so still.

“If that is all you have to say, sir,” I remarked, “there can be nothing left for me to say.”

He nodded assent, and pulled out his thief-dreaded watch, and asked me where I was going to dine? I replied at my own chambers, with Herbert. As a necessary sequence, I asked him if he would favour us with his company, and he promptly accepted the invitation. But he insisted on walking home with me, in order that I might make no extra preparation for him, and first he had a letter or two to write, and (of course) had his hands to wash. So I said I would go into the outer office and talk to Wemmick.

The fact was, that when the five hundred pounds had come into my pocket, a thought had come into my head which had been often there before; and it appeared to me that Wemmick was a good person to advise with concerning such thought.

He had already locked up his safe, and made preparations for going home. He had left his desk, brought out his two greasy office candlesticks and stood them in line with the snuffers on a slab near the door, ready to be extinguished; he had raked his fire low, put his hat and great-coat ready, and was beating himself all over the chest with his safe-key, as an athletic exercise after business.

“Mr. Wemmick,” said I, “I want to ask your opinion. I am very desirous to serve a friend.”

Wemmick tightened his post-office and shook his head, as if his opinion were dead against any fatal weakness of that sort.

“This friend,” I pursued, “is trying to get on in commercial life, but has no money, and finds it difficult and disheartening to make a beginning. Now I want somehow to help him to a beginning.”

“With money down?” said Wemmick, in a tone drier than any sawdust.

“With *some* money down,” I replied, for an uneasy remembrance shot across me of that symmetrical bundle of papers at home—“with *some* money down, and perhaps some anticipation of my expectations.”

“Mr. Pip,” said Wemmick, “I should like just to run over with you on my fingers, if you please, the names of the various bridges up as high as Chelsea Reach. Let’s see; there’s London, one; Southwark, two; Blackfriars, three; Waterloo, four; Westminster, five; Vauxhall, six.” He had checked off each bridge in its turn, with the handle of his safe-key on the palm of his hand. “There’s as many as six, you see, to choose from.”

“I don’t understand you,” said I.

“Choose your bridge, Mr. Pip,” returned Wemmick, “and take a walk upon your bridge, and pitch your money into the Thames over the centre arch of your bridge, and you know the end of it. Serve a friend with it, and you may know the end of it too,—but it’s a less pleasant and profitable end.”

I could have posted a newspaper in his mouth, he made it so wide after saying this.

“This is very discouraging,” said I.

“Meant to be so,” said Wemmick.

“Then is it your opinion,” I inquired, with some little indignation, “that a man should never—”

“—Invest portable property in a friend?” said Wemmick. “Certainly he should not. Unless he wants to get rid of the friend,—and then it becomes a question how much portable property it may be worth to get rid of him.”

“And that,” said I, “is your deliberate opinion, Mr. Wemmick?”

“That,” he returned, “is my deliberate opinion in this office.”

“Ah!” said I, pressing him, for I thought I saw him near a loophole here; “but would that be your opinion at Walworth?”

“Mr. Pip,” he replied, with gravity, “Walworth is one place, and this office is another. Much as the Aged is one person, and Mr. Jaggers is another. They must not be confounded together. My Walworth sentiments must be taken at Walworth; none but my official sentiments can be taken in this office.”

“Very well,” said I, much relieved, “then I shall look you up at Walworth, you may depend upon it.”

“Mr. Pip,” he returned, “you will be welcome there, in a private and personal capacity.”

We had held this conversation in a low voice, well knowing my guardian’s ears to be the sharpest of the sharp. As he now appeared in his doorway, towelling his hands, Wemmick got on his great-coat and stood by to snuff out the candles. We all three went into the street together, and from the door-step Wemmick turned his way, and Mr. Jaggers and I turned ours.

I could not help wishing more than once that evening, that Mr. Jaggers had had an Aged in Gerrard Street, or a Stinger, or a Something, or a Somebody, to unbend his brows a little. It was an uncomfortable consideration on a twenty-first birthday, that coming of age at all seemed hardly worth while in such a guarded and suspicious world as he made of it. He was a thousand times better informed and cleverer than Wemmick, and yet I would a thousand times rather have had Wemmick to dinner. And Mr. Jaggers made not me alone intensely melancholy, because, after he was gone, Herbert said of himself, with his eyes fixed on the fire, that he thought he must have committed a felony and forgotten the details of it, he felt so dejected and guilty.

Chapter XXXVII

Deeming Sunday the best day for taking Mr. Wemmick’s Walworth sentiments, I devoted the next ensuing Sunday afternoon to a pilgrimage to the Castle. On arriving before the battlements, I found the Union Jack flying and the drawbridge up; but undeterred by this show of defiance and resistance, I rang at the gate, and was admitted in a most pacific manner by the Aged.

“My son, sir,” said the old man, after securing the drawbridge, “rather had it in his mind that you might

happen to drop in, and he left word that he would soon be home from his afternoon’s walk. He is very regular in his walks, is my son. Very regular in everything, is my son.”

I nodded at the old gentleman as Wemmick himself might have nodded, and we went in and sat down by the fireside.

“You made acquaintance with my son, sir,” said the old man, in his chirping way, while he warmed his hands at the blaze, “at his office, I expect?” I nodded. “Hah! I have heard that my son is a wonderful hand at his business, sir?” I nodded hard. “Yes; so they tell me. His business is the Law?” I nodded harder. “Which makes it more surprising in my son,” said the old man, “for he was not brought up to the Law, but to the Wine-Coopering.”

Curious to know how the old gentleman stood informed concerning the reputation of Mr. Jaggers, I

roared that name at him. He threw me into the greatest confusion by laughing heartily and replying in a very sprightly manner, “No, to be sure; you’re right.” And to this hour I have not the faintest notion what he meant, or what joke he thought I had made.

As I could not sit there nodding at him perpetually, without making some other attempt to interest him, I shouted at inquiry whether his own calling in life had been “the Wine-Coopering.” By dint of straining that term out of myself several times and tapping the old gentleman on the chest to associate it with him, I at last succeeded in making my meaning understood.

“No,” said the old gentleman; “the warehousing, the warehousing. First, over yonder,” he appeared to mean up the chimney, but I believe he intended to refer me to Liverpool; “and then in the City of London here. However, having an infirmity—for I am hard of hearing, sir—”

I expressed in pantomime the greatest astonishment.

“—Yes, hard of hearing; having that infirmity coming upon me, my son he went into the Law, and he took charge of me, and he by little and little made out this elegant and beautiful property. But returning to what you said, you know,” pursued the old man, again laughing heartily, “what I say is, No to be sure; you’re right.”

I was modestly wondering whether my utmost ingenuity would have enabled me to say anything that would have amused him half as much as this imaginary pleantry, when I was startled by a sudden click in the wall on one side of the chimney, and the ghostly tumbling open of a little wooden flap with “JOHN” upon it. The old man, following my eyes, cried with great triumph, “My son’s come home!” and we both went out to the drawbridge.

It was worth any money to see Wemmick waving a salute to me from the other side of the moat, when we might have shaken hands across it with the greatest ease. The Aged was so delighted to work the drawbridge, that I made no offer to assist him, but stood quiet until Wemmick had come across, and had presented me to Miss Skiffins; a lady by whom he was accompanied.

Miss Skiffins was of a wooden appearance, and was, like her escort, in the post-office branch of the service. She might have been some two or three years younger than Wemmick, and I judged her to stand possessed of portable property. The cut of her dress from the waist upward, both before and behind, made her figure very like a boy’s kite; and I might have pronounced her gown a little too decidedly orange, and her gloves a little too intensely green. But she seemed to be a good sort of fellow, and showed a high regard for the Aged. I was not long in discovering that she was a frequent visitor at the Castle; for, on our going in, and my complimenting Wemmick on his ingenious contrivance for announcing himself to

the Aged, he begged me to give my attention for a moment to the other side of the chimney, and disappeared. Presently another click came, and another little door tumbled open with "Miss Skiffins" on it; then Miss Skiffins shut up and John tumbled open; then Miss Skiffins and John both tumbled open together, and finally shut up together. On Wemmick's return from working these mechanical appliances, I expressed the great admiration with which I regarded them, and he said, "Well, you know, they're both pleasant and useful to the Aged. And by George, sir, it's a thing worth mentioning, that of all the people who come to this gate, the secret of those pulls is only known to the Aged, Miss Skiffins, and me!"

"And Mr. Wemmick made them," added Miss Skiffins, "with his own hands out of his own head."

While Miss Skiffins was taking off her bonnet (she retained her green gloves during the evening as an outward and visible sign that there was company),

Wemmick invited me to take a walk with him round the property, and see how the island looked in wintertime. Thinking that he did this to give me an opportunity of taking his Walworth sentiments, I seized the opportunity as soon as we were out of the Castle.

Having thought of the matter with care, I approached my subject as if I had never hinted at it before. I informed Wemmick that I was anxious in behalf of Herbert Pocket, and I told him how we had first met, and how we had fought. I glanced at Herbert's home, and at his character, and at his having no means but such as he was dependent on his father for; those, uncertain and unpunctual. I alluded to the advantages I had derived in my first rawness and

ignorance from his society, and I confessed that I feared I had but ill repaid them, and that he might have done better without me and my expectations. Keeping Miss Havisham in the background at a great distance, I still hinted at the possibility of my having competed with him in his prospects, and at the certainty of his possessing a generous soul, and being far above any mean distrusts, retaliations, or designs. For all these reasons (I told Wemmick), and because he was my young companion and friend, and I had a great affection for him, I wished my own good fortune to reflect some rays upon him, and therefore I sought advice from Wemmick's experience and knowledge of men and affairs, how I could best try with my resources to help Herbert to some present income,—say of a hundred a year, to keep him in good hope and heart,—and gradually to buy him on to some small partnership. I begged Wemmick, in conclusion, to understand that my help must always be rendered without Herbert's knowledge or suspicion, and that there was no one else in the world with whom I could advise. I wound up by laying my hand upon his shoulder, and saying, "I can't help confiding in you, though I know it must be

troublesome to you; but that is your fault, in having ever brought me here."

Wemmick was silent for a little while, and then said with a kind of start, "Well you know, Mr. Pip, I must tell you one thing. This is devilish good of you."

"Say you'll help me to be good then," said I.

"Ecod," replied Wemmick, shaking his head, "that's not my trade."

"Nor is this your trading-place," said I.

"You are right," he returned. "You hit the nail on the head. Mr. Pip, I'll put on my considering-cap, and I think all you want to do may be done by degrees. Skiffins (that's her brother) is an accountant and agent. I'll look him up and go to work for you."

"I thank you ten thousand times."

"On the contrary," said he, "I thank you, for though we are strictly in our private and personal capacity, still it may be mentioned that there *are* Newgate cobwebs about, and it brushes them away."

After a little further conversation to the same effect, we returned into the Castle where we found Miss Skiffins preparing tea. The responsible duty of making the toast was delegated to the Aged, and that excellent old gentleman was so intent upon it that he seemed to me in some danger of melting his eyes. It was no nominal meal that we were going to make, but a vigorous reality. The Aged prepared such a hay-stack of buttered toast, that I could scarcely see him over it as it simmered on an iron stand hooked on to the top-bar; while Miss Skiffins brewed such a jorum of tea, that the pig in the back premises became strongly excited, and repeatedly expressed his desire to participate in the entertainment.

The flag had been struck, and the gun had been fired, at the right moment of time, and I felt as snugly cut off from the rest of Walworth as if the moat were thirty feet wide by as many deep. Nothing disturbed the tranquillity of the Castle, but the occasional tumbling open of John and Miss Skiffins: which little doors were a prey to some spasmodic infirmity that made me sympathetically uncomfortable until I got used to it. I inferred from the methodical nature of Miss Skiffins's arrangements that she made tea there every Sunday night; and I rather suspected that a classic brooch she wore, representing the profile of an undesirable female with a very straight nose and a very new moon, was a piece of portable property that had been given her by Wemmick.

We ate the whole of the toast, and drank tea in proportion, and it was delightful to see how warm and greasy we all got after it. The Aged especially, might have passed for some clean old chief of a savage tribe, just oiled. After a short pause of repose, Miss Skiffins—in the absence of the little servant who, it seemed, retired to the bosom of her family on Sunday afternoons—washed up the tea-

things, in a trifling lady-like amateur manner that compromised none of us. Then, she put on her gloves again, and we drew round the fire, and Wemmick said, "Now, Aged Parent, tip us the paper."

Wemmick explained to me while the Aged got his spectacles out, that this was according to custom, and that it gave the old gentleman infinite satisfaction to read the news aloud. "I won't offer an apology," said Wemmick, "for he isn't capable of many pleasures—are you, Aged P.?"

"All right, John, all right," returned the old man, seeing himself spoken to.

"Only tip him a nod every now and then when he looks off his paper," said Wemmick, "and he'll be as happy as a king. We are all attention, Aged One."

"All right, John, all right!" returned the cheerful old man, so busy and so pleased, that it really was quite charming.

The Aged's reading reminded me of the classes at Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt's, with the pleasanter peculiarity that it seemed to come through a keyhole. As he wanted the candles close to him, and as he was always on the verge of putting either his head or the newspaper into them, he required as much watching as a powder-mill. But Wemmick was equally untiring and gentle in his vigilance, and the Aged read on, quite unconscious of his many rescues. Whenever he looked at us, we all expressed the greatest interest and amazement, and nodded until he resumed again.

As Wemmick and Miss Skiffins sat side by side, and as I sat in a shadowy corner, I observed a slow and gradual elongation of Mr. Wemmick's mouth, powerfully suggestive of his slowly and gradually stealing his arm round Miss Skiffins's waist. In course of time I saw his hand appear on the other side of Miss Skiffins; but at that moment Miss Skiffins neatly stopped him with the green glove, unwound his arm again as if it were an article of dress, and with the greatest deliberation laid it on the table before her. Miss Skiffins's composure while she did this was one of the most remarkable sights I have ever seen, and if I could have thought the act consistent with abstraction of mind, I should have deemed that Miss Skiffins performed it mechanically.

By and by, I noticed Wemmick's arm beginning to disappear again, and gradually fading out of view. Shortly afterwards, his mouth began to widen again. After an interval of suspense on my part that was quite enthralling and almost painful, I saw his hand appear on the other side of Miss Skiffins. Instantly, Miss Skiffins stopped it with the neatness of a placid boxer, took off that girdle or cestus as before, and laid it on the table. Taking the table to represent the path of virtue, I am justified in stating that during the whole time of the Aged's reading,

Wemmick's arm was straying from the path of virtue and being recalled to it by Miss Skiffins.

At last, the Aged read himself into a light slumber. This was the time for Wemmick to produce a little kettle, a tray of glasses, and a black bottle with a porcelain-topped cork, representing some clerical dignity of a rubicund and social aspect. With the aid of these appliances we all had something warm to drink, including the Aged, who was soon awake again. Miss Skiffins mixed, and I observed that she and Wemmick drank out of one glass. Of course I knew better than to offer to see Miss Skiffins home, and under the circumstances I thought I had best go first; which I did, taking a cordial leave of the Aged, and having passed a pleasant evening.

Before a week was out, I received a note from Wemmick, dated Walworth, stating that he hoped he had made some advance in that matter appertaining to our private and personal capacities, and that he would be glad if I could come and see him again upon it. So, I went out to Walworth again, and yet again, and yet again, and I saw him by appointment in the City several times, but never held any communication with him on the subject in or near Little Britain. The upshot was, that we found a worthy young merchant or shipping-broker, not long established in business, who wanted intelligent help, and who wanted capital, and who in due course of time and receipt would want a partner. Between him and me, secret articles were signed of which Herbert was the subject, and I paid him half of my five hundred pounds down, and engaged for sundry other payments: some, to fall due at certain dates out of my income: some, contingent on my coming into my property. Miss Skiffins's brother conducted the negotiation. Wemmick pervaded it throughout, but never appeared in it.

The whole business was so cleverly managed, that Herbert had not the least suspicion of my hand being in it. I never shall forget the radiant face with which he came home one afternoon, and told me, as a mighty piece of news, of his having fallen in with one Clarriker (the young merchant's name), and of Clarriker's having shown an extraordinary inclination towards him, and of his belief that the opening had come at last. Day by day as his hopes grew stronger and his face brighter, he must have thought me a more and more affectionate friend, for I had the greatest difficulty in restraining my tears of triumph when I saw him so happy. At length, the thing being done, and he having that day entered Clarriker's House, and he having talked to me for a whole evening in a flush of pleasure and success, I did really cry in good earnest when I went to bed, to think that my expectations had done some good to somebody.

A great event in my life, the turning point of my life, now opens on my view. But, before I proceed to narrate it, and before I pass on to all the changes it involved, I must give one chapter to Estella. It is not much to give to the theme that so long filled my heart.

Chapter XXXVIII

If that staid old house near the Green at Richmond should ever come to be haunted when I am dead, it will be haunted, surely, by my ghost. O the many, many nights and days through which the unquiet spirit within me haunted that house when Estella lived there! Let my body be where it would, my spirit was always wandering, wandering, wandering, about that house.

The lady with whom Estella was placed, Mrs. Brandley by name, was a widow, with one daughter several years older than Estella. The mother looked young, and the daughter looked old; the mother's complexion was pink, and the daughter's was yellow; the mother set up for frivolity, and the daughter for theology. They were in what is called a good position, and visited, and were visited by, numbers of people. Little, if any, community of feeling subsisted between them and Estella, but the understanding was established that they were necessary to her, and that she was necessary to them. Mrs. Brandley had been a friend of Miss Havisham's before the time of her seclusion.

In Mrs. Brandley's house and out of Mrs. Brandley's house, I suffered every kind and degree of torture that Estella could cause me. The nature of my relations with her, which placed me on terms of familiarity without placing me on terms of favour, conduced to my distraction. She made use of me to tease other admirers, and she turned the very familiarity between herself and me to the account of putting a constant slight on my devotion to her. If I had been her secretary, steward, half-brother, poor relation,—if I had been a younger brother of her appointed husband,—I could not have seemed to myself further from my hopes when I was nearest to her. The privilege of calling her by her name and hearing her call me by mine became, under the circumstances an aggravation of my trials; and while I think it likely that it almost maddened her other lovers, I know too certainly that it almost maddened me.

She had admirers without end. No doubt my jealousy made an admirer of every one who went near her; but there were more than enough of them without that.

I saw her often at Richmond, I heard of her often in town, and I used often to take her and the Brandleys on the water; there were picnics, fête days, plays, operas, concerts, parties, all sorts of pleasures, through which I pursued her,—and they were all miseries to me. I never had one hour's happiness in her society, and yet my mind all round the four-and-twenty hours was harping on the happiness of having her with me unto death.

Throughout this part of our intercourse,—and it lasted, as will presently be seen, for what I then thought a long time,—she habitually reverted to that tone which expressed that our association was forced upon us. There were other times when she would come to a sudden check in this tone and in all her many tones, and would seem to pity me.

"Pip, Pip," she said one evening, coming to such a check, when we sat apart at a darkening window of the house in Richmond; "will you never take warning?"

"Of what?"

"Of me."

"Warning not to be attracted by you, do you mean, Estella?"

"Do I mean! If you don't know what I mean, you are blind."

I should have replied that Love was commonly reputed blind, but for the reason that I always was restrained—and this was not the least of my miseries—by a feeling that it was ungenerous to press myself upon her, when she knew that she could not choose but obey Miss Havisham. My dread always was, that this knowledge on her part laid me under a heavy disadvantage with her pride, and made me the subject of a rebellious struggle in her bosom.

"At any rate," said I, "I have no warning given me just now, for you wrote to me to come to you, this time."

"That's true," said Estella, with a cold careless smile that always chilled me.

After looking at the twilight without, for a little while, she went on to say:—

"The time has come round when Miss Havisham wishes to have me for a day at Satis. You are to take me there, and bring me back, if you will. She would rather I did not travel alone, and objects to receiving my maid, for she has a sensitive horror of being talked of by such people. Can you take me?"

"Can I take you, Estella!"

"You can then? The day after to-morrow, if you please. You are to pay all charges out of my purse. You hear the condition of your going?"

"And must obey," said I.

This was all the preparation I received for that visit, or for others like it; Miss Havisham never wrote to me, nor had I ever so much as seen her handwriting. We went down on the next day but one, and we found her in the room where I had first beheld her, and it is needless to add that there was no change in Satis House.

She was even more dreadfully fond of Estella than she had been when I last saw them together; I repeat the word advisedly, for there was something positively dreadful in the energy of her looks and embraces. She hung upon Estella's beauty, hung upon her words, hung upon her gestures, and sat mumbling her own trembling fingers while she looked at her, as though she were devouring the beautiful creature she had reared.

From Estella she looked at me, with a searching glance that seemed to pry into my heart and probe its wounds. "How does she use you, Pip; how does she use you?" she

asked me again, with her witch-like eagerness, even in Estella's hearing. But, when we sat by her flickering fire at night, she was most weird; for then, keeping Estella's hand drawn through her arm and clutched in her own hand, she extorted from her, by dint of referring back to what Estella had told her in her regular letters, the names and conditions of the men whom she had fascinated; and as Miss Havisham dwelt upon this roll, with the intensity of a mind mortally hurt and diseased, she sat with her other hand on her crutch stick, and her chin on that, and her wan bright eyes glaring at me, a very spectre.

I saw in this, wretched though it made me, and bitter the sense of dependence and even of degradation that it awakened,—I saw in this that Estella was set to wreak Miss Havisham's revenge on men, and that she was not to be given to me until she had gratified it for a term. I saw in this, a reason for her being beforehand assigned to me. Sending her out to attract and torment and do mischief, Miss Havisham sent her with the malicious assurance that she was beyond the reach of all admirers, and that all who staked upon that cast were secured to lose. I saw in this that I, too, was tormented by a perversion of ingenuity, even while the prize was reserved for me. I saw in this the reason for my being staved off so long and the reason for my late guardian's declining to commit himself to the formal knowledge of such a scheme. In a word, I saw in this Miss Havisham as I had her then and there before my eyes, and always had had her before my eyes; and I saw in this, the distinct shadow of the darkened and unhealthy house in which her life was hidden from the sun.

The candles that lighted that room of hers were placed in sconces on the wall. They were high from the ground, and they burnt with the steady dulness of artificial light in air that is seldom renewed. As I looked round at them, and at the pale gloom they made, and at the stopped clock, and at the withered articles of bridal dress upon the table and the ground, and at her own awful figure with its ghostly reflection thrown large by the fire upon the ceiling and the wall, I saw in everything the construction that my mind had come to, repeated and thrown back to me. My thoughts passed into the great room across the landing where the table was spread, and I saw it written, as it were, in the falls of the cobwebs from the centre-piece, in the crawlings of the spiders on the cloth, in the tracks of the mice as they betook their little quickened hearts behind the panels, and in the gropings and pausings of the beetles on the floor.

It happened on the occasion of this visit that some sharp words arose between Estella and Miss Havisham. It was the first time I had ever seen them opposed.

We were seated by the fire, as just now described, and Miss Havisham still had Estella's arm drawn through her own, and still clutched Estella's hand in hers, when Estella gradually began to detach herself. She had shown a proud

impatience more than once before, and had rather endured that fierce affection than accepted or returned it.

"What!" said Miss Havisham, flashing her eyes upon her, "are you tired of me?"

"Only a little tired of myself," replied Estella, disengaging her arm, and moving to the great chimney-piece, where she stood looking down at the fire.

"Speak the truth, you ingrate!" cried Miss Havisham, passionately striking her stick upon the floor; "you are tired of me."

Estella looked at her with perfect composure, and again looked down at the fire. Her graceful figure and her beautiful face expressed a self-possessed indifference to the wild heat of the other, that was almost cruel.

"You stock and stone!" exclaimed Miss Havisham. "You cold, cold heart!"

"What?" said Estella, preserving her attitude of indifference as she leaned against the great chimney-piece and only moving her eyes; "do you reproach me for being cold? You?"

"Are you not?" was the fierce retort.

"You should know," said Estella. "I am what you have made me. Take all the praise, take all the blame; take all the success, take all the failure; in short, take me."

"O, look at her, look at her!" cried Miss Havisham, bitterly; "Look at her so hard and thankless, on the hearth where she was reared! Where I took her into this wretched breast when it was first bleeding from its stabs, and where I have lavished years of tenderness upon her!"

"At least I was no party to the compact," said Estella, "for if I could walk and speak, when it was made, it was as much as I could do. But what would you have? You have been very good to me, and I owe everything to you. What would you have?"

"Love," replied the other.

"You have it."

"I have not," said Miss Havisham.

"Mother by adoption," retorted Estella, never departing from the easy grace of her attitude, never raising her voice as the other did, never yielding either to anger or tenderness,—"mother by adoption, I have said that I owe everything to you. All I possess is freely yours. All that you have given me, is at your command to have again. Beyond that, I have nothing. And if you ask me to give you, what you never gave me, my gratitude and duty cannot do impossibilities."

"Did I never give her love!" cried Miss Havisham, turning wildly to me. "Did I never give her a burning love, inseparable from jealousy at all times, and from sharp pain, while she speaks thus to me! Let her call me mad, let her call me mad!"

"Why should I call you mad," returned Estella, "I, of all people? Does any one live, who knows what set purposes you have, half as well as I do? Does any one live, who knows what a steady memory you have, half as well as I do? I who have sat on this same hearth on the little stool that is even now beside you there, learning your lessons and looking up into your face, when your face was strange and frightened me!"

"Soon forgotten!" moaned Miss Havisham. "Times soon forgotten!"

"No, not forgotten," retorted Estella,—"not forgotten, but treasured up in my memory. When have you found me false to your teaching? When have you found me unmindful of your lessons? When have you found me giving admission here," she touched her bosom with her hand, "to anything that you excluded? Be just to me."

"So proud, so proud!" moaned Miss Havisham, pushing away her grey hair with both her hands.

"Who taught me to be proud?" returned Estella. "Who praised me when I learnt my lesson?"

"So hard, so hard!" moaned Miss Havisham, with her former action.

"Who taught me to be hard?" returned Estella. "Who praised me when I learnt my lesson?"

"But to be proud and hard to *me*!" Miss Havisham quite shrieked, as she stretched out her arms. "Estella, Estella, Estella, to be proud and hard to *me*!"

Estella looked at her for a moment with a kind of calm wonder, but was not otherwise disturbed; when the moment was past, she looked down at the fire again.

"I cannot think," said Estella, raising her eyes after a silence "why you should be so unreasonable when I come to see you after a separation. I have never forgotten your wrongs and their causes. I have never been unfaithful to you or your schooling. I have never shown any weakness that I can charge myself with."

"Would it be weakness to return my love?" exclaimed Miss Havisham. "But yes, yes, she would call it so!"

"I begin to think," said Estella, in a musing way, after another moment of calm wonder, "that I almost understand how this comes about. If you had brought up your adopted daughter wholly in the dark confinement of these rooms, and had never let her

know that there was such a thing as the daylight by which she had never once seen your face,—if you had done that, and then, for a purpose had wanted her to understand the daylight and know all about it, you would have been disappointed and angry?"

Miss Havisham, with her head in her hands, sat making a low moaning, and swaying herself on her chair, but gave no answer.

"Or," said Estella,—“which is a nearer case,—if you had taught her, from the dawn of her intelligence, with your utmost energy and might, that there was such a thing as daylight, but that it was made to be her enemy and destroyer, and she must always turn against

it, for it had blighted you and would else blight her;—if you had done this, and then, for a purpose, had wanted her to take naturally to the daylight and she could not do it, you would have been disappointed and angry?"

Miss Havisham sat listening (or it seemed so, for I could not see her face), but still made no answer.

"So," said Estella, "I must be taken as I have been made. The success is not mine, the failure is not mine, but the two together make me."

Miss Havisham had settled down, I hardly knew how, upon the floor, among the faded bridal relics with which it was strewn. I took advantage of the moment—I had sought one from the first—to leave the room, after beseeching Estella's attention to her, with a movement of my hand. When I left, Estella was yet standing by the great chimney-piece, just as she had stood throughout. Miss Havisham's grey hair was all adrift upon the ground, among the other bridal wrecks, and was a miserable sight to see.

It was with a depressed heart that I walked in the starlight for an hour and more, about the courtyard, and about the brewery, and about the ruined garden. When I at last took courage to return to the room, I found Estella sitting at Miss Havisham's knee, taking up some stitches in one of those old articles of dress that were dropping to pieces, and of which I have often been reminded since by the faded tatters of old banners that I have seen hanging up in cathedrals. Afterwards, Estella and I played at cards, as of yore,—only we were skilful now, and played French games,—and so the evening wore away, and I went to bed.

I lay in that separate building across the courtyard. It was the first time I had ever lain down to rest in Satis House, and sleep refused to come near me. A thousand Miss Havishams haunted me. She was on this side of my pillow, on that, at the head of the bed, at the foot, behind the half-opened door of the dressing-room, in the dressing-room, in the room overhead, in the room beneath,—everywhere. At last, when the night was slow to creep on towards two o'clock, I felt that I absolutely could no longer bear the place as a place to lie down in, and that I must get up. I therefore got up and put on my clothes, and went out across the yard into the long stone passage, designing to gain the outer courtyard and walk there for the relief of my mind. But I was no sooner in the passage than I extinguished my candle; for I saw Miss Havisham going along it in a ghostly manner, making a low cry. I followed her at a distance, and saw her go up the staircase. She carried a bare candle in her hand, which she had probably taken from one of the sconces in her own room, and was a most unearthly object by its light. Standing at

the bottom of the staircase, I felt the mildewed air of the feast-chamber, without seeing her open the door, and I heard her walking there, and so across into her own room, and so across again into that, never ceasing the low cry. After a time, I tried in the dark both to get out, and to go back, but I could do neither until some streaks of day strayed in and showed me where to lay my hands. During the whole interval, whenever I went to the bottom of the staircase, I heard her footstep, saw her light pass above, and heard her ceaseless low cry.

Before we left next day, there was no revival of the difference between her and Estella, nor was it ever revived on any similar occasion; and there were four similar occasions, to the best of my remembrance. Nor, did Miss Havisham's manner towards Estella in anywise change, except that I believed it to have something like fear infused among its former characteristics.

It is impossible to turn this leaf of my life, without putting Bentley Drummle's name upon it; or I would, very gladly.

On a certain occasion when the Finches were assembled in force, and when good feeling was being promoted in the usual manner by nobody's agreeing with anybody else, the presiding Finch called the Grove to order, forasmuch as Mr. Drummle had not yet toasted a lady; which, according to the solemn constitution of the society, it was the brute's turn to do that day. I thought I saw him leer in an ugly way at me while the decanters were going round, but as there was no love lost between us, that might easily be. What was my indignant surprise when he called upon the company to pledge him to "Estella!"

"Estella who?" said I.

"Never you mind," retorted Drummle.

"Estella of where?" said I. "You are bound to say of where." Which he was, as a Finch.

"Of Richmond, gentlemen," said Drummle, putting me out of the question, "and a peerless beauty."

Much he knew about peerless beauties, a mean, miserable idiot! I whispered Herbert.

"I know that lady," said Herbert, across the table, when the toast had been honoured.

"Do you?" said Drummle.

"And so do I," I added, with a scarlet face.

"Do you?" said Drummle. "O, Lord!"

This was the only retort—except glass or crockery—that the heavy creature was capable of making; but, I became as highly incensed by it as if it had been barbed with wit, and I immediately rose in my place and said that I could not but regard it as being like the honourable Finch's impudence to come down to that Grove,—we always talked about coming down to that Grove, as a neat Parliamentary turn of expression,—down to that Grove, proposing a lady of whom he knew nothing. Mr. Drummle, upon this, starting up, demanded what I meant

by that? Whereupon I made him the extreme reply that I believed he knew where I was to be found.

Whether it was possible in a Christian country to get on without blood, after this, was a question on which the Finches were divided. The debate upon it grew so lively, indeed, that at least six more honourable members told six more, during the discussion, that they believed *they* knew where *they* were to be found. However, it was decided at last (the Grove being a Court of Honour) that if Mr. Drummle would bring never so slight a certificate from the lady, importing that he had the honour of her acquaintance, Mr. Pip must express his regret, as a gentleman and a Finch, for "having been betrayed into a warmth which." Next day was appointed for the production (lest our honour should take cold from delay), and next day Drummle appeared with a polite little avowal in Estella's hand, that she had had the honour of dancing with him several times. This left me no course but to regret that I had been "betrayed into a warmth which," and on the whole to repudiate, as untenable, the idea that I was to be found anywhere. Drummle and I then sat snorting at one another for an hour, while the Grove engaged in indiscriminate contradiction, and finally the promotion of good feeling was declared to have gone ahead at an amazing rate.

I tell this lightly, but it was no light thing to me. For, I cannot adequately express what pain it gave me to think that Estella should show any favour to a contemptible, clumsy, sulky booby, so very far below the average. To the present moment, I believe it to have been referable to some pure fire of generosity and disinterestedness in my love for her, that I could not endure the thought of her stooping to that hound. No doubt I should have been miserable whomsoever she had favoured; but a worthier object would have caused me a different kind and degree of distress.

It was easy for me to find out, and I did soon find out, that Drummle had begun to follow her closely, and that she allowed him to do it. A little while, and he was always in pursuit of her, and he and I crossed one another every day. He held on, in a dull persistent way, and Estella held him on; now with encouragement, now with discouragement, now almost flattering him, now openly despising him, now knowing him very well, now scarcely remembering who he was.

The Spider, as Mr. Jaggers had called him, was used to lying in wait, however, and had the patience of his tribe. Added to that, he had a blockhead confidence in his money and in his family greatness, which sometimes did him good service,—almost taking the place of concentration and determined purpose. So, the Spider, doggedly watching Estella, outwatched many brighter insects, and would often uncoil himself and drop at the right nick of time.

At a certain Assembly Ball at Richmond (there used to be Assembly Balls at most places then), where Estella had

outshone all other beauties, this blundering Drummle so hung about her, and with so much toleration on her part, that I resolved to speak to her concerning him. I took the next opportunity; which was when she was waiting for Mrs. Blandley to take her home, and was sitting apart among some flowers, ready to go. I was with her, for I almost always accompanied them to and from such places.

"Are you tired, Estella?"

"Rather, Pip."

"You should be."

"Say rather, I should not be; for I have my letter to Satis House to write, before I go to sleep."

"Recounting to-night's triumph?" said I. "Surely a very poor one, Estella."

"What do you mean? I didn't know there had been any."

"Estella," said I, "do look at that fellow in the corner yonder, who is looking over here at us."

"Why should I look at him?" returned Estella, with her eyes on me instead. "What is there in that fellow in the corner yonder,—to use your words,—that I need look at?"

"Indeed, that is the very question I want to ask you," said I. "For he has been hovering about you all night."

"Moths, and all sorts of ugly creatures," replied Estella, with a glance towards him, "hover about a lighted candle. Can the candle help it?"

"No," I returned; "but cannot the Estella help it?"

"Well!" said she, laughing, after a moment, "perhaps. Yes. Anything you like."

"But, Estella, do hear me speak. It makes me wretched that you should encourage a man so generally despised as Drummle. You know he is despised."

"Well?" said she.

"You know he is as ungainly within as without. A deficient, ill-tempered, lowering, stupid fellow."

"Well?" said she.

"You know he has nothing to recommend him but money and a ridiculous roll of addle-headed predecessors; now, don't you?"

"Well?" said she again; and each time she said it, she opened her lovely eyes the wider.

To overcome the difficulty of getting past that monosyllable, I took it from her, and said, repeating it with emphasis, "Well! Then, that is why it makes me wretched."

Now, if I could have believed that she favoured Drummle with any idea of making me—me—wretched, I should have been in better heart about it; but in that

habitual way of hers, she put me so entirely out of the question, that I could believe nothing of the kind.

"Pip," said Estella, casting her glance over the room, "don't be foolish about its effect on you. It may have its effect on others, and may be meant to have. It's not worth discussing."

"Yes it is," said I, "because I cannot bear that people should say, 'she throws away her graces and attractions on a mere boor, the lowest in the crowd.'"

"I can bear it," said Estella.

"Oh! don't be so proud, Estella, and so inflexible."

"Calls me proud and inflexible in this breath!" said Estella, opening her hands. "And in his last breath reproached me for stooping to a boor!"

"There is no doubt you do," said I, something hurriedly, "for I have seen you give him looks and smiles this very night, such as you never give to—me."

"Do you want me then," said Estella, turning suddenly with a fixed and serious, if not angry, look, "to deceive and entrap you?"

"Do you deceive and entrap him, Estella?"

"Yes, and many others,—all of them but you. Here is Mrs. Brandley. I'll say no more."

And now that I have given the one chapter to the theme that so filled my heart, and so often made it ache and ache again, I pass on unhindered, to the event that had impended over me longer yet; the event that had begun to be prepared for, before I knew that the world held Estella, and in the days when her baby intelligence was receiving its first distortions from Miss Havisham's wasting hands.

In the Eastern story, the heavy slab that was to fall on the bed of state in the flush of conquest was slowly wrought out of the quarry, the tunnel for the rope to hold it in its place was slowly carried through the leagues of rock, the slab was slowly raised and fitted in the roof, the rope was rove to it and slowly taken through the miles of hollow to the great iron ring. All being made ready with much labour, and the hour come, the sultan was aroused in the dead of the night, and the sharpened axe that was to sever the rope from the great iron ring was put into his hand, and he struck with it, and the rope parted and rushed away, and the ceiling fell. So, in my case; all the work, near and afar, that tended to the end, had been accomplished; and in an instant the blow was struck, and the roof of my stronghold dropped upon me.



Chapter XXXIX

I was three-and-twenty years of age. Not another word had I heard to enlighten me on the subject of my expectations, and my twenty-third birthday was a week gone. We had left Barnard's Inn more than a year, and lived in the Temple. Our chambers were in Garden-court, down by the river.

Mr. Pocket and I had for some time parted company as to our original relations, though we continued on the best terms. Notwithstanding my inability to settle to anything,—which I hope arose out of the restless and incomplete tenure on which I held my means,—I had a taste for reading, and read regularly so many hours a day. That matter of Herbert's was still progressing, and everything with me was as I have brought it down to the close of the last preceding chapter.

Business had taken Herbert on a journey to Marseilles. I was alone, and had a dull sense of being alone. Dispirited and anxious, long hoping that to-morrow or next week would clear my way, and long disappointed, I sadly missed the cheerful face and ready response of my friend.

It was wretched weather; stormy and wet, stormy and wet; and mud, mud, mud, deep in all the streets. Day after day, a vast heavy veil had been driving over London from the East, and it drove still, as if in the East there were an eternity of cloud and wind. So furious had been the gusts, that high buildings in town had had the lead stripped off their roofs; and in the country, trees had been torn up, and sails of windmills carried away; and gloomy accounts had come in from the coast, of shipwreck and death. Violent blasts of rain had accompanied these rages of wind, and the day just closed as I sat down to read had been the worst of all.

Alterations have been made in that part of the Temple since that time, and it has not now so lonely a character as it had then, nor is it so exposed to the river. We lived at the top of the last house, and the wind rushing up the river shook the house that night, like discharges of cannon, or breakings of a sea. When the rain came with it and dashed against the windows, I thought, raising my eyes to them as they rocked, that I might have fancied myself in a storm-beaten lighthouse. Occasionally, the smoke came rolling down the chimney as though it could not bear to go out into such a night; and when I set the doors open and looked down the staircase, the staircase lamps were blown out; and when I shaded my face with my hands and looked through the black windows (opening them ever so little was out of the question in the teeth of such wind and rain), I saw that the lamps in the court were blown out, and that the lamps on the bridges and the shore were shuddering, and that the coal-fires in barges on the river were being carried away before the wind like red-hot splashes in the rain.

I read with my watch upon the table, purposing to close my book at eleven o'clock. As I shut it, Saint Paul's, and all the many church-clocks in the City—some leading, some accompanying, some following—struck that hour. The sound was curiously flawed by the wind; and I was listening, and thinking how the wind assailed and tore it, when I heard a footstep on the stair.

What nervous folly made me start, and awfully connect it with the footstep of my dead sister, matters not. It was past in a moment, and I listened again, and heard the footstep stumble in coming on. Remembering then, that the staircase-lights were blown out, I took up my reading-lamp and went out to the stair-head. Whoever was below had stopped on seeing my lamp, for all was quiet.

"There is some one down there, is there not?" I called out, looking down.

"Yes," said a voice from the darkness beneath.

"What floor do you want?"

"The top. Mr. Pip."

"That is my name.—There is nothing the matter?"

"Nothing the matter," returned the voice. And the man came on.

I stood with my lamp held out over the stair-rail, and he came slowly within its light. It was a shaded lamp, to shine upon a book, and its circle of light was very contracted; so that he was in it for a mere instant, and then out of it. In the instant, I had seen a face that was strange to me, looking up with an incomprehensible air of being touched and pleased by the sight of me.

Moving the lamp as the man moved, I made out that he was substantially dressed, but roughly, like a voyager by sea. That he had long iron-grey hair. That his age was about sixty. That he was a muscular man, strong on his legs, and that he was browned and hardened by exposure to weather. As he ascended the last stair or two, and the light of my lamp included us both, I saw, with a stupid kind of amazement, that he was holding out both his hands to me.

"Pray what is your business?" I asked him.

"My business?" he repeated, pausing. "Ah! Yes. I will explain my business, by your leave."

"Do you wish to come in?"

"Yes," he replied; "I wish to come in, master."

I had asked him the question inhospitably enough, for I resented the sort of bright and gratified recognition that still shone in his face. I resented it, because it seemed to imply that he expected me to respond to it. But I took him into the room I had just left, and, having set the lamp on the table, asked him as civilly as I could to explain himself.

He looked about him with the strangest air,—an air of

wondering pleasure, as if he had some part in the things he admired,—and he pulled off a rough outer coat, and his hat. Then, I saw that his head was furrowed and bald, and that the long iron-grey hair grew only on its sides. But, I saw nothing that in the least explained him. On the contrary, I saw him next moment, once more holding out both his hands to me.

“What do you mean?” said I, half suspecting him to be mad.

He stopped in his looking at me, and slowly rubbed his right hand over his head. “It’s disapinting to a man,” he said, in a coarse broken voice, “arter having looked for’ard so distant, and come so fur; but you’re not to blame for that,—neither on us is to blame for that. I’ll speak in half a minute. Give me half a minute, please.”

He sat down on a chair that stood before the fire, and covered his forehead with his large brown veinous hands. I looked at him attentively then, and recoiled a little from him; but I did not know him.

“There’s no one nigh,” said he, looking over his shoulder; “is there?”

“Why do you, a stranger coming into my rooms at this time of the night, ask that question?” said I.

“You’re a game one,” he returned, shaking his head at me with a deliberate affection, at once most unintelligible and most exasperating; “I’m glad you’ve grow’d up, a game one! But don’t catch hold of me. You’d be sorry arterwards to have done it.”

I relinquished the intention he had detected, for I knew him! Even yet I could not recall a single feature, but I knew him! If the wind and the rain had driven away the intervening years, had scattered all the intervening objects, had swept us to the churchyard where we first stood face to face on such different levels, I could not have known my convict more distinctly than I knew him now as he sat in the chair before the fire. No need to take a file from his pocket and show it to me; no need to take the handkerchief from his neck and twist it round his head; no need to hug himself with both his arms, and take a shivering turn across the room, looking back at me for recognition. I knew him before he gave me one of those aids, though, a moment before, I had not been conscious of remotely suspecting his identity.

He came back to where I stood, and again held out both his hands. Not knowing what to do,—for, in my astonishment I had lost my self-possession,—I reluctantly gave him my hands. He grasped them heartily, raised them to his lips, kissed them, and still held them.

“You acted noble, my boy,” said he. “Noble, Pip! And I have never forgot it!”

At a change in his manner as if he were even going to

embrace me, I laid a hand upon his breast and put him away.

“Stay!” said I. “Keep off! If you are grateful to me for what I did when I was a little child, I hope you have shown your gratitude by mending your way of life. If you have come here to thank me, it was not necessary. Still, however you have found me out, there must be something good in the feeling that has brought you here, and I will not repulse you; but surely you must understand that—I —”

My attention was so attracted by the singularity of his fixed look at me, that the words died away on my tongue.

“You was a-saying,” he observed, when we had confronted one another in silence, “that surely I must understand. What, surely must I understand?”

“That I cannot wish to renew that chance intercourse with you of long ago, under these different circumstances. I am glad to believe you have repented and recovered yourself. I am glad to tell you so. I am glad that, thinking I deserve to be thanked, you have come to thank me. But our ways are different ways, none the less. You are wet, and you look weary. Will you drink something before you go?”

He had replaced his neckerchief loosely, and had stood, keenly observant of me, biting a long end of it. “I think,” he answered, still with the end at his mouth and still observant of me, “that I *will* drink (I thank you) afore I go.”

There was a tray ready on a side-table. I brought it to the table near the fire, and asked him what he would have? He touched one of the bottles without looking at it or speaking, and I made him some hot rum and water. I tried to keep my hand steady while I did so, but his look at me as he leaned back in his chair with the long dragged end of his neckerchief between his teeth—evidently forgotten—made my hand very difficult to master. When at last I put the glass to him, I saw with amazement that his eyes were full of tears.

Up to this time I had remained standing, not to disguise that I wished him gone. But I was softened by the softened aspect of the man, and felt a touch of reproach. “I hope,” said I, hurriedly putting some-thing into a glass for myself, and drawing a chair to the table, “that you will not think I spoke harshly to you just now. I had no intention of doing it, and I am sorry for it if I did. I wish you well and happy!”

As I put my glass to my lips, he glanced with surprise at the end of his neckerchief, dropping from his mouth when he opened it, and stretched out his hand. I gave him mine, and then he drank, and drew his sleeve across his eyes and forehead.

“How are you living?” I asked him.

“I’ve been a sheep-farmer, stock-breeder, other trades

besides, away in the new world," said he; "many a thousand mile of stormy water off from this."

"I hope you have done well?"

"I've done wonderfully well. There's others went out alonger me as has done well too, but no man has done nigh as well as me. I'm famous for it."

"I am glad to hear it."

"I hope to hear you say so, my dear boy."

Without stopping to try to understand those words or the tone in which they were spoken, I turned off to a point that had just come into my mind.

"Have you ever seen a messenger you once sent to me," I inquired, "since he undertook that trust?"

"Never set eyes upon him. I warn't likely to it."

"He came faithfully, and he brought me the two one-pound notes. I was a poor boy then, as you know, and to a poor boy they were a little fortune. But, like you, I have done well since, and you must let me pay them back. You can put them to some other poor boy's use." I took out my purse.

He watched me as I laid my purse upon the table and opened it, and he watched me as I separated two one-pound notes from its contents. They were clean and new, and I spread them out and handed them over to him. Still watching me, he laid them one upon the other, folded them long-wise, gave them a twist, set fire to them at the lamp, and dropped the ashes into the tray.

"May I make so bold," he said then, with a smile that was like a frown, and with a frown that was like a smile, "as ask you *how* you have done well, since you and me was out on them lone shivering marshes?"

"How?"

"Ah!"

He emptied his glass, got up, and stood at the side of the fire, with his heavy brown hand on the mantel-shelf. He put a foot up to the bars, to dry and warm it, and the wet boot began to steam; but, he neither looked at it, nor at the fire, but steadily looked at me. It was only now that I began to tremble.

When my lips had parted, and had shaped some words that were without sound, I forced myself to tell him (though I could not do it distinctly), that I had been chosen to succeed to some property.

"Might a mere warmint ask what property?" said he.

I faltered, "I don't know."

"Might a mere warmint ask whose property?" said he.

I faltered again, "I don't know."

"Could I make a guess, I wonder," said the Convict, "at

your income since you come of age! As to the first figure now. Five?"

With my heart beating like a heavy hammer of disordered action, I rose out of my chair, and stood with my hand upon the back of it, looking wildly at him.

"Concerning a guardian," he went on. "There ought to have been some guardian, or such-like, whiles you was a minor. Some lawyer, maybe. As to the first letter of that lawyer's name now. Would it be J?"

All the truth of my position came flashing on me; and its disappointments, dangers, disgraces, consequences of all kinds, rushed in in such a multitude that I was borne down by them and had to struggle for every breath I drew.

"Put it," he resumed, "as the employer of that lawyer whose name begun with a J, and might be Jagers,—put it as he had come over sea to Portsmouth, and had landed there, and had wanted to come on to you. 'However, you have found me out,' you says just now. Well! However, did I find you out? Why, I wrote from Portsmouth to a person in London, for particulars of your address. That person's name? Why, Wemmick."

I could not have spoken one word, though it had been to save my life. I stood, with a hand on the chair-back and a hand on my breast, where I seemed to be suffocating,—I stood so, looking wildly at him, until I grasped at the chair, when the room began to surge and turn. He caught me, drew me to the sofa, put me up against the cushions, and bent on one knee before me, bringing the face that I now well remembered, and that I shuddered at, very near to mine.

"Yes, Pip, dear boy, I've made a gentleman on you! It's me wot has done it! I swore that time, sure as ever I earned a guinea, that guinea should go to you. I swore arterwards, sure as ever I spec'lated and got rich, you should get rich. I lived rough, that you should live smooth; I worked hard, that you should be above work. What odds, dear boy? Do I tell it, fur you to feel a obligation? Not a bit. I tell it, fur you to know as that there hunted dunghill dog wot you kep life in, got his head so high that he could make a gentleman,—and, Pip, you're him!"

The abhorrence in which I held the man, the dread I had of him, the repugnance with which I shrank from him, could not have been exceeded if he had been some terrible beast.

"Look'ee here, Pip. I'm your second father. You're my son,—more to me nor any son. I've put away money, only for you to spend. When I was a hired-out shepherd in a solitary hut, not seeing no faces but faces of sheep till I half forgot wot men's and women's faces wos like, I see youn. I drops my knife many a time in that hut when I was a-eating my dinner or my supper, and I says, 'Here's the boy again, a looking at me whiles I eats and drinks!' I

see you there a many times, as plain as ever I see you on them misty marshes. 'Lord strike me dead!' I says each time,—and I goes out in the air to say it under the open heavens,—'but wot, if I gets liberty and money, I'll make that boy a gentleman!' And I done it. Why, look at you, dear boy! Look at these here lodgings of yourn, fit for a lord! A lord? Ah! You shall show money with lords for wagers, and beat 'em!"

In his heat and triumph, and in his knowledge that I had been nearly fainting, he did not remark on my reception of all this. It was the one grain of relief I had.

"Look'ee here!" he went on, taking my watch out of my pocket, and turning towards him a ring on my finger, while I recoiled from his touch as if he had been a snake, "a gold 'un and a beauty: *that's* a gentleman's, I hope! A diamond all set round with rubies; *that's* a gentleman's, I hope! Look at your linen; fine and beautiful! Look at your clothes; better ain't to be got! And your books too," turning his eyes round the room, "mounting up, on their shelves, by hundreds! And you read 'em; don't you? I see you'd been a reading of 'em when I come in. Ha, ha, ha! You shall read 'em to me, dear boy! And if they're in foreign languages wot I don't understand, I shall be just as proud as if I did."

Again he took both my hands and put them to his lips, while my blood ran cold within me.

"Don't you mind talking, Pip," said he, after again drawing his sleeve over his eyes and forehead, as the click came in his throat which I well remembered,—and he was all the more horrible to me that he was so much in earnest; "you can't do better nor keep quiet, dear boy. You ain't looked slowly forward to this as I have; you wasn't prepared for this as I wos. But didn't you never think it might be me?"

"O no, no, no," I returned, "Never, never!"

"Well, you see it *wos* me, and single-handed. Never a soul in it but my own self and Mr. Jaggers."

"Was there no one else?" I asked.

"No," said he, with a glance of surprise: "who else should there be? And, dear boy, how good looking you have growed! There's bright eyes somewheres—eh? Isn't there bright eyes somewheres, wot you love the thoughts on?"

O Estella, Estella!

"They shall be yourn, dear boy, if money can buy 'em. Not that a gentleman like you, so well set up as you, can't win 'em off of his own game; but money shall back you! Let me finish wot I was a telling you, dear boy. From that there hut and that there hiring-out, I got money left me by my master (which died, and had been the same as me), and got my liberty and went for myself. In every single thing I went for, I went for you. 'Lord strike a blight upon

it,' I says, wotever it was I went for, 'if it ain't for him!' It all prospered wonderful. As I giv' you to understand just now, I'm famous for it. It was the money left me, and the gains of the first few year wot I sent home to Mr. Jaggers—all for you—when he first come arter you, agreeable to my letter."

O that he had never come! That he had left me at the forge,—far from contented, yet, by comparison happy!

"And then, dear boy, it was a recompense to me, look'ee here, to know in secret that I was making a gentleman. The blood horses of them colonists might fling up the dust over me as I was walking; what do I say? I says to myself, 'I'm making a better gentleman nor ever *you'll* be!' When one of 'em says to another, 'He was a convict, a few year ago, and is a ignorant common fellow now, for all he's lucky,' what do I say? I says to myself, 'If I ain't a gentleman, nor yet ain't got no learning, I'm the owner of such. All on you owns stock and land; which on you owns a brought-up London gentleman?' This way I kep myself a-going. And this way I held steady afore my mind that I would for certain come one day and see my boy, and make myself known to him, on his own ground."

He laid his hand on my shoulder. I shuddered at the thought that for anything I knew, his hand might be stained with blood.

"It warn't easy, Pip, for me to leave them parts, nor yet it warn't safe. But I held to it, and the harder it was, the stronger I held, for I was determined, and my mind firm made up. At last I done it. Dear boy, I done it!"

I tried to collect my thoughts, but I was stunned. Throughout, I had seemed to myself to attend more to the wind and the rain than to him; even now, I could not separate his voice from those voices, though those were loud and his was silent.

"Where will you put me?" he asked, presently. "I must be put somewheres, dear boy."

"To sleep?" said I.

"Yes. And to sleep long and sound," he answered; "for I've been sea-tossed and sea-washed, months and months."

"My friend and companion," said I, rising from the sofa, "is absent; you must have his room."

"He won't come back to-morrow; will he?"

"No," said I, answering almost mechanically, in spite of my utmost efforts; "not to-morrow."

"Because, look'ee here, dear boy," he said, dropping his voice, and laying a long finger on my breast in an impressive manner, "caution is necessary."

"How do you mean? Caution?"

"By G——, it's Death!"

“What’s death?”

“I was sent for life. It’s death to come back. There’s been overmuch coming back of late years, and I should of a certainty be hanged if took.”

Nothing was needed but this; the wretched man, after loading wretched me with his gold and silver chains for years, had risked his life to come to me, and I held it there in my keeping! If I had loved him instead of abhorring him; if I had been attracted to him by the strongest admiration and affection, instead of shrinking from him with the strongest repugnance; it could have been no worse. On the contrary, it would have been better, for his preservation would then have naturally and tenderly addressed my heart.

My first care was to close the shutters, so that no light might be seen from without, and then to close and make fast the doors. While I did so, he stood at the table drinking rum and eating biscuit; and when I saw him thus engaged, I saw my convict on the marshes at his meal again. It almost seemed to me as if he must stoop down presently, to file at his leg.

When I had gone into Herbert’s room, and had shut off any other communication between it and the staircase than through the room in which our conversation had been held, I asked him if he would go to bed? He said yes, but asked me for some of my “gentleman’s linen” to put on in the morning. I brought it out, and laid it ready for him, and my blood again ran cold when he again took me by both hands to give me good-night.

I got away from him, without knowing how I did it, and mended the fire in the room where we had been together, and sat down by it, afraid to go to bed. For an hour or more, I remained too stunned to think; and it was not until I began to think, that I began fully to know how wrecked I was, and how the ship in which I had sailed was gone to pieces.

Miss Havisham’s intentions towards me, all a mere dream; Estella not designed for me; I only suffered in Satis House as a convenience, a sting for the greedy relations, a model with a mechanical heart to practise on when no other practice was at hand; those were the first smarts I had. But, sharpest and deepest pain of all,—it was for the convict, guilty of I knew not what crimes, and liable to be taken out of those rooms where I sat thinking, and hanged at the Old Bailey door, that I had deserted Joe.

I would not have gone back to Joe now, I would not have gone back to Biddy now, for any consideration; simply, I suppose, because my sense of my own worthless conduct to them was greater than every consideration. No wisdom on earth could have given me the comfort that I should have derived from their simplicity and fidelity; but I could never, never, undo what I had done.

In every rage of wind and rush of rain, I heard pursuers. Twice, I could have sworn there was a knocking and whispering at the outer door. With these fears upon me, I began either to imagine or recall that I had had mysterious warnings of this man’s approach. That, for weeks gone by, I had passed faces in the streets which I had thought like his. That these likenesses had grown more numerous, as he, coming over the sea, had drawn nearer. That his wicked spirit had somehow sent these messengers to mine, and that now on this stormy night he was as good as his word, and with me.

Crowding up with these reflections came the reflection that I had seen him with my childish eyes to be a desperately violent man; that I had heard that other convict reiterate that he had tried to murder him; that I had seen him down in the ditch tearing and fighting like a wild beast. Out of such remembrances I brought into the light of the fire a half-formed terror that it might not be safe to be shut up there with him in the dead of the wild solitary night. This dilated until it filled the room, and impelled me to take a candle and go in and look at my dreadful burden.

He had rolled a handkerchief round his head, and his face was set and lowering in his sleep. But he was asleep, and quietly too, though he had a pistol lying on the pillow. Assured of this, I softly removed the key to the outside of his door, and turned it on him before I again sat down by the fire. Gradually I slipped from the chair and lay on the floor. When I awoke without having parted in my sleep with the perception of my wretchedness, the clocks of the Eastward churches were striking five, the candles were wasted out, the fire was dead, and the wind and rain intensified the thick black darkness.

***THIS IS THE END OF THE SECOND
STAGE OF PIP’S EXPECTATIONS.***



Chapter XL

It was fortunate for me that I had to take precautions to ensure (so far as I could) the safety of my dreaded visitor; for, this thought pressing on me when I awoke, held other thoughts in a confused concourse at a distance.

The impossibility of keeping him concealed in the chambers was self-evident. It could not be done, and the attempt to do it would inevitably engender suspicion. True, I had no Avenger in my service now, but I was looked after by an inflammatory old female, assisted by an animated rag-bag whom she called her niece, and to keep a room secret from them would be to invite curiosity and exaggeration. They both had weak eyes, which I had long attributed to their chronically looking in at keyholes, and they were always at hand when not wanted; indeed that was their only reliable quality besides larceny. Not to get up a mystery with these people, I resolved to announce in the morning that my uncle had unexpectedly come from the country.

This course I decided on while I was yet groping about in the darkness for the means of getting a light. Not stumbling on the means after all, I was fain to go out to the adjacent Lodge and get the watchman there to come with his lantern. Now, in groping my way down the black staircase I fell over something, and that something was a man crouching in a corner.

As the man made no answer when I asked him what he did there, but eluded my touch in silence, I ran to the Lodge and urged the watchman to come quickly; telling him of the incident on the way back. The wind being as fierce as ever, we did not care to endanger the light in the lantern by rekindling the extinguished lamps on the staircase, but we examined the staircase from the bottom to the top and found no one there. It then occurred to me as possible that the man might have slipped into my rooms; so, lighting my candle at the watchman's, and leaving him standing at the door, I examined them carefully, including the room in which my dreaded guest lay asleep. All was quiet, and assuredly no other man was in those chambers.

It troubled me that there should have been a lurker on the stairs, on that night of all nights in the year, and I asked the watchman, on the chance of eliciting some hopeful explanation as I handed him a dram at the door, whether he had admitted at his gate any gentleman who had perceptibly been dining out? Yes, he said; at different times of the night, three. One lived in Fountain Court, and the other two lived in the Lane, and he had seen them all go home. Again, the only other man who dwelt in the house of which my chambers formed a part had been in the country for some weeks, and he certainly had not returned in the night, because we had seen his door with his seal on it as we came upstairs.

"The night being so bad, sir," said the watchman, as he gave me back my glass, "uncommon few have come in at my gate. Besides them three gentlemen that I have named, I don't call to mind another since about eleven o'clock, when a stranger asked for you."

"My uncle," I muttered. "Yes."

"You saw him, sir?"

"Yes. Oh yes."

"Likewise the person with him?"

"Person with him?" I repeated.

"I judged the person to be with him," returned the watchman. "The person stopped, when he stopped to make inquiry of me, and the person took this way when he took this way."

"What sort of person?"

The watchman had not particularly noticed; he should say a working person; to the best of his belief, he had a dust-coloured kind of clothes on, under a dark coat. The watchman made more light of the matter than I did, and naturally; not having my reason for attaching weight to it.

When I had got rid of him, which I thought it well to do without prolonging explanations, my mind was much troubled by these two circumstances taken together. Whereas they were easy of innocent solution apart,—as, for instance, some diner out or diner at home, who had not gone near this watchman's gate, might have strayed to my staircase and dropped asleep there,—and my nameless visitor might have brought some one with him to show him the way,—still, joined, they had an ugly look to one as prone to distrust and fear as the changes of a few hours had made me.

I lighted my fire, which burnt with a raw pale flare at that time of the morning, and fell into a doze before it. I seemed to have been dozing a whole night when the clocks struck six. As there was full an hour and a half between me and daylight, I dozed again; now, waking up uneasily, with prolix conversations about nothing, in my ears; now, making thunder of the wind in the chimney; at length, falling off into a profound sleep from which the daylight woke me with a start.

All this time I had never been able to consider my own situation, nor could I do so yet. I had not the power to attend to it. I was greatly dejected and distressed, but in an incoherent wholesale sort of way. As to forming any plan for the future, I could as soon have formed an elephant. When I opened the shutters and looked out at the wet wild morning, all of a leaden hue; when I walked from room to room; when I sat down again shivering, before the fire, waiting for my laundress to appear; I thought how miserable I was, but hardly knew why, or how long I had been so, or on what day of the week I made the reflection, or even who I was that made it.

At last, the old woman and the niece came in,—the latter with a head not easily distinguishable from her dusty broom,—and testified surprise at sight of me and the fire. To whom I imparted how my uncle had come in the night and was then asleep, and how the breakfast preparations were to be modified accordingly. Then I washed and dressed while they knocked the furniture about and made a dust; and so, in a sort of dream or sleep-waking, I found myself sitting by the fire again, waiting for—Him—to come to breakfast.

By and by, his door opened and he came out. I could not bring myself to bear the sight of him, and I thought he had a worse look by daylight.

“I do not even know,” said I, speaking low as he took his seat at the table, “by what name to call you. I have given out that you are my uncle.”

“That’s it, dear boy! Call me uncle.”

“You assumed some name, I suppose, on board ship?”

“Yes, dear boy. I took the name of Provis.”

“Do you mean to keep that name?”

“Why, yes, dear boy, it’s as good as another,—unless you’d like another.”

“What is your real name?” I asked him in a whisper.

“Magwitch,” he answered, in the same tone; “chrisen’d Abel.”

“What were you brought up to be?”

“A warmint, dear boy.”

He answered quite seriously, and used the word as if it denoted some profession.

“When you came into the Temple last night—” said I, pausing to wonder whether that could really have been last night, which seemed so long ago.

“Yes, dear boy?”

“When you came in at the gate and asked the watchman the way here, had you any one with you?”

“With me? No, dear boy.”

“But there was some one there?”

“I didn’t take particular notice,” he said, dubiously, “not knowing the ways of the place. But I think there *was* a person, too, come in alonger me.”

“Are you known in London?”

“I hope not!” said he, giving his neck a jerk with his forefinger that made me turn hot and sick.

“Were you known in London, once?”

“Not over and above, dear boy. I was in the provinces mostly.”

“Were you—tried—in London?”

“Which time?” said he, with a sharp look.

“The last time.”

He nodded. “First knowed Mr. Jaggers that way. Jaggers was for me.”

It was on my lips to ask him what he was tried for, but he took up a knife, gave it a flourish, and with the words, “And what I done is worked out and paid for!” fell to at his breakfast.

He ate in a ravenous way that was very disagreeable, and all his actions were uncouth, noisy, and greedy. Some of his teeth had failed him since I saw him eat on the marshes, and as he turned his food in his mouth, and turned his head sideways to bring his strongest fangs to bear upon it, he looked terribly like a hungry old dog. If I had begun with any appetite, he would have taken it away, and I should have sat much as I did,—repelled from him by an insurmountable aversion, and gloomily looking at the cloth.

“I’m a heavy grubber, dear boy,” he said, as a polite kind of apology when he made an end of his meal, “but I always was. If it had been in my constitution to be a lighter grubber, I might ha’ got into lighter trouble. Similarly, I must have my smoke. When I was first hired out as shepherd t’other side the world, it’s my belief I should ha’ turned into a mollynolly-mad sheep myself, if I hadn’t a had my smoke.”

As he said so, he got up from table, and putting his hand into the breast of the pea-coat he wore, brought out a short black pipe, and a handful of loose tobacco of the kind that is called Negro-head. Having filled his pipe, he put the surplus tobacco back again, as if his pocket were a drawer. Then, he took a live coal from the fire with the tongs, and lighted his pipe at it, and then turned round on the hearth-rug with his back to the fire, and went through his favourite action of holding out both his hands for mine.

“And this,” said he, dandling my hands up and down in his, as he puffed at his pipe,—“and this is the gentleman what I made! The real genuine One! It does me good fur to look at you, Pip. All I stip’late, is, to stand by and look at you, dear boy!”

I released my hands as soon as I could, and found that I was beginning slowly to settle down to the contemplation of my condition. What I was chained to, and how heavily, became intelligible to me, as I heard his hoarse voice, and sat looking up at his furrowed bald head with its iron grey hair at the sides.

“I mustn’t see my gentleman a footing it in the mire of the streets; there mustn’t be no mud on *his* boots. My gentleman must have horses, Pip! Horses to ride, and horses to drive, and horses for his servant to ride and drive as well. Shall colonists have their horses (and blood ’uns, if you please, good Lord!) and not my London gentleman? No, no. We’ll show ’em another pair of shoes than that, Pip; won’t us?”

He took out of his pocket a great thick pocket-book, bursting with papers, and tossed it on the table.

"There's something worth spending in that there book, dear boy. It's yourn. All I've got ain't mine; it's yourn. Don't you be afeerd on it. There's more where that come from. I've come to the old country fur to see my gentleman spend his money *like* a gentleman. That'll be *my* pleasure. *My* pleasure 'ull be fur to see him do it. And blast you all!" he wound up, looking round the room and snapping his fingers once with a loud snap, "blast you every one, from the judge in his wig, to the colonist a stirring up the dust, I'll show a better gentleman than the whole kit on you put together!"

"Stop!" said I, almost in a frenzy of fear and dislike, "I want to speak to you. I want to know what is to be done. I want to know how you are to be kept out of danger, how long you are going to stay, what projects you have."

"Look'ee here, Pip," said he, laying his hand on my arm in a suddenly altered and subdued manner; "first of all, look'ee here. I forgot myself half a minute ago. What I said was low; that's what it was; low. Look'ee here, Pip. Look over it. I ain't a-going to be low."

"First," I resumed, half groaning, "what precautions can be taken against your being recognised and seized?"

"No, dear boy," he said, in the same tone as before, "that don't go first. Lowness goes first. I ain't took so many year to make a gentleman, not without knowing what's due to him. Look'ee here, Pip. I was low; that's what I was; low. Look over it, dear boy."

Some sense of the grimly-ludicrous moved me to a fretful laugh, as I replied, "I *have* looked over it. In Heaven's name, don't harp upon it!"

"Yes, but look'ee here," he persisted. "Dear boy, I ain't come so fur, not fur to be low. Now, go on, dear boy. You was a saying—"

"How are you to be guarded from the danger you have incurred?"

"Well, dear boy, the danger ain't so great. Without I was informed agen, the danger ain't so much to signify. There's Jagers, and there's Wemmick, and there's you. Who else is there to inform?"

"Is there no chance person who might identify you in the street?" said I.

"Well," he returned, "there ain't many. Nor yet I don't intend to advertise myself in the newspapers by the name of A.M. come back from Botany Bay; and years have rolled away, and who's to gain by it? Still, look'ee here, Pip. If the danger had been fifty times as great, I should ha' come to see you, mind you, just the same."

"And how long do you remain?"

"How long?" said he, taking his black pipe from his mouth, and dropping his jaw as he stared at me. "I'm not a-going back. I've come for good."

"Where are you to live?" said I. "What is to be done with you? Where will you be safe?"

"Dear boy," he returned, "there's disguising wigs can be bought for money, and there's hair powder, and spectacles, and black clothes,—shorts and what not. Others has done it safe afore, and what others has done afore, others can do agen. As to the where and how of living, dear boy, give me your own opinions on it."

"You take it smoothly now," said I, "but you were very serious last night, when you swore it was Death."

"And so I swear it is Death," said he, putting his pipe back in his mouth, "and Death by the rope, in the open street not fur from this, and it's serious that you should fully understand it to be so. What then, when that's once done? Here I am. To go back now 'ud be as bad as to stand ground—worse. Besides, Pip, I'm here, because I've meant it by you, years and years. As to what I dare, I'm a old bird now, as has dared all manner of traps since first he was fledged, and I'm not afeerd to perch upon a scarecrow. If there's Death hid inside of it, there is, and let him come out, and I'll face him, and then I'll believe in him and not afore. And now let me have a look at my gentleman agen."

Once more, he took me by both hands and surveyed me with an air of admiring proprietorship: smoking with great complacency all the while.

It appeared to me that I could do no better than secure him some quiet lodging hard by, of which he might take possession when Herbert returned: whom I expected in two or three days. That the secret must be confided to Herbert as a matter of unavoidable necessity, even if I could have put the immense relief I should derive from sharing it with him out of the question, was plain to me. But it was by no means so plain to Mr. Provis (I resolved to call him by that name), who reserved his consent to Herbert's participation until he should have seen him and formed a favourable judgment of his physiognomy. "And even then, dear boy," said he, pulling a greasy little clasped black Testament out of his pocket, "we'll have him on his oath."

To state that my terrible patron carried this little black book about the world solely to swear people on in cases of emergency, would be to state what I never quite established; but this I can say, that I never knew him put it to any other use. The book itself had the appearance of having been stolen from some court of justice, and perhaps his knowledge of its antecedents, combined with his own experience in that wise, gave him a reliance on its powers as a sort of legal spell or charm. On this first occasion of his producing it, I recalled how he had made me swear fidelity in the churchyard long ago, and how he had described himself last night as always swearing to his resolutions in his solitude.

As he was at present dressed in a seafaring slop suit, in which he looked as if he had some parrots and cigars to dispose of, I next discussed with him what dress he should wear. He cherished an extraordinary belief in the virtues of "shorts" as a disguise, and had in his own mind sketched a dress for himself that would have made him

something between a dean and a dentist. It was with considerable difficulty that I won him over to the assumption of a dress more like a prosperous farmer's; and we arranged that he should cut his hair close, and wear a little powder. Lastly, as he had not yet been seen by the laundress or her niece, he was to keep himself out of their view until his change of dress was made.

It would seem a simple matter to decide on these precautions; but in my dazed, not to say distracted, state, it took so long, that I did not get out to further them until two or three in the afternoon. He was to remain shut up in the chambers while I was gone, and was on no account to open the door.

There being to my knowledge a respectable lodging-house in Essex Street, the back of which looked into the Temple, and was almost within hail of my windows, I first of all repaired to that house, and was so fortunate as to secure the second floor for my uncle, Mr. Provis. I then went from shop to shop, making such purchases as were necessary to the change in his appearance. This business transacted, I turned my face, on my own account, to Little Britain. Mr. Jaggers was at his desk, but, seeing me enter, got up immediately and stood before his fire.

"Now, Pip," said he, "be careful."

"I will, sir," I returned. For, coming along I had thought well of what I was going to say.

"Don't commit yourself," said Mr. Jaggers, "and don't commit any one. You understand—any one. Don't tell me anything: I don't want to know anything; I am not curious."

Of course I saw that he knew the man was come.

"I merely want, Mr. Jaggers," said I, "to assure myself that what I have been told is true. I have no hope of its being untrue, but at least I may verify it."

Mr. Jaggers nodded. "But did you say 'told' or 'informed'?" he asked me, with his head on one side, and not looking at me, but looking in a listening way at the floor. "Told would seem to imply verbal communication. You can't have verbal communication with a man in New South Wales, you know."

"I will say, informed, Mr. Jaggers."

"Good."

"I have been informed by a person named Abel Magwitch, that he is the benefactor so long unknown to me."

"That is the man," said Mr. Jaggers, "in New South Wales."

"And only he?" said I.

"And only he," said Mr. Jaggers.

"I am not so unreasonable, sir, as to think you at all responsible for my mistakes and wrong conclusions; but I always supposed it was Miss Havisham."

"As you say, Pip," returned Mr. Jaggers, turning his eyes

upon me coolly, and taking a bite at his forefinger, "I am not at all responsible for that."

"And yet it looked so like it, sir," I pleaded with a downcast heart.

"Not a particle of evidence, Pip," said Mr. Jaggers, shaking his head and gathering up his skirts. "Take nothing on its looks; take everything on evidence. There's no better rule."

"I have no more to say," said I, with a sigh, after standing silent for a little while. "I have verified my information, and there's an end."

"And Magwitch—in New South Wales—having at last disclosed himself," said Mr. Jaggers, "you will comprehend, Pip, how rigidly throughout my communication with you, I have always adhered to the strict line of fact. There has never been the least departure from the strict line of fact. You are quite aware of that?"

"Quite, sir."

"I communicated to Magwitch—in New South Wales—when he first wrote to me—from New South Wales—the caution that he must not expect me ever to deviate from the strict line of fact. I also communicated to him another caution. He appeared to me to have obscurely hinted in his letter at some distant idea he had of seeing you in England here. I cautioned him that I must hear no more of that; that he was not at all likely to obtain a pardon; that he was expatriated for the term of his natural life; and that his presenting himself in this country would be an act of felony, rendering him liable to the extreme penalty of the law. I gave Magwitch that caution," said Mr. Jaggers, looking hard at me; "I wrote it to New South Wales. He guided himself by it, no doubt."

"No doubt," said I.

"I have been informed by Wemmick," pursued Mr. Jaggers, still looking hard at me, "that he has received a letter, under date Portsmouth, from a colonist of the name of Purvis, or—"

"Or Provis," I suggested.

"Or Provis—thank you, Pip. Perhaps it *is* Provis? Perhaps you know it's Provis?"

"Yes," said I.

"You know it's Provis. A letter, under date Portsmouth, from a colonist of the name of Provis, asking for the particulars of your address, on behalf of Magwitch. Wemmick sent him the particulars, I understand, by return of post. Probably it is through Provis that you have received the explanation of Magwitch—in New South Wales?"

"It came through Provis," I replied.

"Good day, Pip," said Mr. Jaggers, offering his hand; "glad to have seen you. In writing by post to Magwitch—in New South Wales—or in communicating with him through Provis, have the goodness to mention that the

particulars and vouchers of our long account shall be sent to you, together with the balance; for there is still a balance remaining. Good-day, Pip!"

We shook hands, and he looked hard at me as long as he could see me. I turned at the door, and he was still looking hard at me, while the two vile casts on the shelf seemed to be trying to get their eyelids open, and to force out of their swollen throats, "O, what a man he is!"

Wemmick was out, and though he had been at his desk he could have done nothing for me. I went straight back to the Temple, where I found the terrible Provis drinking rum and water and smoking negro-head, in safety.

Next day the clothes I had ordered all came home, and he put them on. Whatever he put on, became him less (it dismally seemed to me) than what he had worn before. To my thinking, there was something in him that made it hopeless to attempt to disguise him. The more I dressed him and the better I dressed him, the more he looked like the slouching fugitive on the marshes. This effect on my anxious fancy was partly referable, no doubt, to his old face and manner growing more familiar to me; but I believe too that he dragged one of his legs as if there were still a weight of iron on it, and that from head to foot there was Convict in the very grain of the man.

The influences of his solitary hut-life were upon him besides, and gave him a savage air that no dress could tame; added to these were the influences of his subsequent branded life among men, and, crowning all, his consciousness that he was dodging and hiding now. In all his ways of sitting and standing, and eating and drinking,—of brooding about in a high-shouldered reluctant style,—of taking out his great horn-handled jackknife and wiping it on his legs and cutting his food,—of lifting light glasses and cups to his lips, as if they were clumsy pannikins,—of chopping a wedge off his bread, and soaking up with it the last fragments of gravy round and round his plate, as if to make the most of an allowance, and then drying his finger-ends on it, and then swallowing it,—in these ways and a thousand other small nameless instances arising every minute in the day, there was Prisoner, Felon, Bondsman, plain as plain could be.

It had been his own idea to wear that touch of powder, and I had conceded the powder after overcoming the shorts. But I can compare the effect of it, when on, to nothing but the probable effect of rouge upon the dead; so awful was the manner in which everything in him that it was most desirable to repress, started through that thin layer of pretence, and seemed to come blazing out at the crown of his head. It was abandoned as soon as tried, and he wore his grizzled hair cut short.

Words cannot tell what a sense I had, at the same time, of the dreadful mystery that he was to me. When he fell asleep of an evening, with his knotted hands clenching the sides of the easy-chair, and his bald head tattooed with

deep wrinkles falling forward on his breast, I would sit and look at him, wondering what he had done, and loading him with all the crimes in the Calendar, until the impulse was powerful on me to start up and fly from him. Every hour so increased my abhorrence of him, that I even think I might have yielded to this impulse in the first agonies of being so haunted, notwithstanding all he had done for me and the risk he ran, but for the knowledge that Herbert must soon come back. Once, I actually did start out of bed in the night, and begin to dress myself in my worst clothes, hurriedly intending to leave him there with everything else I possessed, and enlist for India as a private soldier.

I doubt if a ghost could have been more terrible to me, up in those lonely rooms in the long evenings and long nights, with the wind and the rain always rushing by. A ghost could not have been taken and hanged on my account, and the consideration that he could be, and the dread that he would be, were no small addition to my horrors. When he was not asleep, or playing a complicated kind of Patience with a ragged pack of cards of his own,—a game that I never saw before or since, and in which he recorded his winnings by sticking his jackknife into the table,—when he was not engaged in either of these pursuits, he would ask me to read to him,—“Foreign language, dear boy!” While I complied, he, not comprehending a single word, would stand before the fire surveying me with the air of an Exhibitor, and I would see him, between the fingers of the hand with which I shaded my face, appealing in dumb show to the furniture to take notice of my proficiency. The imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made, was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me, and recoiling from him with a stronger repulsion, the more he admired me and the fonder he was of me.

This is written of, I am sensible, as if it had lasted a year. It lasted about five days. Expecting Herbert all the time, I dared not go out, except when I took Provis for an airing after dark. At length, one evening when dinner was over and I had dropped into a slumber quite worn out,—for my nights had been agitated and my rest broken by fearful dreams,—I was roused by the welcome footstep on the staircase. Provis, who had been asleep too, staggered up at the noise I made, and in an instant I saw his jackknife shining in his hand.

“Quiet! It’s Herbert!” I said; and Herbert came bursting in, with the airy freshness of six hundred miles of France upon him.

“Handel, my dear fellow, how are you, and again how are you, and again how are you? I seem to have been gone a twelvemonth! Why, so I must have been, for you have grown quite thin and pale! Handel, my—Halloa! I beg your pardon.”

He was stopped in his running on and in his shaking hands with me, by seeing Provis. Provis, regarding him with a fixed attention, was slowly putting up his jackknife, and groping in another pocket for something else.

"Herbert, my dear friend," said I, shutting the double doors, while Herbert stood staring and wondering, "something very strange has happened. This is—a visitor of mine."

"It's all right, dear boy!" said Provis coming forward, with his little clasped black book, and then addressing himself to Herbert. "Take it in your right hand. Lord strike you dead on the spot, if ever you split in any way sumever! Kiss it!"

"Do so, as he wishes it," I said to Herbert. So, Herbert, looking at me with a friendly uneasiness and amazement, complied, and Provis immediately shaking hands with him, said, "Now you're on your oath, you know. And never believe me on mine, if Pip shan't make a gentleman on you!"

Chapter XLI

In vain should I attempt to describe the astonishment and disquiet of Herbert, when he and I and Provis sat down before the fire, and I recounted the whole of the secret. Enough, that I saw my own feelings reflected in Herbert's face, and not least among them, my repugnance towards the man who had done so much for me.

What would alone have set a division between that man and us, if there had been no other dividing circumstance, was his triumph in my story. Saving his troublesome sense of having been "low" on one occasion since his return,—on which point he began to hold forth to Herbert, the moment my revelation was finished,—he had no perception of the possibility of my finding any fault with my good fortune. His boast that he had made me a gentleman, and that he had come to see me support the character on his ample resources, was made for me quite as much as for himself. And that it was a highly agreeable boast to both of us, and that we must both be very proud of it, was a conclusion quite established in his own mind.

"Though, look'ee here, Pip's comrade," he said to Herbert, after having discoursed for some time, "I know very well that once since I come back—for half a minute—I've been low. I said to Pip, I knowed as I had been low. But don't you fret yourself on that score. I ain't made Pip a gentleman, and Pip ain't a-going to make you a gentleman, not fur me not to know what's due to ye both. Dear boy, and Pip's comrade, you two may count upon me always having a genteel muzzle on. Muzzled I have been since that half a minute when I was betrayed into lowness, muzzled I am at the present time, muzzled I ever will be."

Herbert said, "Certainly," but looked as if there were no specific consolation in this, and remained perplexed

and dismayed. We were anxious for the time when he would go to his lodging and leave us together, but he was evidently jealous of leaving us together, and sat late. It was midnight before I took him round to Essex Street, and saw him safely in at his own dark door. When it closed upon him, experienced the first moment of relief I had known since the night of his arrival.

Never quite free from an uneasy remembrance of the man on the stairs, I had always looked about me in taking my guest out after dark, and in bringing him back; and I looked about me now. Difficult as it is in a large city to avoid the suspicion of being watched, when the mind is conscious of danger in that regard, I could not persuade myself that any of the people within sight cared about my movements. The few who were passing passed on their several ways, and the street was empty when I turned back into the Temple. Nobody had come out at the gate with us, nobody went in at the gate with me. As I crossed by the fountain, I saw his lighted back windows looking bright and quiet, and, when I stood for a few moments in the doorway of the building where I lived, before going up the stairs, Garden Court was as still and lifeless as the staircase was when I ascended it.

Herbert received me with open arms, and I had never felt before so blessedly what it is to have a friend. When he had spoken some sound words of sympathy and encouragement, we sat down to consider the question, What was to be done?

The chair that Provis had occupied still remaining where it had stood,—for he had a barrack way with him of hanging about one spot, in one unsettled manner, and going through one round of observances with his pipe and his negro-head and his jackknife and his pack of cards, and what not, as if it were all put down for him on a slate,—I say his chair remaining where it had stood, Herbert unconsciously took it, but next moment started out of it, pushed it away, and took another. He had no occasion to say after that that he had conceived an aversion for my patron, neither had I occasion to confess my own. We interchanged that confidence without shaping a syllable.

"What," said I to Herbert, when he was safe in another chair,—“what is to be done?”

"My poor dear Handel," he replied, holding his head, "I am too stunned to think."

"So was I, Herbert, when the blow first fell. Still, something must be done. He is intent upon various new expenses,—horses, and carriages, and lavish appearances of all kinds. He must be stopped somehow."

"You mean that you can't accept—"

"How can I?" I interposed, as Herbert paused. "Think of him! Look at him!"

An involuntary shudder passed over both of us.

"Yet I am afraid the dreadful truth is, Herbert, that he

is attached to me, strongly attached to me. Was there ever such a fate!"

"My poor dear Handel," Herbert repeated.

"Then," said I, "after all, stopping short here, never taking another penny from him, think what I owe him already! Then again: I am heavily in debt,—very heavily for me, who have now no expectations,—and I have been bred to no calling, and I am fit for nothing."

"Well, well, well!" Herbert remonstrated. "Don't say fit for nothing."

"What am I fit for? I know only one thing that I am fit for, and that is, to go for a soldier. And I might have gone, my dear Herbert, but for the prospect of taking counsel with your friendship and affection."

Of course I broke down there: and of course Herbert, beyond seizing a warm grip of my hand, pretended not to know it.

"Anyhow, my dear Handel," said he presently, "soldiering won't do. If you were to renounce this patronage and these favours, I suppose you would do so with some faint hope of one day repaying what you have already had. Not very strong, that hope, if you went soldiering! Besides, it's absurd. You would be infinitely better in Clarriker's house, small as it is. I am working up towards a partnership, you know."

Poor fellow! He little suspected with whose money.

"But there is another question," said Herbert. "This is an ignorant, determined man, who has long had one fixed idea. More than that, he seems to me (I may misjudge him) to be a man of a desperate and fierce character."

"I know he is," I returned. "Let me tell you what evidence I have seen of it." And I told him what I had not mentioned in my narrative, of that encounter with the other convict.

"See, then," said Herbert; "think of this! He comes here at the peril of his life, for the realisation of his fixed idea. In the moment of realisation, after all his toil and waiting, you cut the ground from under his feet, destroy his idea, and make his gains worthless to him. Do you see nothing that he might do, under the disappointment?"

"I have seen it, Herbert, and dreamed of it, ever since the fatal night of his arrival. Nothing has been in my thoughts so distinctly as his putting himself in the way of being taken."

"Then you may rely upon it," said Herbert, "that there would be great danger of his doing it. That is his power over you as long as he remains in England, and that would be his reckless course if you forsook him."

I was so struck by the horror of this idea, which had weighed upon me from the first, and the working out of which would make me regard myself, in some sort, as his

murderer, that I could not rest in my chair, but began pacing to and fro. I said to Herbert, meanwhile, that even if Provis were recognised and taken, in spite of himself, I should be wretched as the cause, however innocently. Yes; even though I was so wretched in having him at large and near me, and even though I would far rather have worked at the forge all the days of my life than I would ever have come to this!

But there was no staving off the question, What was to be done?

"The first and the main thing to be done," said Herbert, "is to get him out of England. You will have to go with him, and then he may be induced to go."

"But get him where I will, could I prevent his coming back?"

"My good Handel, is it not obvious that with Newgate in the next street, there must be far greater hazard in your breaking your mind to him and making him reckless, here, than elsewhere? If a pretext to get him away could be made out of that other convict, or out of anything else in his life, now."

"There, again!" said I, stopping before Herbert, with my open hands held out, as if they contained the desperation of the case. "I know nothing of his life. It has almost made me mad to sit here of a night and see him before me, so bound up with my fortunes and misfortunes, and yet so unknown to me, except as the miserable wretch who terrified me two days in my childhood!"

Herbert got up, and linked his arm in mine, and we slowly walked to and fro together, studying the carpet.

"Handel," said Herbert, stopping, "you feel convinced that you can take no further benefits from him; do you?"

"Fully. Surely you would, too, if you were in my place?"

"And you feel convinced that you must break with him?"

"Herbert, can you ask me?"

"And you have, and are bound to have, that tenderness for the life he has risked on your account, that you must save him, if possible, from throwing it away. Then you must get him out of England before you stir a finger to extricate yourself. That done, extricate yourself, in Heaven's name, and we'll see it out together, dear old boy."

It was a comfort to shake hands upon it, and walk up and down again, with only that done.

"Now, Herbert," said I, "with reference to gaining some knowledge of his history. There is but one way that I know of. I must ask him point blank."

"Yes. Ask him," said Herbert, "when we sit at breakfast in the morning." For he had said, on taking leave of Herbert, that he would come to breakfast with us.

With this project formed, we went to bed. I had the wildest dreams concerning him, and woke unrefreshed; I woke, too, to recover the fear which I had lost in the night, of his being found out as a returned transport. Waking, I never lost that fear.

He came round at the appointed time, took out his jackknife, and sat down to his meal. He was full of plans “for his gentleman’s coming out strong, and like a gentleman,” and urged me to begin speedily upon the pocket-book which he had left in my possession. He considered the chambers and his own lodging as temporary residences, and advised me to look out at once for a “fashionable crib” near Hyde Park, in which he could have “a shake-down.” When he had made an end of his breakfast, and was wiping his knife on his leg, I said to him, without a word of preface,—

“After you were gone last night, I told my friend of the struggle that the soldiers found you engaged in on the marshes, when we came up. You remember?”

“Remember?” said he. “I think so!”

“We want to know something about that man—and about you. It is strange to know no more about either, and particularly you, than I was able to tell last night. Is not this as good a time as another for our knowing more?”

“Well!” he said, after consideration. “You’re on your oath, you know, Pip’s comrade?”

“Assuredly,” replied Herbert.

“As to anything I say, you know,” he insisted. “The oath applies to all.”

“I understand it to do so.”

“And look’ee here! Wotever I done is worked out and paid for,” he insisted again.

“So be it.”

He took out his black pipe and was going to fill it with negro-head, when, looking at the tangle of

tobacco in his hand, he seemed to think it might perplex the thread of his narrative. He put it back again, stuck his pipe in a button-hole of his coat, spread a hand on each knee, and after turning an angry eye on the fire for a few silent moments, looked round at us and said what follows.

Chapter XLII

“Dear boy and Pip’s comrade. I am not a-going fur to tell you my life like a song, or a story-book. But to give it you short and handy, I’ll put it at once into a mouthful of English. In jail and out of jail, in jail and out of jail, in jail and out of jail. There, you’ve got it. That’s *my* life pretty much, down to such times as I got shipped off, arter Pip stood my friend.

“I’ve been done everything to, pretty well—except hanged. I’ve been locked up as much as a silver tea-kettle.

I’ve been carted here and carted there, and put out of this town, and put out of that town, and stuck in the stocks, and whipped and worried and drove. I’ve no more notion where I was born than you have—if so much. I first become aware of myself down in Essex, a thieving turnips for my living. Summun had run away from me—a man—a tinker—and he’d took the fire with him, and left me very cold.

“I know’d my name to be Magwitch, chrisen’d Abel. How did I know it? Much as I know’d the birds’ names in the hedges to be chaffinch, sparrer, thrush. I might have thought it was all lies together, only as the birds’ names come out true, I supposed mine did.

“So fur as I could find, there warn’t a soul that see young Abel Magwitch, with us little on him as in him, but wot caught fright at him, and either drove him off, or took him up. I was took up, took up, took up, to that extent that I reg’larly grow’d up took up.

“This is the way it was, that when I was a ragged little creetur as much to be pitied as ever I see (not that I looked in the glass, for there warn’t many insides of furnished houses known to me), I got the name of being hardened. ‘This is a terrible hardened one,’ they says to prison visitors, picking out me. ‘May be said to live in jails, this boy.’ Then they looked at me, and I looked at them, and they measured my head, some on ’em,—they had better a measured my stomach,—and others on ’em giv me tracts what I couldn’t read, and made me speeches what I couldn’t understand. They always went on agen me about the Devil. But what the Devil was I to do? I must put something into my stomach, mustn’t I?—Howsomever, I’m a getting low, and I know what’s due. Dear boy and Pip’s comrade, don’t you be afeerd of me being low.

“Tramping, begging, thieving, working sometimes when I could,—though that warn’t as often as you may think, till you put the question whether you would ha’ been over-ready to give me work yourselves,—a bit of a poacher, a bit of a labourer, a bit of a wagoner, a bit of a haymaker, a bit of a hawker, a bit of most things that don’t pay and lead to trouble, I got to be a man. A deserting soldier in a Traveller’s Rest, what lay hid up to the chin under a lot of tators, learnt me to read; and a travelling Giant what signed his name at a penny a time learnt me to write. I warn’t locked up as often now as formerly, but I wore out my good share of key-metal still.

“At Epsom races, a matter of over twenty years ago, I got acquainted wi’ a man whose skull I’d crack wi’ this poker, like the claw of a lobster, if I’d got it on this hob. His right name was Compeyson; and that’s the man, dear boy, what you see me a pounding in the ditch, according to what you truly told your comrade arter I was gone last night.

“He set up fur a gentleman, this Compeyson, and he’d been to a public boarding-school and had learning. He

was a smooth one to talk, and was a dab at the ways of gentlefolks. He was good-looking too. It was the night afore the great race, when I found him on the heath, in a booth that I know'd on. Him and some more was a sitting among the tables when I went in, and the landlord (which had a knowledge of me, and was a sporting one) called him out, and said, 'I think this is a man that might suit you,'—meaning I was.

"Compeyson, he looks at me very noticing, and I look at him. He has a watch and a chain and a ring and a breast-pin and a handsome suit of clothes.

"To judge from appearances, you're out of luck,' says Compeyson to me.

"Yes, master, and I've never been in it much.' (I had come out of Kingston Jail last on a vagrancy committal. Not but what it might have been for something else; but it warn't.)

"Luck changes,' says Compeyson; 'perhaps yours is going to change.'

"I says, 'I hope it may be so. There's room.'

"What can you do?' says Compeyson.

"Eat and drink,' I says; 'if you'll find the materials.'

"Compeyson laughed, looked at me again very noticing, giv me five shillings, and appointed me for next night. Same place.

"I went to Compeyson next night, same place, and Compeyson took me on to be his man and pardner. And what was Compeyson's business in which we was to go pardners? Compeyson's business was the swindling, handwriting forging, stolen bank-note passing, and such-like. All sorts of traps as Compeyson could set with his head, and keep his own legs out of and get the profits from and let another man in for, was Compeyson's business. He'd no more heart than a iron file, he was as cold as death, and he had the head of the Devil afore mentioned.

"There was another in with Compeyson, as was called Arthur,—not as being so chrisen'd, but as a surname. He was in a Decline, and was a shadow to look at. Him and Compeyson had been in a bad thing with a rich lady some years afore, and they'd made a pot of money by it; but Compeyson betted and gamed, and he'd have run through the king's taxes. So, Arthur was a dying, and a dying poor and with the horrors on him, and Compeyson's wife (which Compeyson kicked mostly) was a having pity on him when she could, and Compeyson was a having pity on nothing and nobody.

"I might a took warning by Arthur, but I didn't; and I won't pretend I was partick'ler—for where 'ud be the good on it, dear boy and comrade? So I begun wi' Compeyson, and a poor tool I was in his hands. Arthur lived at the top of Compeyson's house (over nigh Brentford it was), and Compeyson kept a careful account

agen him for board and lodging, in case he should ever get better to work it out. But Arthur soon settled the account. The second or third time as ever I see him, he come a tearing down into Compeyson's parlour late at night, in only a flannel gown, with his hair all in a sweat, and he says to Compeyson's wife, 'Sally, she really is upstairs alonger me, now, and I can't get rid of her. She's all in white,' he says, 'wi' white flowers in her hair, and she's awful mad, and she's got a shroud hanging over her arm, and she says she'll put it on me at five in the morning.'

"Says Compeyson: 'Why, you fool, don't you know she's got a living body? And how should she be up there, without coming through the door, or in at the window, and up the stairs?'

"I don't know how she's there,' says Arthur, shivering dreadful with the horrors, 'but she's standing in the corner at the foot of the bed, awful mad. And over where her heart's broke—you broke it!—there's drops of blood.'

"Compeyson spoke hardy, but he was always a coward. 'Go up alonger this drivelling sick man,' he says to his wife, 'and Magwitch, lend her a hand, will you?' But he never come nigh himself.

"Compeyson's wife and me took him up to bed agen, and he raved most dreadful. 'Why look at her!' he cries out. 'She's a shaking the shroud at me! Don't you see her? Look at her eyes! Ain't it awful to see her so mad?' Next he cries, 'She'll put it on me, and then I'm done for! Take it away from her, take it away!' And then he caught hold of us, and kep on a talking to her, and answering of her, till I half believed I see her myself.

"Compeyson's wife, being used to him, giv him some liquor to get the horrors off, and by and by he quieted. 'O, she's gone! Has her keeper been for her?' he says. 'Yes,' says Compeyson's wife. 'Did you tell him to lock her and bar her in?' 'Yes.' 'And to take that ugly thing away from her?' 'Yes, yes, all right.' 'You're a good creetur,' he says, 'don't leave me, whatever you do, and thank you!'

"He rested pretty quiet till it might want a few minutes of five, and then he starts up with a scream, and screams out, 'Here she is! She's got the shroud again. She's unfolding it. She's coming out of the corner. She's coming to the bed. Hold me, both on you—one of each side—don't let her touch me with it. Hah! she missed me that time. Don't let her throw it over my shoulders. Don't let her lift me up to get it round me. She's lifting me up. Keep me down!' Then he lifted himself up hard, and was dead.

"Compeyson took it easy as a good riddance for both sides. Him and me was soon busy, and first he swore me (being ever artful) on my own book,—this here little black book, dear boy, what I swore your comrade on.

"Not to go into the things that Compeyson planned, and I done—which 'ud take a week—I'll simply say to you, dear boy, and Pip's comrade, that that man got me into such nets as made me his black slave. I was always in

debt to him, always under his thumb, always a working, always a getting into

danger. He was younger than me, but he'd got craft, and he'd got learning, and he overmatched me five hundred times told and no mercy. My Missis as I had the hard time wi'—Stop though! I ain't brought *her* in."

He looked about him in a confused way, as if he had lost his place in the book of his remembrance; and he turned his face to the fire, and spread his hands broader on his knees, and lifted them off and put them on again.

"There ain't no need to go into it," he said, looking round once more. "The time wi' Compeyson was a'most as hard a time as ever I had; that said, all's said. Did I tell you as I was tried, alone, for misdemeanor, while with Compeyson?"

I answered, No.

"Well!" he said, "I *was*, and got convicted. As to took up on suspicion, that was twice or three times in the four or five year that it lasted; but evidence was wanting. At last, me and Compeyson was both committed for felony,—on a charge of putting stolen notes in circulation,—and there was other charges behind. Compeyson says to me, 'Separate defences, no communication,' and that was all. And I was so miserable poor, that I sold all the clothes I had, except what hung on my back, afore I could get Jagers.

"When we was put in the dock, I noticed first of all what a gentleman Compeyson looked, wi' his curly hair and his black clothes and his white pocket-handkercher, and what a common sort of a wretch I looked. When the prosecution opened and the evidence was put short, aforehand, I noticed how heavy it all bore on me, and how light on him. When the evidence was giv in the box, I noticed how it was always me that had come for'ard, and could be swore to, how it was always me that the money had been paid to, how it was always me that had seemed to work the thing and get the profit. But when the defence come on, then I see the plan plainer; for, says the counsellor for Compeyson, 'My lord and gentlemen, here you has afore you, side by side, two persons as your eyes can separate wide; one, the younger, well brought up, who will be spoke to as such; one, the elder, ill brought up, who will be spoke to as such; one, the younger, seldom if ever seen in these here transactions, and only suspected; t'other, the elder, always seen in 'em and always wi' his guilt brought home. Can you doubt, if there is but one in it, which is the one, and, if there is two in it, which is much the worst one?' And such-like. And when it come to character, warn't it Compeyson as had been to the school, and warn't it his schoolfellows as was in this position and in that, and warn't it him as had been know'd by witnesses in such clubs and societies, and nowt to his disadvantage? And warn't it me as had been tried afore, and as had been know'd up hill and down dale in Bridewells and Lock-Ups!

And when it come to speech-making, warn't it Compeyson as could speak to 'em wi' his face dropping every now and then into his white pocket-handkercher,—ah! and wi' verses in his speech, too,—and warn't it me as could only say, 'Gentlemen, this man at my side is a most precious rascal'? And when the verdict come, warn't it Compeyson as was recommended to mercy on account of good character and bad company, and giving up all the information he could agen me, and warn't it me as got never a word but Guilty? And when I says to Compeyson, 'Once out of this court, I'll smash that face of yourn!' ain't it Compeyson as prays the Judge to be protected, and gets two turnkeys stood betwixt us? And when we're sentenced, ain't it him as gets seven year, and me fourteen, and ain't it him as the Judge is sorry for, because he might a done so well, and ain't it me as the Judge perceives to be a old offender of violent passion, likely to come to worse?"

He had worked himself into a state of great excitement, but he checked it, took two or three short breaths, swallowed as often, and stretching out his hand towards me said, in a reassuring manner, "I ain't a-going to be low, dear boy!"

He had so heated himself that he took out his handkerchief and wiped his face and head and neck and hands, before he could go on.

"I had said to Compeyson that I'd smash that face of his, and I swore Lord smash mine! to do it. We was in the same prison-ship, but I couldn't get at him for long, though I tried. At last I come behind him and hit him on the cheek to turn him round and get a smashing one at him, when I was seen and seized. The black-hole of that ship warn't a strong one, to a judge of black-holes that could swim and dive. I escaped to the shore, and I was a hiding among the graves there, envying them as was in 'em and all over, when I first see my boy!"

He regarded me with a look of affection that made him almost abhorrent to me again, though I had felt great pity for him.

"By my boy, I was giv to understand as Compeyson was out on them marshes too. Upon my soul, I half believe he escaped in his terror, to get quit of me, not knowing it was me as had got ashore. I hunted him down. I smashed his face. 'And now,' says I 'as the worst thing I can do, caring nothing for myself, I'll drag you back.' And I'd have swum off, towing him by the hair, if it had come to that, and I'd a got him aboard without the soldiers.

"Of course he'd much the best of it to the last,—his character was so good. He had escaped when he was made half wild by me and my murderous intentions; and his punishment was light. I was put in irons, brought to trial again, and sent for life. I didn't stop for life, dear boy and Pip's comrade, being here."

He wiped himself again, as he had done before, and then slowly took his tangle of tobacco from his pocket,

and plucked his pipe from his button-hole, and slowly filled it, and began to smoke.

"Is he dead?" I asked, after a silence.

"Is who dead, dear boy?"

"Compeyson."

"He hopes *I* am, if he's alive, you may be sure," with a fierce look. "I never heerd no more of him."

Herbert had been writing with his pencil in the cover of a book. He softly pushed the book over to me, as Provis stood smoking with his eyes on the fire, and I read in it:—

"Young Havisham's name was Arthur. Compeyson is the man who professed to be Miss Havisham's lover."

I shut the book and nodded slightly to Herbert, and put the book by; but we neither of us said anything, and both looked at Provis as he stood smoking by the fire.

Chapter XLIII

Why should I pause to ask how much of my shrinking from Provis might be traced to Estella? Why should I loiter on my road, to compare the state of mind in which I had tried to rid myself of the stain of the prison before meeting her at the coach-office, with the state of mind in which I now reflected on the abyss between Estella in her pride and beauty, and the returned transport whom I harboured? The road would be none the smoother for it, the end would be none the better for it, he would not be helped, nor I extenuated.

A new fear had been engendered in my mind by his narrative; or rather, his narrative had given form and purpose to the fear that was already there. If Compeyson were alive and should discover his return, I could hardly doubt the consequence. That Compeyson stood in mortal fear of him, neither of the two could know much better than I; and that any such man as that man had been described to be would hesitate to release himself for good from a dreaded enemy by the safe means of becoming an informer was scarcely to be imagined.

Never had I breathed, and never would I breathe—or so I resolved—a word of Estella to Provis. But, I said to Herbert that, before I could go abroad, I must see both Estella and Miss Havisham. This was when we were left alone on the night of the day when Provis told us his story. I resolved to go out to Richmond next day, and I went.

On my presenting myself at Mrs. Brandley's, Estella's maid was called to tell that Estella had gone into the country. Where? To Satis House, as usual. Not as usual, I said, for she had never yet gone there without me; when was she coming back? There was an air of reservation in the answer which increased my perplexity, and the answer was, that her maid believed she was only coming back at all for a little while. I could make nothing of this, except

that it was meant that I should make nothing of it, and I went home again in complete discomfiture.

Another night consultation with Herbert after Provis was gone home (I always took him home, and always looked well about me), led us to the conclusion that nothing should be said about going abroad until I came back from Miss Havisham's. In the mean time, Herbert and I were to consider separately what it would be best to say; whether we should devise any pretence of being afraid that he was under suspicious observation; or whether I, who had never yet been abroad, should propose an expedition. We both knew that I had but to propose anything, and he would consent. We agreed that his remaining many days in his present hazard was not to be thought of.

Next day I had the meanness to feign that I was under a binding promise to go down to Joe; but I was capable of almost any meanness towards Joe or his name. Provis was to be strictly careful while I was gone, and Herbert was to take the charge of him that I had taken. I was to be absent only one night, and, on my return, the gratification of his impatience for my starting as a gentleman on a greater scale was to be begun. It occurred to me then, and as I afterwards found to Herbert also, that he might be best got away across the water, on that pretence,—as, to make purchases, or the like.

Having thus cleared the way for my expedition to Miss Havisham's, I set off by the early morning coach before it was yet light, and was out on the open country road when the day came creeping on, halting and whimpering and shivering, and wrapped in patches of cloud and rags of mist, like a beggar. When we drove up to the Blue Boar after a drizzly ride, whom should I see come out under the gateway, toothpick in hand, to look at the coach, but Bentley Drummle!

As he pretended not to see me, I pretended not to see him. It was a very lame pretence on both sides; the lamer, because we both went into the coffee-room, where he had just finished his breakfast, and where I ordered mine. It was poisonous to me to see him in the town, for I very well knew why he had come there.

Pretending to read a smeary newspaper long out of date, which had nothing half so legible in its local news, as the foreign matter of coffee, pickles, fish sauces, gravy, melted butter, and wine with which it was sprinkled all over, as if it had taken the measles in a highly irregular form, I sat at my table while he stood before the fire. By degrees it became an enormous injury to me that he stood before the fire. And I got up, determined to have my share of it. I had to put my hand behind his legs for the poker when I went up to the fireplace to stir the fire, but still pretended not to know him.

"Is this a cut?" said Mr. Drummle.

"Oh!" said I, poker in hand; "it's you, is it? How do you do? I was wondering who it was, who kept the fire off."

With that, I poked tremendously, and having done so, planted myself side by side with Mr. Drummle, my shoulders squared and my back to the fire.

"You have just come down?" said Mr. Drummle, edging me a little away with his shoulder.

"Yes," said I, edging *him* a little away with *my* shoulder.

"Beastly place," said Drummle. "Your part of the country, I think?"

"Yes," I assented. "I am told it's very like your Shropshire."

"Not in the least like it," said Drummle.

Here Mr. Drummle looked at his boots and I looked at mine, and then Mr. Drummle looked at my boots, and I looked at his.

"Have you been here long?" I asked, determined not to yield an inch of the fire.

"Long enough to be tired of it," returned Drummle, pretending to yawn, but equally determined.

"Do you stay here long?"

"Can't say," answered Mr. Drummle. "Do you?"

"Can't say," said I.

I felt here, through a tingling in my blood, that if Mr. Drummle's shoulder had claimed another hair's breadth of room, I should have jerked him into the window; equally, that if my own shoulder had urged a similar claim, Mr. Drummle would have jerked me into the nearest box. He whistled a little. So did I.

"Large tract of marshes about here, I believe?" said Drummle.

"Yes. What of that?" said I.

Mr. Drummle looked at me, and then at my boots, and then said, "Oh!" and laughed.

"Are you amused, Mr. Drummle?"

"No," said he, "not particularly. I am going out for a ride in the saddle. I mean to explore those marshes for amusement. Out-of-the-way villages there, they tell me. Curious little public-houses—and smithies—and that. Waiter!"

"Yes, sir."

"Is that horse of mine ready?"

"Brought round to the door, sir."

"I say. Look here, you sir. The lady won't ride to-day; the weather won't do."

"Very good, sir."

"And I don't dine, because I'm going to dine at the lady's."

"Very good, sir."

Then, Drummle glanced at me, with an insolent triumph on his great-jowled face that cut me to the heart, dull as he was, and so exasperated me, that I felt inclined to take him in my arms (as the robber in the story-book is said to have taken the old lady) and seat him on the fire.

One thing was manifest to both of us, and that was, that until relief came, neither of us could relinquish the fire. There we stood, well squared up before it, shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot, with our hands behind us, not budging an inch. The horse was visible outside in the drizzle at the door, my breakfast was put on the table, Drummle's was cleared away, the waiter invited me to begin, I nodded, we both stood our ground.

"Have you been to the Grove since?" said Drummle.

"No," said I, "I had quite enough of the Finches the last time I was there."

"Was that when we had a difference of opinion?"

"Yes," I replied, very shortly.

"Come, come! They let you off easily enough," sneered Drummle. "You shouldn't have lost your temper."

"Mr. Drummle," said I, "you are not competent to give advice on that subject. When I lose my temper (not that I admit having done so on that occasion), I don't throw glasses."

"I do," said Drummle.

After glancing at him once or twice, in an increased state of smouldering ferocity, I said,—

"Mr. Drummle, I did not seek this conversation, and I don't think it an agreeable one."

"I am sure it's not," said he, superciliously over his shoulder; "I don't think anything about it."

"And therefore," I went on, "with your leave, I will suggest that we hold no kind of communication in future."

"Quite my opinion," said Drummle, "and what I should have suggested myself, or done—more likely—without suggesting. But don't lose your temper. Haven't you lost enough without that?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Waiter!" said Drummle, by way of answering me.

The waiter reappeared.

"Look here, you sir. You quite understand that the young lady don't ride to-day, and that I dine at the young lady's?"

"Quite so, sir!"

When the waiter had felt my fast-cooling teapot with the palm of his hand, and had looked imploringly at me, and had gone out, Drummle, careful not to move the shoulder next me, took a cigar from his pocket and bit the

end off, but showed no sign of stirring. Choking and boiling as I was, I felt that we could not go a word further, without introducing Estella's name, which I could not endure to hear him utter; and therefore I looked stonily at the opposite wall, as if there were no one present, and forced myself to silence. How long we might have remained in this ridiculous position it is impossible to say, but for the incursion of three thriving farmers—laid on by the waiter, I think—who came into the coffee-room unbuttoning their great-coats and rubbing their hands, and before whom, as they charged at the fire, we were obliged to give way.

I saw him through the window, seizing his horse's mane, and mounting in his blundering brutal manner, and sidling and backing away. I thought he was gone, when he came back, calling for a light for the cigar in his mouth, which he had forgotten. A man in a dust-coloured dress appeared with what was wanted,—I could not have said from where: whether from the inn yard, or the street, or where not,—and as Drummle leaned down from the saddle and lighted his cigar and laughed, with a jerk of his head towards the coffee-room windows, the slouching shoulders and ragged hair of this man whose back was towards me reminded me of Orlick.

Too heavily out of sorts to care much at the time whether it were he or no, or after all to touch the breakfast, I washed the weather and the journey from my face and hands, and went out to the memorable old house that it would have been so much the better for me never to have entered, never to have seen.

Chapter XLIV

In the room where the dressing-table stood, and where the wax-candles burnt on the wall, I found Miss Havisham and Estella; Miss Havisham seated on a settee near the fire, and Estella on a cushion at her feet. Estella was knitting, and Miss Havisham was looking on. They both raised their eyes as I went in, and both saw an alteration in me. I derived that, from the look they interchanged.

"And what wind," said Miss Havisham, "blows you here, Pip?"

Though she looked steadily at me, I saw that she was rather confused. Estella, pausing a moment in her knitting with her eyes upon me, and then going on, I fancied that I read in the action of her fingers, as plainly as if she had told me in the dumb alphabet, that she perceived I had discovered my real benefactor.

"Miss Havisham," said I, "I went to Richmond yesterday, to speak to Estella; and finding that some wind had blown *her* here, I followed."

Miss Havisham motioning to me for the third or fourth time to sit down, I took the chair by the dressing-table, which I had often seen her occupy. With all that ruin at

my feet and about me, it seemed a natural place for me, that day.

"What I had to say to Estella, Miss Havisham, I will say before you, presently—in a few moments. It will not surprise you, it will not displease you. I am as unhappy as you can ever have meant me to be."

Miss Havisham continued to look steadily at me. I could see in the action of Estella's fingers as they worked that she attended to what I said; but she did not look up.

"I have found out who my patron is. It is not a fortunate discovery, and is not likely ever to enrich me in reputation, station, fortune, anything. There are reasons why I must say no more of that. It is not my secret, but another's."

As I was silent for a while, looking at Estella and considering how to go on, Miss Havisham repeated, "It is not your secret, but another's. Well?"

"When you first caused me to be brought here, Miss Havisham, when I belonged to the village over yonder, that I wish I had never left, I suppose I did really come here, as any other chance boy might have come,—as a kind of servant, to gratify a want or a whim, and to be paid for it?"

"Ay, Pip," replied Miss Havisham, steadily nodding her head; "you did."

"And that Mr. Jaggers—"

"Mr. Jaggers," said Miss Havisham, taking me up in a firm tone, "had nothing to do with it, and knew nothing of it. His being my lawyer, and his being the lawyer of your patron is a coincidence. He holds the same relation towards numbers of people, and it might easily arise. Be that as it may, it did arise, and was not brought about by any one."

Any one might have seen in her haggard face that there was no suppression or evasion so far.

"But when I fell into the mistake I have so long remained in, at least you led me on?" said I.

"Yes," she returned, again nodding steadily, "I let you go on."

"Was that kind?"

"Who am I," cried Miss Havisham, striking her stick upon the floor and flashing into wrath so suddenly that Estella glanced up at her in surprise,—"*who am I*, for God's sake, that I should be kind?"

It was a weak complaint to have made, and I had not meant to make it. I told her so, as she sat brooding after this outburst.

"Well, well, well!" she said. "What else?"

"I was liberally paid for my old attendance here," I said, to soothe her, "in being apprenticed, and I have asked these questions only for my own information. What

follows has another (and I hope more disinterested) purpose. In humouring my mistake, Miss Havisham, you punished—practised on—perhaps you will supply whatever term expresses your intention, without offence—your self-seeking relations?”

“I did. Why, they would have it so! So would you. What has been my history, that I should be at the pains of entreating either them or you not to have it so! You made your own snares. *I* never made them.”

Waiting until she was quiet again,—for this, too, flashed out of her in a wild and sudden way,—I went on.

“I have been thrown among one family of your relations, Miss Havisham, and have been constantly among them since I went to London. I know them to have been as honestly under my delusion as I myself. And I should be false and base if I did not tell you, whether it is acceptable to you or no, and whether you are inclined to give credence to it or no, that you deeply wrong both Mr. Matthew Pocket and his son Herbert, if you suppose them to be otherwise than generous, upright, open, and incapable of anything designing or mean.”

“They are your friends,” said Miss Havisham.

“They made themselves my friends,” said I, “when they supposed me to have superseded them; and when Sarah Pocket, Miss Georgiana, and Mistress Camilla were not my friends, I think.”

This contrasting of them with the rest seemed, I was glad to see, to do them good with her. She looked at me keenly for a little while, and then said quietly,—

“What do you want for them?”

“Only,” said I, “that you would not confound them with the others. They may be of the same blood, but, believe me, they are not of the same nature.”

Still looking at me keenly, Miss Havisham repeated,

“What do you want for them?”

“I am not so cunning, you see,” I said, in answer, conscious that I reddened a little, “as that I could hide from you, even if I desired, that I do want something. Miss Havisham, if you would spare the money to do my friend Herbert a lasting service in life, but which from the nature of the case must be done without his knowledge, I could show you how.”

“Why must it be done without his knowledge?” she asked, settling her hands upon her stick, that she might regard me the more attentively.

“Because,” said I, “I began the service myself, more than two years ago, without his knowledge, and I don’t want to be betrayed. Why I fail in my ability to finish it, I cannot explain. It is a part of the secret which is another person’s and not mine.”

She gradually withdrew her eyes from me, and turned them on the fire. After watching it for what appeared in

the silence and by the light of the slowly wasting candles to be a long time, she was roused by the collapse of some of the red coals, and looked towards me again—at first, vacantly—then, with a gradually concentrating attention. All this time Estella knitted on. When Miss Havisham had fixed her attention on me, she said, speaking as if there had been no lapse in our dialogue,—

“What else?”

“Estella,” said I, turning to her now, and trying to command my trembling voice, “you know I love you. You know that I have loved you long and dearly.”

She raised her eyes to my face, on being thus addressed, and her fingers plied their work, and she looked at me with an unmoved countenance. I saw that Miss Havisham glanced from me to her, and from her to me.

“I should have said this sooner, but for my long mistake. It induced me to hope that Miss Havisham meant us for one another. While I thought you could not help yourself, as it were, I refrained from saying it. But I must say it now.”

Preserving her unmoved countenance, and with her fingers still going, Estella shook her head.

“I know,” said I, in answer to that action,—“I know. I have no hope that I shall ever call you mine, Estella. I am ignorant what may become of me very soon, how poor I may be, or where I may go. Still, I love you. I have loved you ever since I first saw you in this house.”

Looking at me perfectly unmoved and with her fingers busy, she shook her head again.

“It would have been cruel in Miss Havisham, horribly cruel, to practise on the susceptibility of a poor boy, and to torture me through all these years with a vain hope and an idle pursuit, if she had reflected on the gravity of what she did. But I think she did not. I think that, in the endurance of her own trial, she forgot mine, Estella.”

I saw Miss Havisham put her hand to her heart and hold it there, as she sat looking by turns at Estella and at me.

“It seems,” said Estella, very calmly, “that there are sentiments, fancies,—I don’t know how to call them,—which I am not able to comprehend. When you say you love me, I know what you mean, as a form of words; but nothing more. You address nothing in my breast, you touch nothing there. I don’t care for what you say at all. I have tried to warn you of this; now, have I not?”

I said in a miserable manner, “Yes.”

“Yes. But you would not be warned, for you thought I did not mean it. Now, did you not think so?”

“I thought and hoped you could not mean it. You, so young, untried, and beautiful, Estella! Surely it is not in Nature.”

“It is in *my* nature,” she returned. And then she added, with a stress upon the words, “It is in the nature formed

within me. I make a great difference between you and all other people when I say so much. I can do no more."

"Is it not true," said I, "that Bentley Drummle is in town here, and pursuing you?"

"It is quite true," she replied, referring to him with the indifference of utter contempt.

"That you encourage him, and ride out with him, and that he dines with you this very day?"

She seemed a little surprised that I should know it, but again replied, "Quite true."

"You cannot love him, Estella!"

Her fingers stopped for the first time, as she retorted rather angrily, "What have I told you? Do you still think, in spite of it, that I do not mean what I say?"

"You would never marry him, Estella?"

She looked towards Miss Havisham, and considered for a moment with her work in her hands. Then she said, "Why not tell you the truth? I am going to be married to him."

I dropped my face into my hands, but was able to control myself better than I could have expected, considering what agony it gave me to hear her say those words. When I raised my face again, there was such a ghastly look upon Miss Havisham's, that it impressed me, even in my passionate hurry and grief.

"Estella, dearest Estella, do not let Miss Havisham lead you into this fatal step. Put me aside for ever,—you have done so, I well know,—but bestow yourself on some worthier person than Drummle. Miss Havisham gives you to him, as the greatest slight and injury that could be done to the many far better men who admire you, and to the few who truly love you. Among those few there may be one who loves you even as dearly, though he has not loved you as long, as I. Take him, and I can bear it better, for your sake!"

My earnestness awoke a wonder in her that seemed as if it would have been touched with compassion, if she could have rendered me at all intelligible to her own mind.

"I am going," she said again, in a gentler voice, "to be married to him. The preparations for my marriage are making, and I shall be married soon. Why do you injuriously introduce the name of my mother by adoption? It is my own act."

"Your own act, Estella, to fling yourself away upon a brute?"

"On whom should I fling myself away?" she retorted, with a smile. "Should I fling myself away upon the man who would the soonest feel (if people do feel such things) that I took nothing to him? There! It is done. I shall do well enough, and so will my husband. As to leading me into what you call this fatal step, Miss Havisham would have had me wait, and not marry yet; but I am tired of the

life I have led, which has very few charms for me, and I am willing enough to change it. Say no more. We shall never understand each other."

"Such a mean brute, such a stupid brute!" I urged, in despair.

"Don't be afraid of my being a blessing to him," said Estella; "I shall not be that. Come! Here is my hand. Do we part on this, you visionary boy—or man?"

"O Estella!" I answered, as my bitter tears fell fast on her hand, do what I would to restrain them; "even if I remained in England and could hold my head up with the rest, how could I see you Drummle's wife?"

"Nonsense," she returned,— "nonsense. This will pass in no time."

"Never, Estella!"

"You will get me out of your thoughts in a week."

"Out of my thoughts! You are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line I have ever read since I first came here, the rough common boy whose poor heart you wounded even then. You have been in every prospect I have ever seen since,—on the river, on the sails of the ships, on the marshes, in the clouds, in the light, in the darkness, in the wind, in the woods, in the sea, in the streets. You have been the embodiment of every graceful fancy that my mind has ever become acquainted with. The stones of which the strongest London buildings are made are not more real, or more impossible to be displaced by your hands, than your presence and influence have been to me, there and everywhere, and will be. Estella, to the last hour of my life, you cannot choose but remain part of my character, part of the little good in me, part of the evil. But, in this separation, I associate you only with the good; and I will faithfully hold you to that always, for you must have done me far more good than harm, let me feel now what sharp distress I may. O God bless you, God forgive you!"

In what ecstasy of unhappiness I got these broken words out of myself, I don't know. The rhapsody welled up within me, like blood from an inward wound, and gushed out. I held her hand to my lips some lingering moments, and so I left her. But ever afterwards, I remembered,—and soon afterwards with stronger reason,—that while Estella looked at me merely with incredulous wonder, the spectral figure of Miss Havisham, her hand still covering her heart, seemed all resolved into a ghastly stare of pity and remorse.

All done, all gone! So much was done and gone, that when I went out at the gate, the light of the day seemed of a darker colour than when I went in. For a while, I hid myself among some lanes and by-paths, and then struck off to walk all the way to London. For, I had by that time come to myself so far as to consider that I could not go back to the inn and see Drummle there; that I could not

bear to sit upon the coach and be spoken to; that I could do nothing half so good for myself as tire myself out.

It was past midnight when I crossed London Bridge. Pursuing the narrow intricacies of the streets which at that time tended westward near the Middlesex shore of the river, my readiest access to the Temple was close by the river-side, through Whitefriars. I was not expected till tomorrow; but I had my keys, and, if Herbert were gone to bed, could get to bed myself without disturbing him.

As it seldom happened that I came in at that Whitefriars gate after the Temple was closed, and as I was very muddy and weary, I did not take it ill that the night-porter examined me with much attention as he held the gate a little way open for me to pass in. To help his memory I mentioned my name.

"I was not quite sure, sir, but I thought so. Here's a note, sir. The messenger that brought it, said would you be so good as read it by my lantern?"

Much surprised by the request, I took the note. It was directed to Philip Pip, Esquire, and on the top of the superscription were the words, "PLEASE READ THIS, HERE." I opened it, the watchman holding up his light, and read inside, in Wemmick's writing,—

"DON'T GO HOME."

Chapter XLV

Turning from the Temple gate as soon as I had read the warning, I made the best of my way to Fleet Street, and there got a late hackney chariot and drove to the Hummums in Covent Garden. In those times a bed was always to be got there at any hour of the night, and the chamberlain, letting me in at his ready wicket, lighted the candle next in order on his shelf, and showed me straight into the bedroom next in order on his list. It was a sort of vault on the ground floor at the back, with a despotic monster of a four-post bedstead in it, straddling over the whole place, putting one of his arbitrary legs into the fireplace and another into the doorway, and squeezing the wretched little washing-stand in quite a Divinely Righteous manner.

As I had asked for a night-light, the chamberlain had brought me in, before he left me, the good old constitutional rushlight of those virtuous days—an object like the ghost of a walking-cane, which instantly broke its back if it were touched, which nothing could ever be lighted at, and which was placed in solitary confinement at the bottom of a high tin tower, perforated with round holes that made a staringly wide-awake pattern on the walls. When I had got into bed, and lay there footsore, weary, and wretched, I found that I could no more close my own eyes than I could close the eyes of this foolish Argus. And thus, in the gloom and death of the night, we stared at one another.

What a doleful night! How anxious, how dismal, how long! There was an inhospitable smell in the room, of cold soot and hot dust; and, as I looked up into the corners of the tester over my head, I thought what a number of blue-bottle flies from the butchers', and earwigs from the market, and grubs from the country, must be holding on up there, lying by for next summer. This led me to speculate whether any of them ever tumbled down, and then I fancied that I felt light falls on my face,—a disagreeable turn of thought, suggesting other and more objectionable approaches up my back. When I had lain awake a little while, those extraordinary voices with which silence teems began to make themselves audible. The closet whispered, the fireplace sighed, the little washing-stand ticked, and one guitar-string played occasionally in the chest of drawers. At about the same time, the eyes on the wall acquired a new expression, and in every one of those staring rounds I saw written, DON'T GO HOME.

Whatever night-fancies and night-noises crowded on me, they never warded off this DON'T GO HOME. It plaited itself into whatever I thought of, as a bodily pain would have done. Not long before, I had read in the newspapers, how a gentleman unknown had come to the Hummums in the night, and had gone to bed, and had destroyed himself, and had been found in the morning weltering in blood. It came into my head that he must have occupied this very vault of mine, and I got out of bed to assure myself that there were no red marks about; then opened the door to look out into the passages, and cheer myself with the companionship of a distant light, near which I knew the chamberlain to be dozing. But all this time, why I was not to go home, and what had happened at home, and when I should go home, and whether Provis was safe at home, were questions occupying my mind so busily, that one might have supposed there could be no more room in it for any other theme. Even when I thought of Estella, and how we had parted that day forever, and when I recalled all the circumstances of our parting, and all her looks and tones, and the action of her fingers while she knitted,—even then I was pursuing, here and there and everywhere, the caution, Don't go home. When at last I dozed, in sheer exhaustion of mind and body, it became a vast shadowy verb which I had to conjugate. Imperative mood, present tense: Do not thou go home, let him not go home, let us not go home, do not ye or you go home, let not them go home. Then potentially: I may not and I cannot go home; and I might not, could not, would not, and should not go home; until I felt that I was going distracted, and rolled over on the pillow, and looked at the staring rounds upon the wall again.

I had left directions that I was to be called at seven; for it was plain that I must see Wemmick before seeing any one else, and equally plain that this was a case in which his Walworth sentiments only could be taken. It was a relief to get out of the room where the night had been so

miserable, and I needed no second knocking at the door to startle me from my uneasy bed.

The Castle battlements arose upon my view at eight o'clock. The little servant happening to be entering the fortress with two hot rolls, I passed through the postern and crossed the drawbridge in her company, and so came without announcement into the presence of Wemmick as he was making tea for himself and the Aged. An open door afforded a perspective view of the Aged in bed.

"Halloa, Mr. Pip!" said Wemmick. "You did come home, then?"

"Yes," I returned; "but I didn't go home."

"That's all right," said he, rubbing his hands. "I left a note for you at each of the Temple gates, on the chance. Which gate did you come to?"

I told him.

"I'll go round to the others in the course of the day and destroy the notes," said Wemmick; "it's a good rule never to leave documentary evidence if you can help it, because you don't know when it may be put in. I'm going to take a liberty with you. *Would* you mind toasting this sausage for the Aged P.?"

I said I should be delighted to do it.

"Then you can go about your work, Mary Anne," said Wemmick to the little servant; "which leaves us to ourselves, don't you see, Mr. Pip?" he added, winking, as she disappeared.

I thanked him for his friendship and caution, and our discourse proceeded in a low tone, while I toasted the Aged's sausage and he buttered the crumb of the Aged's roll.

"Now, Mr. Pip, you know," said Wemmick, "you and I understand one another. We are in our private and personal capacities, and we have been engaged in a confidential transaction before to-day. Official sentiments are one thing. We are extra official."

I cordially assented. I was so very nervous, that I had already lighted the Aged's sausage like a torch, and been obliged to blow it out.

"I accidentally heard, yesterday morning," said Wemmick, "being in a certain place where I once took you,—even between you and me, it's as well not to mention names when avoidable—"

"Much better not," said I. "I understand you."

"I heard there by chance, yesterday morning," said Wemmick, "that a certain person not altogether of uncolonial pursuits, and not unpossessed of portable property,—I don't know who it may really be,—we won't name this person—"

"Not necessary," said I.

"—Had made some little stir in a certain part of the

world where a good many people go, not always in gratification of their own inclinations, and not quite irrespective of the government expense—"

In watching his face, I made quite a firework of the Aged's sausage, and greatly discomposed both my own attention and Wemmick's; for which I apologised.

"—By disappearing from such place, and being no more heard of thereabouts. From which," said Wemmick, "conjectures had been raised and theories formed. I also heard that you at your chambers in Garden Court, Temple, had been watched, and might be watched again."

"By whom?" said I.

"I wouldn't go into that," said Wemmick, evasively, "it might clash with official responsibilities. I heard it, as I have in my time heard other curious things in the same place. I don't tell it you on information received. I heard it."

He took the toasting-fork and sausage from me as he spoke, and set forth the Aged's breakfast neatly on a little tray. Previous to placing it before him, he went into the Aged's room with a clean white cloth, and tied the same under the old gentleman's chin, and propped him up, and put his nightcap on one side, and gave him quite a rakish air. Then he placed his breakfast before him with great care, and said, "All right, ain't you, Aged P.?" To which the cheerful Aged replied, "All right, John, my boy, all right!" As there seemed to be a tacit understanding that the Aged was not in a presentable state, and was therefore to be considered invisible, I made a pretence of being in complete ignorance of these proceedings.

"This watching of me at my chambers (which I have once had reason to suspect)," I said to Wemmick when he came back, "is inseparable from the person to whom you have adverted; is it?"

Wemmick looked very serious. "I couldn't undertake to say that, of my own knowledge. I mean, I couldn't undertake to say it was at first. But it either is, or it will be, or it's in great danger of being."

As I saw that he was restrained by fealty to Little Britain from saying as much as he could, and as I knew with thankfulness to him how far out of his way he went to say what he did, I could not press him. But I told him, after a little meditation over the fire, that I would like to ask him a question, subject to his answering or not answering, as he deemed right, and sure that his course would be right. He paused in his breakfast, and crossing his arms, and pinching his shirt-sleeves (his notion of in-door comfort was to sit without any coat), he nodded to me once, to put my question.

"You have heard of a man of bad character, whose true name is Compeyson?"

He answered with one other nod.

"Is he living?"

One other nod.

"Is he in London?"

He gave me one other nod, compressed the post-office exceedingly, gave me one last nod, and went on with his breakfast.

"Now," said Wemmick, "questioning being over," which he emphasised and repeated for my guidance, "I come to what I did, after hearing what I heard. I went to Garden Court to find you; not finding you, I went to Clarriker's to find Mr. Herbert."

"And him you found?" said I, with great anxiety.

"And him I found. Without mentioning any names or going into any details, I gave him to understand that if he was aware of anybody—Tom, Jack, or Richard—being about the chambers, or about the immediate neighbourhood, he had better get Tom, Jack, or Richard out of the way while you were out of the way."

"He would be greatly puzzled what to do?"

"He *was* puzzled what to do; not the less, because I gave him my opinion that it was not safe to try to get Tom, Jack, or Richard too far out of the way at present. Mr. Pip, I'll tell you something. Under existing circumstances, there is no place like a great city when you are once in it. Don't break cover too soon. Lie close. Wait till things slacken, before you try the open, even for foreign air."

I thanked him for his valuable advice, and asked him what Herbert had done?

"Mr. Herbert," said Wemmick, "after being all of a heap for half an hour, struck out a plan. He mentioned to me as a secret, that he is courting a young lady who has, as no doubt you are aware, a bedridden Pa. Which Pa, having been in the Purser line of life, lies a-bed in a bow-window where he can see the ships sail up and down the river. You are acquainted with the young lady, most probably?"

"Not personally," said I.

The truth was, that she had objected to me as an expensive companion who did Herbert no good, and that, when Herbert had first proposed to present me to her, she had received the proposal with such very moderate warmth, that Herbert had felt himself obliged to confide the state of the case to me, with a view to the lapse of a little time before I made her acquaintance. When I had begun to advance Herbert's prospects by stealth, I had been able to bear this with cheerful philosophy: he and his affianced, for their part, had naturally not been very anxious to introduce a third person into their interviews; and thus, although I was assured that I had risen in Clara's esteem, and although the young lady and I had long regularly interchanged messages and remembrances by Herbert, I had never seen her. However, I did not trouble Wemmick with these particulars.

"The house with the bow-window," said Wemmick,

"being by the river-side, down the Pool there between Limehouse and Greenwich, and being kept, it seems, by a very respectable widow who has a furnished upper floor to let, Mr. Herbert put it to me, what did I think of that as a temporary tenement for Tom, Jack, or Richard? Now, I thought very well of it, for three reasons I'll give you. That is to say: *Firstly*. It's altogether out of all your beats, and is well away from the usual heap of streets great and small. *Secondly*. Without going near it yourself, you could always hear of the safety of Tom, Jack, or Richard, through Mr. Herbert. *Thirdly*. After a while and when it might be prudent, if you should want to slip Tom, Jack, or Richard on board a foreign packet-boat, there he is—ready."

Much comforted by these considerations, I thanked Wemmick again and again, and begged him to proceed.

"Well, sir! Mr. Herbert threw himself into the business with a will, and by nine o'clock last night he housed Tom, Jack, or Richard,—whichever it may be,—you and I don't want to know,—quite successfully. At the old lodgings it was understood that he was summoned to Dover, and, in fact, he was taken down the Dover road and cornered out of it. Now, another great advantage of all this is, that it was done without you, and when, if any one was concerning himself about your movements, you must be known to be ever so many miles off and quite otherwise engaged. This diverts suspicion and confuses it; and for the same reason I recommended that, even if you came back last night, you should not go home. It brings in more confusion, and you want confusion."

Wemmick, having finished his breakfast, here looked at his watch, and began to get his coat on.

"And now, Mr. Pip," said he, with his hands still in the sleeves, "I have probably done the most I can do; but if I can ever do more,—from a Walworth point of view, and in a strictly private and personal capacity,—I shall be glad to do it. Here's the address. There can be no harm in your going here to-night, and seeing for yourself that all is well with Tom, Jack, or Richard, before you go home,—which is another reason for your not going home last night. But, after you have gone home, don't go back here. You are very welcome, I am sure, Mr. Pip"; his hands were now out of his sleeves, and I was shaking them; "and let me finally impress one important point upon you." He laid his hands upon my shoulders, and added in a solemn whisper: "Avail yourself of this evening to lay hold of his portable property. You don't know what may happen to him. Don't let anything happen to the portable property."

Quite despairing of making my mind clear to Wemmick on this point, I forbore to try.

"Time's up," said Wemmick, "and I must be off. If you had nothing more pressing to do than to keep here till dark, that's what I should advise. You look very much worried, and it would do you good to have a perfectly quiet day with the Aged,—he'll be up presently,—and a little bit of—you remember the pig?"

"Of course," said I.

“Well; and a little bit of *him*. That sausage you toasted was his, and he was in all respects a first-rater. Do try him, if it is only for old acquaintance sake. Good-bye, Aged Parent!” in a cheery shout.

“All right, John; all right, my boy!” piped the old man from within.

I soon fell asleep before Wemmick’s fire, and the Aged and I enjoyed one another’s society by falling asleep before it more or less all day. We had loin of pork for dinner, and greens grown on the estate; and I nodded at the Aged with a good intention whenever I failed to do it drowsily. When it was quite dark, I left the Aged preparing the fire for toast; and I inferred from the number of teacups, as well as from his glances at the two little doors in the wall, that Miss Skiffins was expected.

Chapter XLVI

Eight o’clock had struck before I got into the air, that was scented, not disagreeably, by the chips and shavings of the long-shore boat-builders, and mast, oar, and block makers. All that water-side region of the upper and lower Pool below Bridge was unknown ground to me; and when I struck down by the river, I found that the spot I wanted was not where I had supposed it to be, and was anything but easy to find. It was called Mill Pond Bank, Chinks’s Basin; and I had no other guide to Chinks’s Basin than the Old Green Copper Rope-walk.

It matters not what stranded ships repairing in dry docks I lost myself among, what old hulls of ships in course of being knocked to pieces, what ooze and slime and other dregs of tide, what yards of ship-builders and ship-breakers, what rusty anchors blindly biting into the ground, though for years off duty, what mountainous country of accumulated casks and timber, how many rope-walks that were not the Old Green Copper. After several times falling short of my destination and as often overshooting it, I came unexpectedly round a corner, upon Mill Pond Bank. It was a fresh kind of place, all circumstances considered, where the wind from the river had room to turn itself round; and there were two or three trees in it, and there was the stump of a ruined windmill, and there was the Old Green Copper Rope-walk,—whose long and narrow vista I could trace in the moonlight, along a series of wooden frames set in the ground, that looked like superannuated haymaking-rakes which had grown old and lost most of their teeth.

Selecting from the few queer houses upon Mill Pond Bank a house with a wooden front and three stories of bow-window (not bay-window, which is another thing), I looked at the plate upon the door, and read there, Mrs. Whimple. That being the name I wanted, I knocked, and an elderly woman of a pleasant and thriving appearance responded. She was immediately deposed, however, by Herbert, who silently led me into the parlour and shut the

door. It was an odd sensation to see his very familiar face established quite at home in that very unfamiliar room and region; and I found myself looking at him, much as I looked at the corner-cupboard with the glass and china, the shells upon the chimney-piece, and the coloured engravings on the wall, representing the death of Captain Cook, a ship-launch, and his Majesty King George the Third in a state coachman’s wig, leather-breeches, and top-boots, on the terrace at Windsor.

“All is well, Handel,” said Herbert, “and he is quite satisfied, though eager to see you. My dear girl is with her father; and if you’ll wait till she comes down, I’ll make you known to her, and then we’ll go upstairs. *That’s* her father.”

I had become aware of an alarming growling overhead, and had probably expressed the fact in my countenance.

“I am afraid he is a sad old rascal,” said Herbert, smiling, “but I have never seen him. Don’t you smell rum? He is always at it.”

“At rum?” said I.

“Yes,” returned Herbert, “and you may suppose how mild it makes his gout. He persists, too, in keeping all the provisions upstairs in his room, and serving them out. He keeps them on shelves over his head, and *will* weigh them all. His room must be like a Chandler’s shop.”

While he thus spoke, the growling noise became a prolonged roar, and then died away.

“What else can be the consequence,” said Herbert, in explanation, “if he *will* cut the cheese? A man with the gout in his right hand—and everywhere else—can’t expect to get through a Double Gloucester without hurting himself.”

He seemed to have hurt himself very much, for he gave another furious roar.

“To have Provis for an upper lodger is quite a godsend to Mrs. Whimple,” said Herbert, “for of course people in general won’t stand that noise. A curious place, Handel; isn’t it?”

It was a curious place, indeed; but remarkably well kept and clean.

“Mrs. Whimple,” said Herbert, when I told him so, “is the best of housewives, and I really do not know what my Clara would do without her motherly help. For, Clara has no mother of her own, Handel, and no relation in the world but old Gruffandgrim.”

“Surely that’s not his name, Herbert?”

“No, no,” said Herbert, “that’s my name for him. His name is Mr. Barley. But what a blessing it is for the son of my father and mother to love a girl who has no relations, and who can never bother herself or anybody else about her family!”

Herbert had told me on former occasions, and now reminded me, that he first knew Miss Clara Barley when she was completing her education at an establishment at Hammersmith, and that on her being recalled home to nurse her father, he and she had confided their affection to the motherly Mrs. Whimple, by whom it had been fostered and regulated with equal kindness and discretion, ever since. It was understood that nothing of a tender nature could possibly be confided to old Barley, by reason of his being totally unequal to the consideration of any subject more psychological than Gout, Rum, and Purser's stores.

As we were thus conversing in a low tone while Old Barley's sustained growl vibrated in the beam that crossed the ceiling, the room door opened, and a very pretty, slight, dark-eyed girl of twenty or so came in with a basket in her hand: whom Herbert tenderly relieved of the basket, and presented, blushing, as "Clara." She really was a most charming girl, and might have passed for a captive fairy, whom that truculent Ogre, Old Barley, had pressed into his service.

"Look here," said Herbert, showing me the basket, with a compassionate and tender smile, after we had talked a little; "here's poor Clara's supper, served out every night. Here's her allowance of bread, and here's her slice of cheese, and here's her rum,—which I drink. This is Mr. Barley's breakfast for to-morrow, served out to be cooked. Two mutton-chops, three potatoes, some split peas, a little flour, two ounces of butter, a pinch of salt, and all this black pepper. It's stewed up together, and taken hot, and it's a nice thing for the gout, I should think!"

There was something so natural and winning in Clara's resigned way of looking at these stores in detail, as Herbert pointed them out; and something so confiding, loving, and innocent in her modest manner of yielding herself to Herbert's embracing arm; and something so gentle in her, so much needing protection on Mill Pond Bank, by Chinks's Basin, and the Old Green Copper Rope-walk, with Old Barley growling in the beam,—that I would not have undone the engagement between her and Herbert for all the money in the pocket-book I had never opened.

I was looking at her with pleasure and admiration, when suddenly the growl swelled into a roar again, and a frightful bumping noise was heard above, as if a giant with a wooden leg were trying to bore it through the ceiling to come at us. Upon this Clara said to Herbert, "Papa wants me, darling!" and ran away.

"There is an unconscionable old shark for you!" said Herbert. "What do you suppose he wants now, Handel?"

"I don't know," said I. "Something to drink?"

"That's it!" cried Herbert, as if I had made a guess of extraordinary merit. "He keeps his grog ready mixed in a little tub on the table. Wait a moment, and you'll hear

Clara lift him up to take some. There he goes!" Another roar, with a prolonged shake at the end. "Now," said Herbert, as it was succeeded by silence, "he's drinking. Now," said Herbert, as the growl resounded in the beam once more, "he's down again on his back!"

Clara returned soon afterwards, and Herbert accompanied me upstairs to see our charge. As we passed Mr. Barley's door, he was heard hoarsely muttering within, in a strain that rose and fell like wind, the following Refrain, in which I substitute good wishes for something quite the reverse:—

"Ahoy! Bless your eyes, here's old Bill Barley. Here's old Bill Barley, bless your eyes. Here's old Bill Barley on the flat of his back, by the Lord. Lying on the flat of his back like a drifting old dead flounder, here's your old Bill Barley, bless your eyes. Ahoy! Bless you."

In this strain of consolation, Herbert informed me the invisible Barley would commune with himself by the day and night together; Often, while it was light, having, at the same time, one eye at a telescope which was fitted on his bed for the convenience of sweeping the river.

In his two cabin rooms at the top of the house, which were fresh and airy, and in which Mr. Barley was less audible than below, I found Provis comfortably settled. He expressed no alarm, and seemed to feel none that was worth mentioning; but it struck me that he was softened,—indefinably, for I could not have said how, and could never afterwards recall how when I tried, but certainly.

The opportunity that the day's rest had given me for reflection had resulted in my fully determining to say nothing to him respecting Compeyson. For anything I knew, his animosity towards the man might otherwise lead to his seeking him out and rushing on his own destruction. Therefore, when Herbert and I sat down with him by his fire, I asked him first of all whether he relied on Wemmick's judgment and sources of information?

"Ay, ay, dear boy!" he answered, with a grave nod, "Jaggers knows."

"Then, I have talked with Wemmick," said I, "and have come to tell you what caution he gave me and what advice."

This I did accurately, with the reservation just mentioned; and I told him how Wemmick had heard, in Newgate prison (whether from officers or prisoners I could not say), that he was under some suspicion, and that my chambers had been watched; how Wemmick had recommended his keeping close for a time, and my keeping away from him; and what Wemmick had said about getting him abroad. I added, that of course, when the time came, I should go with him, or should follow close upon him, as might be safest in Wemmick's judgment. What was to follow that I did not touch upon; neither, indeed, was I at all clear or comfortable about it

in my own mind, now that I saw him in that softer condition, and in declared peril for

my sake. As to altering my way of living by enlarging my expenses, I put it to him whether in our present unsettled and difficult circumstances, it would not be simply ridiculous, if it were no worse?

He could not deny this, and indeed was very reasonable throughout. His coming back was a venture, he said, and he had always known it to be a venture. He would do nothing to make it a desperate venture, and he had very little fear of his safety with such good help.

Herbert, who had been looking at the fire and pondering, here said that something had come into his thoughts arising out of Wemmick's suggestion, which it might be worth while to pursue. "We are both good watermen, Handel, and could take him down the river ourselves when the right time comes. No boat would then be hired for the purpose, and no boatmen; that would save at least a chance of suspicion, and any chance is worth saving. Never mind the season; don't you think it might be a good thing if you began at once to keep a boat at the Temple stairs, and were in the habit of rowing up and down the river? You fall into that habit, and then who notices or minds? Do it twenty or fifty times, and there is nothing special in your doing it the twenty-first or fifty-first."

I liked this scheme, and Provis was quite elated by it. We agreed that it should be carried into execution, and that Provis should never recognise us if we came below Bridge, and rowed past Mill Pond Bank. But we further agreed that he should pull down the blind in that part of his window which gave upon the east, whenever he saw us and all was right.

Our conference being now ended, and everything arranged, I rose to go; remarking to Herbert that he and I had better not go home together, and that I would take half an hour's start of him. "I don't like to leave you here," I said to Provis, "though I cannot doubt your being safer here than near me. Good-bye!"

"Dear boy," he answered, clasping my hands, "I don't know when we may meet again, and I don't like good-bye. Say good-night!"

"Good-night! Herbert will go regularly between us, and when the time comes you may be certain I shall be ready. Good-night, good-night!"

We thought it best that he should stay in his own rooms; and we left him on the landing outside his door, holding a light over the stair-rail to light us downstairs. Looking back at him, I thought of the first night of his return, when our positions were reversed, and when I little supposed my heart could ever be as heavy and anxious at parting from him as it was now.

Old Barley was growling and swearing when we repassed

his door, with no appearance of having ceased or of meaning to cease. When we got to the foot of the stairs, I asked Herbert whether he had preserved the name of Provis. He replied, certainly not, and that the lodger was Mr. Campbell. He also explained that the utmost known of Mr. Campbell there was, that he (Herbert) had Mr. Campbell consigned to him, and felt a strong personal interest in his being well cared for, and living a secluded life. So, when we went into the parlour where Mrs. Whimple and Clara were seated at work, I said nothing of my own interest in Mr. Campbell, but kept it to myself.

When I had taken leave of the pretty, gentle, dark-eyed girl, and of the motherly woman who had not outlived her honest sympathy with a little affair of true love, I felt as if the Old Green Copper Rope-walk had grown quite a different place. Old Barley might be as old as the hills, and might swear like a whole field of troopers, but there were redeeming youth and trust and hope enough in Chinks's Basin to fill it to overflowing. And then I thought of Estella, and of our parting, and went home very sadly.

All things were as quiet in the Temple as ever I had seen them. The windows of the rooms on that side, lately occupied by Provis, were dark and still, and there was no lounge in Garden Court. I walked past the fountain twice or thrice before I descended the steps that were between me and my rooms, but I was quite alone. Herbert, coming to my bedside when he came in,—for I went straight to bed, dispirited and fatigued,—made the same report. Opening one of the windows after that, he looked out into the moonlight, and told me that the pavement was as solemnly empty as the pavement of any cathedral at that same hour.

Next day I set myself to get the boat. It was soon done, and the boat was brought round to the Temple stairs, and lay where I could reach her within a minute or two. Then, I began to go out as for training and practice: sometimes alone, sometimes with Herbert. I was often out in cold, rain, and sleet, but nobody took much note of me after I had been out a few times. At first, I kept above Blackfriars Bridge; but as the hours

of the tide changed, I took towards London Bridge. It was Old London Bridge in those days, and at certain states of the tide there was a race and fall of water there which gave it a bad reputation. But I knew well enough how to 'shoot' the bridge after seeing it done, and so began to row about among the shipping in the Pool, and down to Erith. The first time I passed Mill Pond Bank, Herbert and I were pulling a pair of oars; and, both in going and returning, we saw the blind towards the east come down. Herbert was rarely there less frequently than three times in a week, and he never brought me a single word of intelligence that was at all alarming. Still, I knew that there was cause for alarm, and I could not get rid of the notion of being watched. Once received, it is a haunting idea; how many

undesigning persons I suspected of watching me, it would be hard to calculate.

In short, I was always full of fears for the rash man who was in hiding. Herbert had sometimes said to me that he found it pleasant to stand at one of our windows after dark, when the tide was running down, and to think that it was flowing, with everything it bore, towards Clara. But I thought with dread that it was flowing towards Magwitch, and that any black mark on its surface might be his pursuers, going swiftly, silently, and surely, to take him.

Chapter XLVII

Some weeks passed without bringing any change. We waited for Wemmick, and he made no sign. If I had never known him out of Little Britain, and had never enjoyed the privilege of being on a familiar footing at the Castle, I might have doubted him; not so for a moment, knowing him as I did.

My worldly affairs began to wear a gloomy appearance, and I was pressed for money by more than one creditor. Even I myself began to know the want of money (I mean of ready money in my own pocket), and to relieve it by converting some easily spared articles of jewelery into cash. But I had quite determined that it would be a heartless fraud to take more money from my patron in the existing state of my uncertain thoughts and plans. Therefore, I had sent him the unopened pocket-book by Herbert, to hold in his own keeping, and I felt a kind of satisfaction—whether it was a false kind or a true, I hardly know—in not having profited by his generosity since his revelation of himself.

As the time wore on, an impression settled heavily upon me that Estella was married. Fearful of having it confirmed, though it was all but a conviction, I avoided the newspapers, and begged Herbert (to whom I had confided the circumstances of our last interview) never to speak of her to me. Why I hoarded up this last wretched little rag of the robe of hope that was rent and given to the winds, how do I know? Why did you who read this, commit that not dissimilar inconsistency of your own last year, last month, last week?

It was an unhappy life that I lived; and its one dominant anxiety, towering over all its other anxieties, like a high mountain above a range of mountains, never disappeared from my view. Still, no new cause for fear arose. Let me start from my bed as I would, with the terror fresh upon me that he was discovered; let me sit listening, as I would with dread, for Herbert's returning step at night, lest it should be fleeter than ordinary, and winged with evil news,—for all that, and much more to like purpose, the round of things went on. Condemned to inaction and a state of constant restlessness and suspense, I rowed about in my boat, and waited, waited, waited, as I best could.

There were states of the tide when, having been down the river, I could not get back through the eddy-chafed arches and starlings of old London Bridge; then, I left my boat at a wharf near the Custom House, to be brought up afterwards to the Temple stairs. I was not averse to doing this, as it served to make me and my boat a commoner incident among the water-side people there. From this slight occasion sprang two meetings that I have now to tell of.

One afternoon, late in the month of February, I came ashore at the wharf at dusk. I had pulled down as far as Greenwich with the ebb tide, and had turned with the tide. It had been a fine bright day, but had become foggy as the sun dropped, and I had had to feel my way back among the shipping, pretty carefully. Both in going and returning, I had seen the signal in his window, All well.

As it was a raw evening, and I was cold, I thought I would comfort myself with dinner at once; and as I had hours of dejection and solitude before me if I went home to the Temple, I thought I would afterwards go to the play. The theatre where Mr. Wopsle had achieved his questionable triumph was in that water-side neighbourhood (it is nowhere now), and to that theatre I resolved to go. I was aware that Mr. Wopsle had not succeeded in reviving the Drama, but, on the contrary, had rather partaken of its decline. He had been ominously heard of, through the play-bills, as a faithful Black, in connection with a little girl of noble birth, and a monkey. And Herbert had seen him as a predatory Tartar of comic propensities, with a face like a red brick, and an outrageous hat all over bells.

I dined at what Herbert and I used to call a geographical chop-house, where there were maps of the world in porter-pot rims on every half-yard of the tablecloths, and charts of gravy on every one of the knives,—to this day there is scarcely a single chop-house within the Lord Mayor's dominions which is not geographical,—and wore out the time in dozing over crumbs, staring at gas, and baking in a hot blast of dinners. By and by, I roused myself, and went to the play.

There, I found a virtuous boatswain in His Majesty's service,—a most excellent man, though I could have wished his trousers not quite so tight in some places, and not quite so loose in others,—who knocked all the little men's hats over their eyes, though he was very generous and brave, and who wouldn't hear of anybody's paying taxes, though he was very patriotic. He had a bag of money in his pocket, like a pudding in the cloth, and on that property married a young person in bed-furniture, with great rejoicings; the whole population of Portsmouth (nine in number at the last census) turning out on the beach to rub their own hands and shake everybody else's, and sing "Fill, fill!" A certain dark-complexioned Swab, however, who wouldn't fill, or do anything else that was

proposed to him, and whose heart was openly stated (by the boatswain) to be as black as his figure-head, proposed to two other Swabs to get all mankind into difficulties; which was so effectually done (the Swab family having considerable political influence) that it took half the evening to set things right, and then it was only brought about through an honest little grocer with a white hat, black gaiters, and red nose, getting into a clock, with a gridiron, and listening, and coming out, and knocking everybody down from behind with the gridiron whom he couldn't confute with what he had overheard. This led to Mr. Wopsle's (who had never been heard of before) coming in with a star and garter on, as a plenipotentiary of great power direct from the Admiralty, to say that the Swabs were all to go to prison on the spot, and that he had brought the boatswain down the Union Jack, as a slight acknowledgment of his public services. The boatswain, unmanned for the first time, respectfully dried his eyes on the Jack, and then cheering up, and addressing Mr. Wopsle as Your Honour, solicited permission to take him by the fin. Mr. Wopsle, conceding his fin with a gracious dignity, was immediately shoved into a dusty corner, while everybody danced a hornpipe; and from that corner, surveying the public with a discontented eye, became aware of me.

The second piece was the last new grand comic Christmas pantomime, in the first scene of which, it pained me to suspect that I detected Mr. Wopsle with red worsted legs under a highly magnified phosphoric countenance and a shock of red curtain-fringe for his hair, engaged in the manufacture of thunderbolts in a mine, and displaying great cowardice when his gigantic master came home (very hoarse) to dinner. But he presently presented himself under worthier circumstances; for, the Genius of Youthful Love being in want of assistance,—on account of the parental brutality of an ignorant farmer who opposed the choice of his daughter's heart, by purposely falling upon the object, in a flour-sack, out of the first-floor window,—summoned a sententious Enchanter; and he, coming up from the antipodes rather unsteadily, after an apparently violent journey, proved to be Mr. Wopsle in a high-crowned hat, with a necromantic work in one volume under his arm. The business of this enchanter on earth being principally to be talked at, sung at, butted at, danced at, and flashed at with fires of various colours, he had a good deal of time on his hands. And I observed, with great surprise, that he devoted it to staring in my direction as if he were lost in amazement.

There was something so remarkable in the increasing glare of Mr. Wopsle's eye, and he seemed to be turning so many things over in his mind and to grow so confused, that I could not make it out. I sat thinking of it long after he had ascended to the clouds in a large watch-case, and still I could not make it out. I was still thinking of it when I came out of the theatre an hour afterwards, and found him waiting for me near the door.

"How do you do?" said I, shaking hands with him as we turned down the street together. "I saw that you saw me."

"Saw you, Mr. Pip!" he returned. "Yes, of course I saw you. But who else was there?"

"Who else?"

"It is the strangest thing," said Mr. Wopsle, drifting into his lost look again; "and yet I could swear to him."

Becoming alarmed, I entreated Mr. Wopsle to explain his meaning.

"Whether I should have noticed him at first but for your being there," said Mr. Wopsle, going on in the same lost way, "I can't be positive; yet I think I should."

Involuntarily I looked round me, as I was accustomed to look round me when I went home; for these mysterious words gave me a chill.

"Oh! He can't be in sight," said Mr. Wopsle. "He went out before I went off. I saw him go."

Having the reason that I had for being suspicious, I even suspected this poor actor. I mistrusted a design to entrap me into some admission. Therefore I glanced at him as we walked on together, but said nothing.

"I had a ridiculous fancy that he must be with you, Mr. Pip, till I saw that you were quite unconscious of him, sitting behind you there like a ghost."

My former chill crept over me again, but I was resolved not to speak yet, for it was quite consistent with his words that he might be set on to induce me to connect these references with Provis. Of course, I was perfectly sure and safe that Provis had not been there.

"I dare say you wonder at me, Mr. Pip; indeed, I see you do. But it is so very strange! You'll hardly believe what I am going to tell you. I could hardly believe it myself, if you told me."

"Indeed?" said I.

"No, indeed. Mr. Pip, you remember in old times a certain Christmas Day, when you were quite a child, and I dined at Gargery's, and some soldiers came to the door to get a pair of handcuffs mended?"

"I remember it very well."

"And you remember that there was a chase after two convicts, and that we joined in it, and that Gargery took you on his back, and that I took the lead, and you kept up with me as well as you could?"

"I remember it all very well." Better than he thought,—except the last clause.

"And you remember that we came up with the two in a ditch, and that there was a scuffle between them, and that one of them had been severely handled and much mauled about the face by the other?"

"I see it all before me."

"And that the soldiers lighted torches, and put the two in the centre, and that we went on to see the last of them, over the black marshes, with the torchlight shining on their faces,—I am particular about that,—with the torchlight shining on their faces, when there was an outer ring of dark night all about us?"

"Yes," said I. "I remember all that."

"Then, Mr. Pip, one of those two prisoners sat behind you tonight. I saw him over your shoulder."

"Steady!" I thought. I asked him then, "Which of the two do you suppose you saw?"

"The one who had been mauled," he answered readily, "and I'll swear I saw him! The more I think of him, the more certain I am of him."

"This is very curious!" said I, with the best assumption I could put on of its being nothing more to me. "Very curious indeed!"

I cannot exaggerate the enhanced disquiet into which this conversation threw me, or the special and peculiar terror I felt at Compeyson's having been behind me "like a ghost." For if he had ever been out of my thoughts for a few moments together since the hiding had begun, it was in those very moments when he was closest to me; and to think that I should be so unconscious and off my guard after all my care was as if I had shut an avenue of a hundred doors to keep him out, and then had found him at my elbow. I could not doubt, either, that he was there, because I was there, and that, however slight an appearance of danger there might be about us, danger was always near and active.

I put such questions to Mr. Wopsle as, When did the man come in? He could not tell me that; he saw me, and over my shoulder he saw the man. It was not until he had seen him for some time that he began to identify him; but he had from the first vaguely associated him with me, and known him as somehow belonging to me in the old village time. How was he dressed? Prosperously, but not noticeably otherwise; he thought, in black. Was his face at all disfigured? No, he believed not. I believed not too, for, although in my brooding state I had taken no especial notice of the people behind me, I thought it likely that a face at all disfigured would have attracted my attention.

When Mr. Wopsle had imparted to me all that he could recall or I extract, and when I had treated him to a little appropriate refreshment, after the fatigues of the evening, we parted. It was between twelve and one o'clock when I reached the Temple, and the gates were shut. No one was near me when I went in and went home.

Herbert had come in, and we held a very serious council by the fire. But there was nothing to be done, saving to communicate to Wemmick what I had that night found out, and to remind him that we waited for his hint. As I thought that I might compromise him if I went too often

to the Castle, I made this communication by letter. I wrote it before I went to bed, and went out and posted it; and again no one was near me. Herbert and I agreed that we could do nothing else but be very cautious. And we were very cautious indeed,—more cautious than before, if that were possible,—and I for my part never went near Chinks's Basin, except when I rowed by, and then I only looked at Mill Pond Bank as I looked at anything else.

Chapter XLVIII

The second of the two meetings referred to in the last chapter occurred about a week after the first. I had again left my boat at the wharf below Bridge; the time was an hour earlier in the afternoon; and, undecided where to dine, I had strolled up into Cheapside, and was strolling along it, surely the most unsettled person in all the busy concourse, when a large hand was laid upon my shoulder by some one overtaking me. It was Mr. Jaggers's hand, and he passed it through my arm.

"As we are going in the same direction, Pip, we may walk together. Where are you bound for?"

"For the Temple, I think," said I.

"Don't you know?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Well," I returned, glad for once to get the better of him in cross-examination, "I do *not* know, for I have not made up my mind."

"You are going to dine?" said Mr. Jaggers. "You don't mind admitting that, I suppose?"

"No," I returned, "I don't mind admitting that."

"And are not engaged?"

"I don't mind admitting also that I am not engaged."

"Then," said Mr. Jaggers, "come and dine with me."

I was going to excuse myself, when he added, "Wemmick's coming." So I changed my excuse into an acceptance,—the few words I had uttered, serving for the beginning of either,—and we went along Cheapside and slanted off to Little Britain, while the lights were springing up brilliantly in the shop windows, and the street lamp-lighters, scarcely finding ground enough to plant their ladders on in the midst of the afternoon's bustle, were skipping up and down and running in and out, opening more red eyes in the gathering fog than my rushlight tower at the Hummums had opened white eyes in the ghostly wall.

At the office in Little Britain there was the usual letter-writing, hand-washing, candle-snuffing, and safe-locking, that closed the business of the day. As I stood idle by Mr. Jaggers's fire, its rising and falling flame made the two casts on the shelf look as if they were playing a diabolical game at bo-peep with me; while the pair of coarse, fat office candles that dimly lighted Mr. Jaggers as

he wrote in a corner were decorated with dirty winding-sheets, as if in remembrance of a host of hanged clients.

We went to Gerrard Street, all three together, in a hackney-coach: And, as soon as we got there, dinner was served. Although I should not have thought of making, in that place, the most distant reference by so much as a look to Wemmick's Walworth sentiments, yet I should have had no objection to catching his eye now and then in a friendly way. But it was not to be done. He turned his eyes on Mr. Jaggers whenever he raised them from the table, and was as dry and distant to me as if there were twin Wemmicks, and this was the wrong one.

"Did you send that note of Miss Havisham's to Mr. Pip, Wemmick?" Mr. Jaggers asked, soon after we began dinner.

"No, sir," returned Wemmick; "it was going by post, when you brought Mr. Pip into the office. Here it is." He handed it to his principal instead of to me.

"It's a note of two lines, Pip," said Mr. Jaggers, handing it on, "sent up to me by Miss Havisham on account of her not being sure of your address. She tells me that she wants to see you on a little matter of business you mentioned to her. You'll go down?"

"Yes," said I, casting my eyes over the note, which was exactly in those terms.

"When do you think of going down?"

"I have an impending engagement," said I, glancing at Wemmick, who was putting fish into the post-office, "that renders me rather uncertain of my time. At once, I think."

"If Mr. Pip has the intention of going at once," said Wemmick to Mr. Jaggers, "he needn't write an answer, you know."

Receiving this as an intimation that it was best not to delay, I settled that I would go to-morrow, and said so. Wemmick drank a glass of wine, and looked with a grimly satisfied air at Mr. Jaggers, but not at me.

"So, Pip! Our friend the Spider," said Mr. Jaggers, "has played his cards. He has won the pool."

It was as much as I could do to assent.

"Hah! He is a promising fellow—in his way—but he may not have it all his own way. The stronger will win in the end, but the stronger has to be found out first. If he should turn to, and beat her—"

"Surely," I interrupted, with a burning face and heart, "you do not seriously think that he is scoundrel enough for that, Mr. Jaggers?"

"I didn't say so, Pip. I am putting a case. If he should turn to and beat her, he may possibly get the strength on his side; if it should be a question of intellect, he certainly will not. It would be chance work to give an opinion how

a fellow of that sort will turn out in such circumstances, because it's a toss-up between two results."

"May I ask what they are?"

"A fellow like our friend the Spider," answered Mr. Jaggers, "either beats or cringes. He may cringe and growl, or cringe and not growl; but he either beats or cringes. Ask Wemmick *his* opinion."

"Either beats or cringes," said Wemmick, not at all addressing himself to me.

"So here's to Mrs. Bentley Drummle," said Mr. Jaggers, taking a decanter of choicer wine from his dumb-waiter, and filling for each of us and for himself, "and may the question of supremacy be settled to the lady's satisfaction! To the satisfaction of the lady *and* the gentleman, it never will be. Now, Molly, Molly, Molly, Molly, how slow you are to-day!"

She was at his elbow when he addressed her, putting a dish upon the table. As she withdrew her hands from it, she fell back a step or two, nervously muttering some excuse. And a certain action of her fingers, as she spoke, arrested my attention.

"What's the matter?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Nothing. Only the subject we were speaking of," said I, "was rather painful to me."

The action of her fingers was like the action of knitting. She stood looking at her master, not understanding whether she was free to go, or whether he had more to say to her and would call her back if she did go. Her look was very intent. Surely, I had seen exactly such eyes and such hands on a memorable occasion very lately!

He dismissed her, and she glided out of the room. But she remained before me as plainly as if she were still there. I looked at those hands, I looked at those eyes, I looked at that flowing hair; and I compared them with other hands, other eyes, other hair, that I knew of, and with what those might be after twenty years of a brutal husband and a stormy life. I looked again at those hands and eyes of the housekeeper, and thought of the inexplicable feeling that had come over me when I last walked—not alone—in the ruined garden, and through the deserted brewery. I thought how the same feeling had come back when I saw a face looking at me, and a hand waving to me from a stage-coach window; and how it had come back again and had flashed about me like lightning, when I had passed in a carriage—not alone—through a sudden glare of light in a dark street. I thought how one link of association had helped that identification in the theatre, and how such a link, wanting before, had been riveted for me now, when I had passed by a chance swift from Estella's name to the fingers with their knitting action, and the attentive eyes. And I felt absolutely certain that this woman was Estella's mother.

Mr. Jaggers had seen me with Estella, and was not likely to have missed the sentiments I had been at no pains to conceal. He nodded when I said the subject was painful to me, clapped me on the back, put round the wine again, and went on with his dinner.

Only twice more did the housekeeper reappear, and then her stay in the room was very short, and Mr. Jaggers was sharp with her. But her hands were Estella's hands, and her eyes were Estella's eyes, and if she had reappeared a hundred times I could have been neither more sure nor less sure that my conviction was the truth.

It was a dull evening, for Wemmick drew his wine, when it came round, quite as a matter of business,—just as he might have drawn his salary when that came round,—and with his eyes on his chief, sat in a state of perpetual readiness for cross-examination. As to the quantity of wine, his post-office was as indifferent and ready as any other post-office for its quantity of letters.

From my point of view, he was the wrong twin all the time, and only externally like the Wemmick of Walworth.

We took our leave early, and left together. Even when we were groping among Mr. Jaggers's stock of boots for our hats, I felt that the right twin was on his way back; and we had not gone half a dozen yards down Gerrard Street in the Walworth direction, before I found that I was walking arm in arm with the right twin, and that the wrong twin had evaporated into the evening air.

"Well!" said Wemmick, "that's over! He's a wonderful man, without his living likeness; but I feel that I have to screw myself up when I dine with him,—and I dine more comfortably unscrewed."

I felt that this was a good statement of the case, and told him so.

"Wouldn't say it to anybody but yourself," he answered. "I know that what is said between you and me goes no further."

I asked him if he had ever seen Miss Havisham's adopted daughter, Mrs. Bentley Drummle. He said no. To avoid being too abrupt, I then spoke of the Aged and of Miss Skiffins. He looked rather sly when I mentioned Miss Skiffins, and stopped in the street to blow his nose, with a roll of the head, and a flourish not quite free from latent boastfulness.

"Wemmick," said I, "do you remember telling me, before I first went to Mr. Jaggers's private house, to notice that housekeeper?"

"Did I?" he replied. "Ah, I dare say I did. Deuce take me," he added, suddenly, "I know I did. I find I am not quite unscrewed yet."

"A wild beast tamed, you called her."

"And what do *you* call her?"

"The same. How did Mr. Jaggers tame her, Wemmick?"

"That's his secret. She has been with him many a long year."

"I wish you would tell me her story. I feel a particular interest in being acquainted with it. You know that what is said between you and me goes no further."

"Well!" Wemmick replied, "I don't know her story,—that is, I don't know all of it. But what I do know I'll tell you. We are in our private and personal capacities, of course."

"Of course."

"A score or so of years ago, that woman was tried at the Old Bailey for murder, and was acquitted. She was a very handsome young woman, and I believe had some gypsy blood in her. Anyhow, it was hot enough when it was up, as you may suppose."

"But she was acquitted."

"Mr. Jaggers was for her," pursued Wemmick, with a look full of meaning, "and worked the case in a way quite astonishing. It was a desperate case, and it was comparatively early days with him then, and he worked it to general admiration; in fact, it may almost be said to have made him. He worked it himself at the police-office, day after day for many days, contending against even a committal; and at the trial where he couldn't work it himself, sat under counsel, and—every one knew—put in all the salt and pepper. The murdered person was a woman,—a woman a good ten years older, very much larger, and very much stronger. It was a case of jealousy. They both led tramping lives, and this woman in Gerrard Street here had been married very young, over the broomstick (as we say), to a tramping man, and was a perfect fury in point of jealousy. The murdered woman,—more a match for the man, certainly, in point of years—was found dead in a barn near Hounslow Heath. There had been a violent struggle, perhaps a fight. She was bruised and scratched and torn, and had been held by the throat, at last, and choked. Now, there was no reasonable evidence to implicate any person but this woman, and on the improbabilities of her having been able to do it Mr. Jaggers principally rested his case. You may be sure," said Wemmick, touching me on the sleeve, "that he never dwelt upon the strength of her hands then, though he sometimes does now."

I had told Wemmick of his showing us her wrists, that day of the dinner party.

"Well, sir!" Wemmick went on; "it happened—happened, don't you see?—that this woman was so very artfully dressed from the time of her apprehension, that she looked much slighter than she really was; in particular, her sleeves are always remembered to have been so skillfully contrived that her arms had quite a delicate look. She had only a bruise or two about her,—nothing

for a tramp,—but the backs of her hands were lacerated, and the question was, Was it with finger-nails? Now, Mr. Jaggers showed that she had struggled through a great lot of brambles which were not as high as her face; but which she could not have got through and kept her hands out of; and bits of those brambles were actually found in her skin and put in evidence, as well as the fact that the brambles in question were found on examination to have been broken through, and to have little shreds of her dress and little spots of blood upon them here and there. But the boldest point he made was this: it was attempted to be set up, in proof of her jealousy, that she was under strong suspicion of having, at about the time of the murder, frantically destroyed her child by this man—some three years old—to revenge herself upon him. Mr. Jaggers worked that in this way: “We say these are not marks of finger-nails, but marks of brambles, and we show you the brambles. You say they are marks of finger-nails, and you set up the hypothesis that she destroyed her child. You must accept all consequences of that hypothesis. For anything we know, she may have destroyed her child, and the child in clinging to her may have scratched her hands. What then? You are not trying her for the murder of her child; why don’t you? As to this case, if you *will* have scratches, we say that, for anything we know, you may have accounted for them, assuming for the sake of argument that you have not invented them?” “To sum up, sir,” said Wemmick, “Mr. Jaggers was altogether too many for the jury, and they gave in.”

“Has she been in his service ever since?”

“Yes; but not only that,” said Wemmick, “she went into his service immediately after her acquittal, tamed as she is now. She has since been taught one thing and another in the way of her duties, but she was tamed from the beginning.”

“Do you remember the sex of the child?”

“Said to have been a girl.”

“You have nothing more to say to me to-night?”

“Nothing. I got your letter and destroyed it. Nothing.”

We exchanged a cordial good-night, and I went home, with new matter for my thoughts, though with no relief from the old.

Chapter XLIX

Putting Miss Havisham’s note in my pocket, that it might serve as my credentials for so soon reappearing at Satis House, in case her waywardness should lead her to express any surprise at seeing me, I went down again by the coach next day. But I alighted at the Halfway House, and breakfasted there, and walked the rest of the distance; for I sought to get into the town quietly by the unfrequented ways, and to leave it in the same manner.

The best light of the day was gone when I passed along the quiet echoing courts behind the High Street. The

nooks of ruin where the old monks had once had their refectories and gardens, and where the strong walls were now pressed into the service of humble sheds and stables, were almost as silent as the old monks in their graves. The cathedral chimes had at once a sadder and a more remote sound to me, as I hurried on avoiding observation, than they had ever had before; so, the swell of the old organ was borne to my ears like funeral music; and the rooks, as they hovered about the grey tower and swung in the bare high trees of the priory garden, seemed to call to me that the place was changed, and that Estella was gone out of it for ever.

An elderly woman, whom I had seen before as one of the servants who lived in the supplementary house across the back courtyard, opened the gate. The lighted candle stood in the dark passage within, as of old, and I took it up and ascended the staircase alone. Miss Havisham was not in her own room, but was in the larger room across the landing. Looking in at the door, after knocking in vain, I saw her sitting on the hearth in a ragged chair, close before, and lost in the contemplation of, the ashy fire.

Doing as I had often done, I went in, and stood touching the old chimney-piece, where she could see me when she raised her eyes. There was an air of utter loneliness upon her, that would have moved me to pity though she had wilfully done me a deeper injury than I could charge her with. As I stood compassionating her, and thinking how, in the progress of time, I too had come to be a part of the wrecked fortunes of that house, her eyes rested on me. She stared, and said in a low voice, “Is it real?”

“It is I, Pip. Mr. Jaggers gave me your note yesterday, and I have lost no time.”

“Thank you. Thank you.”

As I brought another of the ragged chairs to the hearth and sat down, I remarked a new expression on her face, as if she were afraid of me.

“I want,” she said, “to pursue that subject you mentioned to me when you were last here, and to show you that I am not all stone. But perhaps you can never believe, now, that there is anything human in my heart?”

When I said some reassuring words, she stretched out her tremulous right hand, as though she was going to touch me; but she recalled it again before I understood the action, or knew how to receive it.

“You said, speaking for your friend, that you could tell me how to do something useful and good. Something that you would like done, is it not?”

“Something that I would like done very much.”

“What is it?”

I began explaining to her that secret history of the partnership. I had not got far into it, when I judged from her looks that she was thinking in a discursive way of me,

rather than of what I said. It seemed to be so; for, when I stopped speaking, many moments passed before she showed that she was conscious of the fact.

"Do you break off," she asked then, with her former air of being afraid of me, "because you hate me too much to bear to speak to me?"

"No, no," I answered, "how can you think so, Miss Havisham! I stopped because I thought you were not following what I said."

"Perhaps I was not," she answered, putting a hand to her head. "Begin again, and let me look at something else. Stay! Now tell me."

She set her hand upon her stick in the resolute way that sometimes was habitual to her, and looked at the fire with a strong expression of forcing herself to attend. I went on with my explanation, and told her how I had hoped to complete the transaction out of

my means, but how in this I was disappointed. That part of the subject (I reminded her) involved matters which could form no part of my explanation, for they were the weighty secrets of another.

"So!" said she, assenting with her head, but not looking at me. "And how much money is wanting to complete the purchase?"

I was rather afraid of stating it, for it sounded a large sum. "Nine hundred pounds."

"If I give you the money for this purpose, will you keep my secret as you have kept your own?"

"Quite as faithfully."

"And your mind will be more at rest?"

"Much more at rest."

"Are you very unhappy now?"

She asked this question, still without looking at me, but in an unwonted tone of sympathy. I could not reply at the moment, for my voice failed me. She put her left arm across the head of her stick, and softly laid her forehead on it.

"I am far from happy, Miss Havisham; but I have other causes of disquiet than any you know of. They are the secrets I have mentioned."

After a little while, she raised her head, and looked at the fire again.

"It is noble in you to tell me that you have other causes of unhappiness. Is it true?"

"Too true."

"Can I only serve you, Pip, by serving your friend? Regarding that as done, is there nothing I can do for you yourself?"

"Nothing. I thank you for the question. I thank you

even more for the tone of the question. But there is nothing."

She presently rose from her seat, and looked about the blighted room for the means of writing. There were none there, and she took from her pocket a yellow set of ivory tablets, mounted in tarnished gold, and wrote upon them with a pencil in a case of tarnished gold that hung from her neck.

"You are still on friendly terms with Mr. Jaggers?"

"Quite. I dined with him yesterday."

"This is an authority to him to pay you that money, to lay out at your irresponsible discretion for your friend. I keep no money here; but if you would rather Mr. Jaggers knew nothing of the matter, I will send it to you."

"Thank you, Miss Havisham; I have not the least objection to receiving it from him."

She read me what she had written; and it was direct and clear, and evidently intended to absolve me from any suspicion of profiting by the receipt of the money. I took the tablets from her hand, and it trembled again, and it trembled more as she took off the chain to which the pencil was attached, and put it in mine. All this she did without looking at me.

"My name is on the first leaf. If you can ever write under my name, 'I forgive her,' though ever so long after my broken heart is dust pray do it!"

"O Miss Havisham," said I, "I can do it now. There have been sore mistakes; and my life has been a blind and thankless one; and I want forgiveness and direction far too much, to be bitter with you."

She turned her face to me for the first time since she had averted it, and, to my amazement, I may even add to my terror, dropped on her knees at my feet; with her folded hands raised to me in the manner in which, when her poor heart was young and fresh and whole, they must often have been raised to heaven from her mother's side.

To see her with her white hair and her worn face kneeling at my feet gave me a shock through all my frame. I entreated her to rise, and got my arms about her to help her up; but she only pressed that hand of mine which was nearest to her grasp, and hung her head over it and wept. I had never seen her shed a tear before, and, in the hope that the relief might do her good, I bent over her without speaking. She was not kneeling now, but was down upon the ground.

"O!" she cried, despairingly. "What have I done! What have I done!"

"If you mean, Miss Havisham, what have you done to injure me, let me answer. Very little. I should have loved her under any circumstances. Is she married?"

"Yes."

It was a needless question, for a new desolation in the desolate house had told me so.

"What have I done! What have I done!" She wrung her hands, and crushed her white hair, and returned to this cry over and over again. "What have I done!"

I knew not how to answer, or how to comfort her. That she had done a grievous thing in taking an impressionable child to mould into the form that her wild resentment, spurned affection, and wounded pride found vengeance in, I knew full well. But that, in shutting out the light of day, she had shut out infinitely more; that, in seclusion, she had secluded herself from a thousand natural and healing influences; that, her mind, brooding solitary, had grown diseased, as all minds do and must and will that reverse the appointed order of their Maker, I knew equally well. And could I look upon her without compassion, seeing her punishment in the ruin she was, in her profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed, in the vanity of sorrow which had become a master mania, like the vanity of penitence, the vanity of remorse, the vanity of unworthiness, and other monstrous vanities that have been curses in this world?

"Until you spoke to her the other day, and until I saw in you a looking-glass that showed me what I once felt myself, I did not know what I had done. What have I done! What have I done!" And so again, twenty, fifty times over, What had she done!

"Miss Havisham," I said, when her cry had died away, "you may dismiss me from your mind and conscience. But Estella is a different case, and if you can ever undo any scrap of what you have done amiss in keeping a part of her right nature away from her, it will be better to do that than to bemoan the past through a hundred years."

"Yes, yes, I know it. But, Pip—my dear!" There was an earnest womanly compassion for me in her new affection. "My dear! Believe this: when she first came to me, I meant to save her from misery like my own. At first, I meant no more."

"Well, well!" said I. "I hope so."

"But as she grew, and promised to be very beautiful, I gradually did worse, and with my praises, and with my jewels, and with my teachings, and with this figure of myself always before her, a warning to back and point my lessons, I stole her heart away, and put ice in its place."

"Better," I could not help saying, "to have left her a natural heart, even to be bruised or broken."

With that, Miss Havisham looked distractedly at me for a while, and then burst out again, What had she done!

"If you knew all my story," she pleaded, "you would have some compassion for me and a better understanding of me."

"Miss Havisham," I answered, as delicately as I could, "I believe I may say that I do know your story, and have

known it ever since I first left this neighbourhood. It has inspired me with great commiseration, and I hope I understand it and its influences. Does what has passed between us give me any excuse for asking you a question relative to Estella? Not as she is, but as she was when she first came here?"

She was seated on the ground, with her arms on the ragged chair, and her head leaning on them. She looked full at me when I said this, and replied, "Go on."

"Whose child was Estella?"

She shook her head.

"You don't know?"

She shook her head again.

"But Mr. Jaggers brought her here, or sent her here?"

"Brought her here."

"Will you tell me how that came about?"

She answered in a low whisper and with caution: "I had been shut up in these rooms a long time (I don't know how long; you know what time the clocks keep here), when I told him that I wanted a little girl to rear and love, and save from my fate. I had first seen him when I sent for him to lay this place waste for me; having read of him in the newspapers, before I and the world parted. He told me that he would look about him for such an orphan child. One night he brought her here asleep, and I called her Estella."

"Might I ask her age then?"

"Two or three. She herself knows nothing, but that she was left an orphan and I adopted her."

So convinced I was of that woman's being her mother, that I wanted no evidence to establish the fact in my own mind. But, to any mind, I thought, the connection here was clear and straight.

What more could I hope to do by prolonging the interview? I had succeeded on behalf of Herbert, Miss Havisham had told me all she knew of Estella, I had said and done what I could to ease her mind. No matter with what other words we parted; we parted.

Twilight was closing in when I went downstairs into the natural air. I called to the woman who had opened the gate when I entered, that I would not trouble her just yet, but would walk round the place before leaving. For I had a presentiment that I should never be there again, and I felt that the dying light was suited to my last view of it.

By the wilderness of casks that I had walked on long ago, and on which the rain of years had fallen since, rotting them in many places, and leaving miniature swamps and pools of water upon those that stood on end, I made my way to the ruined garden. I went all round it; round by the corner where Herbert and I had fought our battle; round by the paths where Estella and I had walked. So cold, so lonely, so dreary all!

Taking the brewery on my way back, I raised the rusty latch of a little door at the garden end of it, and walked through. I was going out at the opposite door,—not easy to open now, for the damp wood had started and swelled, and the hinges were yielding, and the threshold was encumbered with a growth of fungus,—when I turned my head to look back. A childish association revived with wonderful force in the moment of the slight action, and I fancied that I saw Miss Havisham hanging to the beam. So strong was the impression, that I stood under the beam shuddering from head to foot before I knew it was a fancy,—though to be sure I was there in an instant.

The mournfulness of the place and time, and the great terror of this illusion, though it was but momentary, caused me to feel an indescribable awe as I came out between the open wooden gates where I had once wrung my hair after Estella had wrung my heart. Passing on into the front courtyard, I hesitated whether to call the woman to let me out at the locked gate of which she had the key, or first to go upstairs and assure myself that Miss Havisham was as safe and well as I had left her. I took the latter course and went up.

I looked into the room where I had left her, and I saw her seated in the ragged chair upon the hearth close to the fire, with her back towards me. In the moment when I was withdrawing my head to go quietly away, I saw a great flaming light spring up. In the same moment I saw her running at me, shrieking, with a whirl of fire blazing all about her, and soaring at least as many feet above her head as she was high.

I had a double-caped great-coat on, and over my arm another thick coat. That I got them off, closed with her, threw her down, and got them over her; that I dragged the great cloth from the table for the same purpose, and with it dragged down the heap of rottenness in the midst, and all the ugly things that sheltered there; that we were on the ground struggling like desperate enemies, and that the closer I covered her, the more wildly she shrieked and tried to free herself,—that this occurred I knew through the result, but not through anything I felt, or thought, or knew I did. I knew nothing until I knew that we were on the floor by the great table, and that patches of tinder yet alight were floating in the smoky air, which, a moment ago, had been her faded bridal dress.

Then, I looked round and saw the disturbed beetles and spiders running away over the floor, and the servants coming in with breathless cries at the door. I still held her forcibly down with all my strength, like a prisoner who might escape; and I doubt if I even knew who she was, or why we had struggled, or that she had been in flames, or that the flames were out, until I saw the patches of tinder that had been her garments no longer alight but falling in a black shower around us.

She was insensible, and I was afraid to have her moved, or even touched. Assistance was sent for, and I held her until it came, as if I unreasonably fancied (I think I did) that, if I let her go, the fire would break out again and consume her. When I got up, on the surgeon's coming to her with other aid, I was astonished to see that both my hands were burnt; for, I had no knowledge of it through the sense of feeling.

On examination it was pronounced that she had received serious hurts, but that they of themselves were far from hopeless; the danger lay mainly in the nervous shock. By the surgeon's directions, her bed was carried into that room and laid upon the great table, which happened to be well suited to the dressing of her injuries. When I saw her again, an hour afterwards, she lay, indeed, where I had seen her strike her stick, and had heard her say that she would lie one day.

Though every vestige of her dress was burnt, as they told me, she still had something of her old ghastly bridal appearance; for, they had covered her to the throat with white cotton-wool, and as she lay with a white sheet loosely overlying that, the phantom air of something that had been and was changed was still upon her.

I found, on questioning the servants, that Estella was in Paris, and I got a promise from the surgeon that he would write to her by the next post. Miss Havisham's family I took upon myself; intending to communicate with Mr. Matthew Pocket only, and leave him to do as he liked about informing the rest. This I did next day, through Herbert, as soon as I returned to town.

There was a stage, that evening, when she spoke collectedly of what had happened, though with a certain terrible vivacity. Towards midnight she began to wander in her speech; and after that it gradually set in that she said innumerable times in a low solemn voice, "What have I done!" And then, "When she first came, I meant to save her from misery like mine." And then, "Take the pencil and write under my name, 'I forgive her!'" She never changed the order of these three sentences, but she sometimes left out a word in one or other of them; never putting in another word, but always leaving a blank and going on to the next word.

As I could do no service there, and as I had, nearer home, that pressing reason for anxiety and fear which even her wanderings could not drive out of my mind, I decided, in the course of the night that I would return by the early morning coach, walking on a mile or so, and being taken up clear of the town. At about six o'clock of the morning, therefore, I leaned over her and touched her lips with mine, just as they said, not stopping for being touched, "Take the pencil and write under my name, 'I forgive her!'"

Chapter L

My hands had been dressed twice or thrice in the night, and again in the morning. My left arm was a good deal burned to the elbow, and, less severely, as high as the shoulder; it was very painful, but the flames had set in that direction, and I felt thankful it was no worse. My right hand was not so badly burnt but that I could move the fingers. It was bandaged, of course, but much less inconveniently than my left hand and arm; those I carried in a sling; and I could only wear my coat like a cloak, loose over my shoulders and fastened at the neck. My hair had been caught by the fire, but not my head or face.

When Herbert had been down to Hammersmith and seen his father, he came back to me at our chambers, and devoted the day to attending on me. He was the kindest of nurses, and at stated times took off the bandages, and steeped them in the cooling liquid that was kept ready, and put them on again, with a patient tenderness that I was deeply grateful for.

At first, as I lay quiet on the sofa, I found it painfully difficult, I might say impossible, to get rid of the impression of the glare of the flames, their hurry and noise, and the fierce burning smell. If I dozed for a minute, I was awakened by Miss Havisham's cries, and by her running at me with all that height of fire above her head. This pain of the mind was much harder to strive against than any bodily pain I suffered; and Herbert, seeing that, did his utmost to hold my attention engaged.

Neither of us spoke of the boat, but we both thought of it. That was made apparent by our avoidance of the subject, and by our agreeing—without agreement—to make my recovery of the use of my hands a question of so many hours, not of so many weeks.

My first question when I saw Herbert had been of course, whether all was well down the river? As he replied in the affirmative, with perfect confidence and cheerfulness, we did not resume the subject until the day was wearing away. But then, as Herbert changed the bandages, more by the light of the fire than by the outer light, he went back to it spontaneously.

"I sat with Provis last night, Handel, two good hours."

"Where was Clara?"

"Dear little thing!" said Herbert. "She was up and down with Gruffandgrim all the evening. He was perpetually pegging at the floor the moment she left his sight. I doubt if he can hold out long, though. What with rum and pepper,—and pepper and rum,—I should think his pegging must be nearly over."

"And then you will be married, Herbert?"

"How can I take care of the dear child otherwise?—Lay your arm out upon the back of the sofa, my dear boy, and I'll sit down here, and get the bandage off so gradually that you shall not know when it comes. I was speaking of Provis. Do you know, Handel, he improves?"

"I said to you I thought he was softened when I last saw him."

"So you did. And so he is. He was very communicative last night, and told me more of his life. You remember his breaking off here about some woman that he had had great trouble with.—Did I hurt you?"

I had started, but not under his touch. His words had given me a start.

"I had forgotten that, Herbert, but I remember it now you speak of it."

"Well! He went into that part of his life, and a dark wild part it is. Shall I tell you? Or would it worry you just now?"

"Tell me by all means. Every word."

Herbert bent forward to look at me more nearly, as if my reply had been rather more hurried or more eager than he could quite account for. "Your head is cool?" he said, touching it.

"Quite," said I. "Tell me what Provis said, my dear Herbert."

"It seems," said Herbert, "—there's a bandage off most charmingly, and now comes the cool one,—makes you shrink at first, my poor dear fellow, don't it? but it will be comfortable presently,—it seems that the woman was a young woman, and a jealous woman, and a revengeful woman; revengeful, Handel, to the last degree."

"To what last degree?"

"Murder.—Does it strike too cold on that sensitive place?"

"I don't feel it. How did she murder? Whom did she murder?"

"Why, the deed may not have merited quite so terrible a name," said Herbert, "but, she was tried for it, and Mr. Jagers defended her, and the reputation of that defence first made his name known to Provis. It was another and a stronger woman who was the victim, and there had been a struggle—in a barn. Who began it, or how fair it was, or how unfair, may be doubtful; but how it ended is certainly not doubtful, for the victim was found throttled."

"Was the woman brought in guilty?"

"No; she was acquitted.—My poor Handel, I hurt you!"

"It is impossible to be gentler, Herbert. Yes? What else?"

"This acquitted young woman and Provis had a little child; a little child of whom Provis was exceedingly fond. On the evening of the very night when the object of her jealousy was strangled as I tell you, the young woman presented herself before Provis for one moment, and swore that she would destroy the child (which was in her possession), and he should never see it again; then she vanished.—There's the worst arm comfortably in the sling once more, and now there remains but the right

hand, which is a far easier job. I can do it better by this light than by a stronger, for my hand is steadiest when I don't see the poor blistered patches too distinctly.—You don't think your breathing is affected, my dear boy? You seem to breathe quickly."

"Perhaps I do, Herbert. Did the woman keep her oath?"

"There comes the darkest part of Provis's life. She did."

"That is, he says she did."

"Why, of course, my dear boy," returned Herbert, in a tone of surprise, and again bending forward to get a nearer look at me. "He says it all. I have no other information."

"No, to be sure."

"Now, whether," pursued Herbert, "he had used the child's mother ill, or whether he had used the child's mother well, Provis doesn't say; but she had shared some four or five years of the wretched life he described to us at this fireside, and he seems to have felt pity for her, and forbearance towards her. Therefore, fearing he should be called upon to depose about this destroyed child, and so be the cause of her death, he hid himself (much as he grieved for the child), kept himself dark, as he says, out of the way and out of the trial, and was only vaguely talked of as a certain man called Abel, out of whom the jealousy arose. After the acquittal she disappeared, and thus he lost the child and the child's mother."

"I want to ask—"

"A moment, my dear boy, and I have done. That evil genius, Compeyson, the worst of scoundrels among many scoundrels, knowing of his keeping out of the way at that time and of his reasons for doing so, of course afterwards held the knowledge over his head as a means of keeping him poorer and working him harder. It was clear last night that this barbed the point of Provis's animosity."

"I want to know," said I, "and particularly, Herbert, whether he told you when this happened?"

"Particularly? Let me remember, then, what he said as to that. His expression was, 'a round score o' year ago, and a'most directly after I took up wi' Compeyson.' How old were you when you came upon him in the little churchyard?"

"I think in my seventh year."

"Ay. It had happened some three or four years then, he said, and you brought into his mind the little girl so tragically lost, who would have been about your age."

"Herbert," said I, after a short silence, in a hurried way, "can you see me best by the light of the window, or the light of the fire?"

"By the firelight," answered Herbert, coming close again.

"Look at me."

"I do look at you, my dear boy."

"Touch me."

"I do touch you, my dear boy."

"You are not afraid that I am in any fever, or that my head is much disordered by the accident of last night?"

"N-no, my dear boy," said Herbert, after taking time to examine me. "You are rather excited, but you are quite yourself."

"I know I am quite myself. And the man we have in hiding down the river, is Estella's Father."

Chapter LI

What purpose I had in view when I was hot on tracing out and proving Estella's parentage, I cannot say. It will presently be seen that the question was not before me in a distinct shape until it was put before me by a wiser head than my own.

But when Herbert and I had held our momentous conversation, I was seized with a feverish conviction that I ought to hunt the matter down,—that I ought not to let it rest, but that I ought to see Mr. Jaggers, and come at the bare truth. I really do not know whether I felt that I did this for Estella's sake, or whether I was glad to transfer to the man in whose preservation I was so much concerned some rays of the romantic interest that had so long surrounded me. Perhaps the latter possibility may be the nearer to the truth.

Any way, I could scarcely be withheld from going out to Gerrard Street that night. Herbert's representations that, if I did, I should probably be laid up and stricken useless, when our fugitive's safety would depend upon me, alone restrained my impatience. On the understanding, again and again reiterated, that, come what would, I was to go to Mr. Jaggers to-morrow, I at length submitted to keep quiet, and to have my hurts looked after, and to stay at home. Early next morning we went out together, and at the corner of Giltspur Street by Smithfield, I left Herbert to go his way into the City, and took my way to Little Britain.

There were periodical occasions when Mr. Jaggers and Wemmick went over the office accounts, and checked off the vouchers, and put all things straight. On these occasions, Wemmick took his books and papers into Mr. Jaggers's room, and one of the upstairs clerks came down into the outer office. Finding such clerk on Wemmick's post that morning, I knew what was going on; but I was not sorry to have Mr. Jaggers and Wemmick together, as Wemmick would then hear for himself that I said nothing to compromise him.

My appearance, with my arm bandaged and my coat loose over my shoulders, favoured my object. Although I had sent Mr. Jaggers a brief account of the accident as soon as I had arrived in town, yet I had to give him all the

details now; and the speciality of the occasion caused our talk to be less dry and hard, and less strictly regulated by the rules of evidence, than it had been before. While I described the disaster, Mr. Jaggers stood, according to his wont, before the fire. Wemmick leaned back in his chair, staring at me, with his hands in the pockets of his trousers, and his pen put horizontally into the post. The two brutal casts, always inseparable in my mind from the official proceedings, seemed to be congestively considering whether they didn't smell fire at the present moment.

My narrative finished, and their questions exhaust-ed, I then produced Miss Havisham's authority to receive the nine hundred pounds for Herbert. Mr. Jaggers's eyes retired a little deeper into his head when I handed him the tablets, but he presently handed them over to Wemmick, with instructions to draw the check for his signature. While that was in course of being done, I looked on at Wemmick as he wrote, and Mr. Jaggers, poising and swaying himself on his well-polished boots, looked on at me. "I am sorry, Pip," said he, as I put the check in my pocket, when he had signed it, "that we do nothing for *you*."

"Miss Havisham was good enough to ask me," I returned, "whether she could do nothing for me, and I told her No."

"Everybody should know his own business," said Mr. Jaggers. And I saw Wemmick's lips form the words "portable property."

"I should *not* have told her No, if I had been you," said Mr. Jaggers; "but every man ought to know his own business best."

"Every man's business," said Wemmick, rather reproachfully towards me, "is portable property."

As I thought the time was now come for pursuing the theme I had at heart, I said, turning on Mr. Jaggers:—

"I did ask something of Miss Havisham, however, sir. I asked her to give me some information relative to her adopted daughter, and she gave me all she possessed."

"Did she?" said Mr. Jaggers, bending forward to look at his boots and then straightening himself. "Hah! I don't think I should have done so, if I had been Miss Havisham. But *she* ought to know her own business best."

"I know more of the history of Miss Havisham's adopted child than Miss Havisham herself does, sir. I know her mother."

Mr. Jaggers looked at me inquiringly, and repeated "Mother?"

"I have seen her mother within these three days."

"Yes?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"And so have you, sir. And you have seen her still more recently."

"Yes?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Perhaps I know more of Estella's history than even you do," said I. "I know her father too."

A certain stop that Mr. Jaggers came to in his manner—he was too self-possessed to change his manner, but he could not help its being brought to an indefinitely attentive stop—assured me that he did not know who her father was. This I had strongly suspected from Provis's account (as Herbert had repeated it) of his having kept himself dark; which I pieced on to the fact that he himself was not Mr. Jaggers's client until some four years later, and when he could have no reason for claiming his identity. But, I could not be sure of this unconsciousness on Mr. Jaggers's part before, though I was quite sure of it now.

"So! You know the young lady's father, Pip?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Yes," I replied, "and his name is Provis—from New South Wales."

Even Mr. Jaggers started when I said those words. It was the slightest start that could escape a man, the most carefully repressed and the sooner checked, but he did start, though he made it a part of the action of taking out his pocket-handkerchief. How Wemmick received the announcement I am unable to say; for I was afraid to look at him just then, lest Mr. Jaggers's sharpness should detect that there had been some communication unknown to him between us.

"And on what evidence, Pip," asked Mr. Jaggers, very coolly, as he paused with his handkerchief half way to his nose, "does Provis make this claim?"

"He does not make it," said I, "and has never made it, and has no knowledge or belief that his daughter is in existence."

For once, the powerful pocket-handkerchief failed. My reply was so unexpected, that Mr. Jaggers put the handkerchief back into his pocket without completing the usual performance, folded his arms, and looked with stern attention at me, though with an immovable face.

Then I told him all I knew, and how I knew it; with the one reservation that I left him to infer that I knew from Miss Havisham what I in fact knew from Wemmick. I was very careful indeed as to that. Nor did I look towards Wemmick until I had finished all I had to tell, and had been for some time silently meeting Mr. Jaggers's look. When I did at last turn my eyes in Wemmick's direction, I found that he had unposted his pen, and was intent upon the table before him.

"Hah!" said Mr. Jaggers at last, as he moved towards the papers on the table. "What item was it you were at, Wemmick, when Mr. Pip came in?"

But I could not submit to be thrown off in that way, and I made a passionate, almost an indignant appeal, to

him to be more frank and manly with me. I reminded him of the false hopes into which I had lapsed, the length of time they had lasted, and the discovery I had made: and I hinted at the danger that weighed upon my spirits. I represented myself as being surely worthy of some little confidence from him, in return for the confidence I had just now imparted. I said that I did not blame him, or suspect him, or mistrust him, but I wanted assurance of the truth from him. And if he asked me why I wanted it, and why I thought I had any right to it, I would tell him, little as he cared for such poor dreams, that I had loved Estella dearly and long, and that although I had lost her, and must live a bereaved life, whatever concerned her was still nearer and dearer to me than anything else in the world. And seeing that Mr. Jaggers stood quite still and silent, and apparently quite obdurate, under this appeal, I turned to Wemmick, and said, "Wemmick, I know you to be a man with a gentle heart. I have seen your pleasant home, and your old father, and all the innocent, cheerful playful ways with which you refresh your business life. And I entreat you to say a word for me to Mr. Jaggers, and to represent to him that, all circumstances considered, he ought to be more open with me!"

I have never seen two men look more oddly at one another than Mr. Jaggers and Wemmick did after this apostrophe. At first, a misgiving crossed me that Wemmick would be instantly dismissed from his employment; but it melted as I saw Mr. Jaggers relax into something like a smile, and Wemmick become bolder.

"What's all this?" said Mr. Jaggers. "You with an old father, and you with pleasant and playful ways?"

"Well!" returned Wemmick. "If I don't bring 'em here, what does it matter?"

"Pip," said Mr. Jaggers, laying his hand upon my arm, and smiling openly, "this man must be the most cunning impostor in all London."

"Not a bit of it," returned Wemmick, growing bolder and bolder. "I think you're another."

Again they exchanged their former odd looks, each apparently still distrustful that the other was taking him in.

"*You* with a pleasant home?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Since it don't interfere with business," returned Wemmick, "let it be so. Now, I look at you, sir, I shouldn't wonder if *you* might be planning and contriving to have a pleasant home of your own one of these days, when you're tired of all this work."

Mr. Jaggers nodded his head retrospectively two or three times, and actually drew a sigh. "Pip," said he, "we won't talk about 'poor dreams;' you know more about such things than I, having much fresher experience of that kind. But now about this other matter. I'll put a case to you. Mind! I admit nothing."

He waited for me to declare that I quite understood that he expressly said that he admitted nothing.

"Now, Pip," said Mr. Jaggers, "put this case. Put the case that a woman, under such circumstances as you have mentioned, held her child concealed, and was obliged to communicate the fact to her legal adviser, on his representing to her that he must know, with an eye to the latitude of his defence, how the fact stood about that child. Put the case that, at the same time he held a trust to find a child for an eccentric rich lady to adopt and bring up."

"I follow you, sir."

"Put the case that he lived in an atmosphere of evil, and that all he saw of children was their being generated in great numbers for certain destruction. Put the case that he often saw children solemnly tried at a criminal bar, where they were held up to be seen; put the case that he habitually knew of their being imprisoned, whipped, transported, neglected, cast out, qualified in all ways for the hangman, and growing up to be hanged. Put the case that pretty nigh all the children he saw in his daily business life he had reason to look upon as so much spawn, to develop into the fish that were to come to his net,—to be prosecuted, defended, forsworn, made orphans, bedevilled somehow."

"I follow you, sir."

"Put the case, Pip, that here was one pretty little child out of the heap who could be saved; whom the father believed dead, and dared make no stir about; as to whom, over the mother, the legal adviser had this power: "I know what you did, and how you did it. You came so and so, you did such and such things to divert suspicion. I have tracked you through it all, and I tell it you all. Part with the child, unless it should be necessary to produce it to clear you, and then it shall be produced. Give the child into my hands, and I will do my best to bring you off. If you are saved, your child is saved too; if you are lost, your child is still saved." Put the case that this was done, and that the woman was cleared."

"I understand you perfectly."

"But that I make no admissions?"

"That you make no admissions." And Wemmick repeated, "No admissions."

"Put the case, Pip, that passion and the terror of death had a little shaken the woman's intellects, and that when she was set at liberty, she was scared out of the ways of the world, and went to him to be sheltered. Put the case that he took her in, and that he kept down the old, wild, violent nature whenever he saw an inkling of its breaking out, by asserting his power over her in the old way. Do you comprehend the imaginary case?"

"Quite."

"Put the case that the child grew up, and was married for money. That the mother was still living. That the father was still living. That the mother and father, unknown to one another, were dwelling within so many miles, furlongs, yards if you like, of one another. That the secret was still a secret, except that you had got wind of it. Put that last case to yourself very carefully."

"I do."

"I ask Wemmick to put it to *himself* very carefully."

And Wemmick said, "I do."

"For whose sake would you reveal the secret? For the father's? I think he would not be much the better for the mother. For the mother's? I think if she had done such a deed she would be safer where she was. For the daughter's? I think it would hardly serve her to establish her parentage for the information of her husband, and to drag her back to disgrace, after an escape of twenty years, pretty secure to last for life. But add the case that you had loved her, Pip, and had made her the subject of those 'poor dreams' which have, at one time or another, been in the heads of more men than you think likely, then I tell you that you had better—and would much sooner when you had thought well of it—chop off that bandaged left hand of yours with your bandaged right hand, and then pass the chopper on to Wemmick there, to cut *that* off too."

I looked at Wemmick, whose face was very grave. He gravely touched his lips with his forefinger. I did the same. Mr. Jaggers did the same. "Now, Wemmick," said the latter then, resuming his usual manner, "what item was it you were at when Mr. Pip came in?"

Standing by for a little, while they were at work, I observed that the odd looks they had cast at one another were repeated several times: with this difference now, that each of them seemed suspicious, not to say conscious, of having shown himself in a weak and unprofessional light to the other. For this reason, I suppose, they were now inflexible with one another; Mr. Jaggers being highly dictatorial, and Wemmick obstinately justifying himself whenever there was the smallest point in abeyance for a moment. I had never seen them on such ill terms; for generally they got on very well indeed together.

But they were both happily relieved by the opportune appearance of Mike, the client with the fur cap and the habit of wiping his nose on his sleeve, whom I had seen on the very first day of my appearance within those walls. This individual, who, either in his own person or in that of some member of his family, seemed to be always in trouble (which in that place meant Newgate), called to announce that his eldest daughter was taken up on suspicion of shoplifting. As he imparted this melancholy circumstance to Wemmick, Mr. Jaggers standing magisterially before the fire and taking no share in the proceedings, Mike's eye happened to twinkle with a tear.

"What are you about?" demanded Wemmick, with the utmost indignation. "What do you come snivelling here for?"

"I didn't go to do it, Mr. Wemmick."

"You did," said Wemmick. "How dare you? You're not in a fit state to come here, if you can't come here without spluttering like a bad pen. What do you mean by it?"

"A man can't help his feelings, Mr. Wemmick," pleaded Mike.

"His what?" demanded Wemmick, quite savagely. "Say that again!"

"Now look here my man," said Mr. Jaggers, advancing a step, and pointing to the door. "Get out of this office. I'll have no feelings here. Get out."

"It serves you right," said Wemmick, "Get out."

So, the unfortunate Mike very humbly withdrew, and Mr. Jaggers and Wemmick appeared to have re-established their good understanding, and went to work again with an air of refreshment upon them as if they had just had lunch.

Chapter LII

From Little Britain I went, with my check in my pocket, to Miss Skiffins's brother, the accountant; and Miss Skiffins's brother, the accountant, going straight to Clarriker's and bringing Clarriker to me, I had the great satisfaction of concluding that arrangement. It was the only good thing I had done, and the only completed thing I had done, since I was first apprised of my great expectations.

Clarriker informing me on that occasion that the affairs of the House were steadily progressing, that he would now be able to establish a small branch-house in the East which was much wanted for the extension of the business, and that Herbert in his new partnership capacity would go out and take charge of it, I found that I must have prepared for a separation from my friend, even though my own affairs had been more settled. And now, indeed, I felt as if my last anchor were loosening its hold, and I should soon be driving with the winds and waves.

But there was recompense in the joy with which Herbert would come home of a night and tell me of these changes, little imagining that he told me no news, and would sketch airy pictures of himself conducting Clara Barley to the land of the Arabian Nights, and of me going out to join them (with a caravan of camels, I believe), and of our all going up the Nile and seeing wonders. Without being sanguine as to my own part in those bright plans, I felt that Herbert's way was clearing fast, and that old Bill Barley had but to stick to his pepper and rum, and his daughter would soon be happily provided for.

We had now got into the month of March. My left arm, though it presented no bad symptoms, took, in the natural course, so long to heal that I was still unable to get a coat on. My right arm was tolerably restored; disfigured, but fairly serviceable.

On a Monday morning, when Herbert and I were at breakfast, I received the following letter from Wemmick by the post.

“Walworth. Burn this as soon as read. Early in the week, or say Wednesday, you might do what you know of, if you felt disposed to try it. Now burn.”

When I had shown this to Herbert and had put it in the fire—but not before we had both got it by heart—we considered what to do. For, of course my being disabled could now be no longer kept out of view.

“I have thought it over again and again,” said Herbert, “and I think I know a better course than taking a Thames waterman. Take Startop. A good fellow, a skilled hand, fond of us, and enthusiastic and honourable.”

I had thought of him more than once.

“But how much would you tell him, Herbert?”

“It is necessary to tell him very little. Let him suppose it a mere freak, but a secret one, until the morning comes: then let him know that there is urgent reason for your getting Provis aboard and away. You go with him?”

“No doubt.”

“Where?”

It had seemed to me, in the many anxious considerations I had given the point, almost indifferent what port we made for,—Hamburg, Rotterdam, Antwerp,—the place signified little, so that he was out of England. Any foreign steamer that fell in our way and would take us up would do. I had always proposed to myself to get him well down the river in the boat; certainly well beyond Gravesend, which was a critical place for search or inquiry if suspicion were afoot. As foreign steamers would leave London at about the time of high-water, our plan would be to get down the river by a previous ebb-tide, and lie by in some quiet spot until we could pull off to one. The time when one would be due where we lay, wherever that might be, could be calculated pretty nearly, if we made inquiries beforehand.

Herbert assented to all this, and we went out immediately after breakfast to pursue our investigations. We found that a steamer for Hamburg was likely to suit our purpose best, and we directed our thoughts chiefly to that vessel. But we noted down what other foreign steamers would leave London with the same tide, and we satisfied ourselves that we knew the build and colour of each. We then separated for a few hours: I, to get at once such passports as were necessary; Herbert, to see Startop at his lodgings. We both did what we had to do without any hindrance, and when we met again at one o'clock reported it done. I, for my part, was prepared with passports; Herbert had seen Startop, and he was more than ready to join.

Those two should pull a pair of oars, we settled, and I would steer; our charge would be sitter, and keep quiet; as

speed was not our object, we should make way enough. We arranged that Herbert should not come home to dinner before going to Mill Pond Bank that evening; that he should not go there at all to-morrow evening, Tuesday; that he should prepare Provis to come down to some stairs hard by the house, on Wednesday, when he saw us approach, and not sooner; that all the arrangements with him should be concluded that Monday night; and that he should be communicated with no more in any way, until we took him on board.

These precautions well understood by both of us, I went home.

On opening the outer door of our chambers with my key, I found a letter in the box, directed to me; a very dirty letter, though not ill-written. It had been delivered by hand (of course, since I left home), and its contents were these:—

“If you are not afraid to come to the old marshes to-night or to-morrow night at nine, and to come to the little sluice-house by the limekiln, you had better come. If you want information regarding *your uncle Provis*, you had much better come and tell no one, and lose no time. *You must come alone*. Bring this with you.”

I had had load enough upon my mind before the receipt of this strange letter. What to do now, I could not tell. And the worst was, that I must decide quickly, or I should miss the afternoon coach, which would take me down in time for to-night. To-morrow night I could not think of going, for it would be too close upon the time of the flight. And again, for anything I knew, the proffered information might have some important bearing on the flight itself.

If I had had ample time for consideration, I believe I should still have gone. Having hardly any time for consideration,—my watch showing me that the coach started within half an hour,—I resolved to go. I should certainly not have gone, but for the reference to my Uncle Provis. That, coming on Wemmick's letter and the morning's busy preparation, turned the scale.

It is so difficult to become clearly possessed of the contents of almost any letter, in a violent hurry, that I had to read this mysterious epistle again twice, before its injunction to me to be secret got mechanically into my mind. Yielding to it in the same mechanical kind

of way, I left a note in pencil for Herbert, telling him that as I should be so soon going away, I knew not for how long, I had decided to hurry down and back, to ascertain for myself how Miss Havisham was faring. I had then barely time to get my great-coat, lock up the chambers, and make for the coach-office by the short by-ways. If I had taken a hackney-chariot and gone by the streets, I should have missed my aim; going as I did, I caught the coach just as it came out of the yard. I was the only inside passenger, jolting away knee-deep in straw, when I came to myself.

For I really had not been myself since the receipt of the letter; it had so bewildered me, ensuing on the hurry of the morning. The morning hurry and flutter had been great; for, long and anxiously as I had waited for Wemmick, his hint had come like a surprise at last. And now I began to wonder at myself for being in the coach, and to doubt whether I had sufficient reason for being there, and to consider whether I should get out presently and go back, and to argue against ever heeding an anonymous communication, and, in short, to pass through all those phases of contradiction and indecision to which I suppose very few hurried people are strangers. Still, the reference to Provis by name mastered everything. I reasoned as I had reasoned already without knowing it, —if that be reasoning,—in case any harm should befall him through my not going, how could I ever forgive myself!

It was dark before we got down, and the journey seemed long and dreary to me, who could see little of it inside, and who could not go outside in my disabled state. Avoiding the Blue Boar, I put up at an inn of minor reputation down the town, and ordered some

dinner. While it was preparing, I went to Satis House and inquired for Miss Havisham; she was still very ill, though considered something better.

My inn had once been a part of an ancient ecclesiastical house, and I dined in a little octagonal common-room, like a font. As I was not able to cut my dinner, the old landlord with a shining bald head did it for me. This bringing us into conversation, he was so good as to entertain me with my own story,—of course with the popular feature that Pumblechook was my earliest benefactor and the founder of my fortunes.

“Do you know the young man?” said I.

“Know him!” repeated the landlord. “Ever since he was —no height at all.”

“Does he ever come back to this neighbourhood?”

“Ay, he comes back,” said the landlord, “to his great friends, now and again, and gives the cold shoulder to the man that made him.”

“What man is that?”

“Him that I speak of,” said the landlord. “Mr. Pumblechook.”

“Is he ungrateful to no one else?”

“No doubt he would be, if he could,” returned the landlord, “but he can’t. And why? Because Pumblechook done everything for him.”

“Does Pumblechook say so?”

“Say so!” replied the landlord. “He han’t no call to say so.”

“But does he say so?”

“It would turn a man’s blood to white wine vinegar to hear him tell of it, sir,” said the landlord.

I thought, “Yet Joe, dear Joe, *you* never tell of it. Long-

suffering and loving Joe, *you* never complain. Nor you, sweet-tempered Biddy!”

“Your appetite’s been touched like by your accident,” said the landlord, glancing at the bandaged arm under my coat. “Try a tenderer bit.”

“No, thank you,” I replied, turning from the table to brood over the fire. “I can eat no more. Please take it away.”

I had never been struck at so keenly, for my thanklessness to Joe, as through the brazen impostor Pumblechook. The falsier he, the truer Joe; the meaner he, the nobler Joe.

My heart was deeply and most deservedly humbled as I mused over the fire for an hour or more. The striking of the clock aroused me, but not from my dejection or remorse, and I got up and had my coat fastened round my neck, and went out. I had previously sought in my pockets for the letter, that I might refer to it again; but I could not find it, and was uneasy to think that it must have been dropped in the straw of the coach. I knew very well, however, that the appointed place was the little sluice-house by the limekiln on the marshes, and the hour nine. Towards the marshes I now went straight, having no time to spare.

Chapter LIII

It was a dark night, though the full moon rose as I left the enclosed lands, and passed out upon the marshes. Beyond their dark line there was a ribbon of clear sky, hardly broad enough to hold the red large moon. In a few minutes she had ascended out of that clear field, in among the piled mountains of cloud.

There was a melancholy wind, and the marshes were very dismal. A stranger would have found them insupportable, and even to me they were so oppressive that I hesitated, half inclined to go back. But I knew them well, and could have found my way on a far darker night, and had no excuse for returning, being there. So, having come there against my inclination, I went on against it.

The direction that I took was not that in which my old home lay, nor that in which we had pursued the convicts. My back was turned towards the distant Hulks as I walked on, and, though I could see the old lights away on the spits of sand, I saw them over my shoulder. I knew the limekiln as well as I knew the old Battery, but they were miles apart; so that, if a light had been burning at each point that night, there would have been a long strip of the blank horizon between the two bright specks.

At first, I had to shut some gates after me, and now and then to stand still while the cattle that were lying in the banked-up pathway arose and blundered down among the grass and reeds. But after a little while I seemed to have the whole flats to myself.

It was another half-hour before I drew near to the kiln. The lime was burning with a sluggish stifling smell, but the fires were made up and left, and no workmen were visible. Hard by was a small stone-quarry. It lay directly in

my way, and had been worked that day, as I saw by the tools and barrows that were lying about.

Coming up again to the marsh level out of this excavation,—for the rude path lay through it,—I saw a light in the old sluice-house. I quickened my pace, and knocked at the door with my hand. Waiting for some reply, I looked about me, noticing how the sluice was abandoned and broken, and how the house—of wood with a tiled roof—would not be proof against the weather much longer, if it were so even now, and how the mud and ooze were coated with lime, and how the choking vapour of the kiln crept in a ghostly way towards me. Still there was no answer, and I knocked again. No answer still, and I tried the latch.

It rose under my hand, and the door yielded. Looking in, I saw a lighted candle on a table, a bench, and a mattress on a truckle bedstead. As there was a loft above, I called, “Is there any one here?” but no voice answered. Then I looked at my watch, and, finding that it was past nine, called again, “Is there any one here?” There being still no answer, I went out at the door, irresolute what to do.

It was beginning to rain fast. Seeing nothing save what I had seen already, I turned back into the house, and stood just within the shelter of the doorway, looking out into the night. While I was considering that some one must have been there lately and must soon be coming back, or the candle would not be burning, it came into my head to look if the wick were long. I turned round to do so, and had taken up the candle in my hand, when it was extinguished by some violent shock; and the next thing I comprehended was, that I had been caught in a strong running noose, thrown over my head from behind.

“Now,” said a suppressed voice with an oath, “I’ve got you!”

“What is this?” I cried, struggling. “Who is it? Help, help, help!”

Not only were my arms pulled close to my sides, but the pressure on my bad arm caused me exquisite pain. Sometimes, a strong man’s hand, sometimes a strong man’s breast, was set against my mouth to deaden my cries, and with a hot breath always close to me, I struggled ineffectually in the dark, while I was fastened tight to the wall. “And now,” said the suppressed voice with another oath, “call out again, and I’ll make short work of you!”

Faint and sick with the pain of my injured arm, bewildered by the surprise, and yet conscious how easily this threat could be put in execution, I desisted, and tried to ease my arm were it ever so little. But, it was bound too tight for that. I felt as if, having been burnt before, it were now being boiled.

The sudden exclusion of the night, and the substitution of black darkness in its place, warned me

that the man had closed a shutter. After groping about for a little, he found the flint and steel he wanted, and began to strike a light. I strained my sight upon the sparks that fell among the tinder, and upon which he breathed and breathed, match in hand, but I could only see his lips, and the blue point of the match; even those but fitfully. The tinder was damp,—no wonder there,—and one after another the sparks died out.

The man was in no hurry, and struck again with the flint and steel. As the sparks fell thick and bright about him, I could see his hands, and touches of his face, and could make out that he was seated and bending over the table; but nothing more. Presently I saw his blue lips again, breathing on the tinder, and then a flare of light flashed up, and showed me Orlick.

Whom I had looked for, I don’t know. I had not looked for him. Seeing him, I felt that I was in a dangerous strait indeed, and I kept my eyes upon him.

He lighted the candle from the flaring match with great deliberation, and dropped the match, and trod it out. Then he put the candle away from him on the table, so that he could see me, and sat with his arms folded on the table and looked at me. I made out that I was fastened to a stout perpendicular ladder a few inches from the wall,—a fixture there,—the means of ascent to the loft above.

“Now,” said he, when we had surveyed one another for some time, “I’ve got you.”

“Unbind me. Let me go!”

“Ah!” he returned, “I’ll let you go. I’ll let you go to the moon, I’ll let you go to the stars. All in good time.”

“Why have you lured me here?”

“Don’t you know?” said he, with a deadly look.

“Why have you set upon me in the dark?”

“Because I mean to do it all myself. One keeps a secret better than two. O you enemy, you enemy!”

His enjoyment of the spectacle I furnished, as he sat with his arms folded on the table, shaking his head at me and hugging himself, had a malignity in it that made me tremble. As I watched him in silence, he put his hand into the corner at his side, and took up a gun with a brass-bound stock.

“Do you know this?” said he, making as if he would take aim at me. “Do you know where you saw it afore? Speak, wolf!”

“Yes,” I answered.

“You cost me that place. You did. Speak!”

“What else could I do?”

“You did that, and that would be enough, without more. How dared you to come betwixt me and a young woman I liked?”

"When did I?"

"When didn't you? It was you as always give Old Orlick a bad name to her."

"You gave it to yourself; you gained it for yourself. I could have done you no harm, if you had done yourself none."

"You're a liar. And you'll take any pains, and spend any money, to drive me out of this country, will you?" said he, repeating my words to Biddy in the last interview I had with her. "Now, I'll tell you a piece of information. It was never so well worth your while to get me out of this country as it is to-night. Ah! If it was all your money twenty times told, to the last brass farden!" As he shook his heavy hand at me, with his mouth snarling like a tiger's, I felt that it was true.

"What are you going to do to me?"

"I'm a-going," said he, bringing his fist down upon the table with a heavy blow, and rising as the blow fell to give it greater force,— "I'm a-going to have your life!"

He leaned forward staring at me, slowly unclenched his hand and drew it across his mouth as if his mouth watered for me, and sat down again.

"You was always in Old Orlick's way since ever you was a child. You goes out of his way this present night. He'll have no more on you. You're dead."

I felt that I had come to the brink of my grave. For a moment I looked wildly round my trap for any chance of escape; but there was none.

"More than that," said he, folding his arms on the table again, "I won't have a rag of you, I won't have a bone of you, left on earth. I'll put your body in the kiln,—I'd carry two such to it, on my shoulders—and, let people suppose what they may of you, they shall never know nothing."

My mind, with inconceivable rapidity followed out all the consequences of such a death. Estella's father would believe I had deserted him, would be taken, would die accusing me; even Herbert would doubt me, when he compared the letter I had left for him with the fact that I had called at Miss Havisham's gate for only a moment; Joe and Biddy would never know how sorry I had been that night, none would ever know what I had suffered, how true I had meant to be, what an agony I had passed through. The death close before me was terrible, but far more terrible than death was the dread of being misremembered after death. And so quick were my thoughts, that I saw myself despised by unborn generations,—Estella's children, and their children,—while the wretch's words were yet on his lips.

"Now, wolf," said he, "afore I kill you like any other beast,—which is wot I mean to do and wot I have tied you up for,—I'll have a good look at you and a good goad at you. O you enemy!"

It had passed through my thoughts to cry out for help again; though few could know better than I, the solitary nature of the spot, and the hopelessness of aid. But as he sat gloating over me, I was supported by a scornful detestation of him that sealed my lips. Above all things, I resolved that I would not entreat him, and that I would die making some last poor resistance to him. Softened as my thoughts of all the rest of men were in that dire extremity; humbly beseeching pardon, as I did, of Heaven; melted at heart, as I was, by the thought that I had taken no farewell, and never now could take farewell of those who were dear to me, or could explain myself to them, or ask for their compassion on my miserable errors,—still, if I could have killed him, even in dying, I would have done it.

He had been drinking, and his eyes were red and bloodshot. Around his neck was slung a tin bottle, as I had often seen his meat and drink slung about him in other days. He brought the bottle to his lips, and took a fiery drink from it; and I smelt the strong spirits that I saw flash into his face.

"Wolf!" said he, folding his arms again, "Old Orlick's a-going to tell you somethink. It was you as did for your shrew sister."

Again my mind, with its former inconceivable rapidity, had exhausted the whole subject of the attack upon my sister, her illness, and her death, before his slow and hesitating speech had formed these words.

"It was you, villain," said I.

"I tell you it was your doing,—I tell you it was done through you," he retorted, catching up the gun, and making a blow with the stock at the vacant air between us. "I come upon her from behind, as I come upon you to-night. *I giv' it her!* I left her for dead, and if there had been a limekiln as nigh her as there is now nigh you, she shouldn't have come to life again. But it warn't Old Orlick as did it; it was you. You was favoured, and he was bullied and beat. Old Orlick bullied and beat, eh? Now you pays for it. You done it; now you pays for it."

He drank again, and became more ferocious. I saw by his tilting of the bottle that there was no great quantity left in it. I distinctly understood that he was working himself up with its contents to make an end of me. I knew that every drop it held was a drop of my life. I knew that when I was changed into a part of the vapour that had crept towards me but a little while before, like my own warning ghost, he would do as he had done in my sister's case,—make all haste to the town, and be seen slouching about there drinking at the alehouses. My rapid mind pursued him to the town, made a picture of the street with him in it, and contrasted its lights and life with the lonely marsh and the white vapour creeping over it, into which I should have dissolved.

It was not only that I could have summed up years and years and years while he said a dozen words, but that what he did say presented pictures to me, and not mere words. In the excited and exalted state of my brain, I could not think of a place without seeing it, or of persons without seeing them. It is impossible to overstate the vividness of these images, and yet I was so intent, all the time, upon him himself,—who would not be intent on the tiger crouching to spring!—that I knew of the slightest action of his fingers.

When he had drunk this second time, he rose from the bench on which he sat, and pushed the table aside. Then, he took up the candle, and, shading it with his murderous hand so as to throw its light on me, stood before me, looking at me and enjoying the sight.

“Wolf, I’ll tell you something more. It was Old Orlick as you tumbled over on your stairs that night.”

I saw the staircase with its extinguished lamps. I saw the shadows of the heavy stair-rails, thrown by the watchman’s lantern on the wall. I saw the rooms that I was never to see again; here, a door half open; there, a door closed; all the articles of furniture around.

“And why was Old Orlick there? I’ll tell you something more, wolf. You and her *have* pretty well hunted me out of this country, so far as getting a easy living in it goes, and I’ve took up with new companions, and new masters. Some of ’em writes my letters when I wants ’em wrote,—do you mind?—writes my letters, wolf! They writes fifty hands; they’re not like sneaking you, as writes but one. I’ve had a firm mind and a firm will to have your life, since you was down here at your sister’s burying. I han’t seen a way to get you safe, and I’ve looked arter you to know your ins and outs. For, says Old Orlick to himself, ‘Somehow or another I’ll have him!’ What! When I looks for you, I finds your uncle Provis, eh?”

Mill Pond Bank, and Chinks’s Basin, and the Old Green Copper Rope-walk, all so clear and plain! Provis in his rooms, the signal whose use was over, pretty Clara, the good motherly woman, old Bill Barley on his back, all drifting by, as on the swift stream of my life fast running out to sea!

“*You* with a uncle too! Why, I know’d you at Gargery’s when you was so small a wolf that I could have took your weazen betwixt this finger and thumb and chucked you away dead (as I’d thoughts o’ doing, odd times, when I see you loitering amongst the pollards on a Sunday), and you hadn’t found no uncles then. No, not you! But when Old Orlick come for to hear that your uncle Provis had most like wore the leg-iron wot Old Orlick had picked up, filed asunder,

on these meshes ever so many year ago, and wot he kep by him till he dropped your sister with it, like a bullock, as he means to drop you—hey?—when he come for to hear that—hey?”

In his savage taunting, he flared the candle so close at me that I turned my face aside to save it from the flame.

“Ah!” he cried, laughing, after doing it again, “the burnt child dreads the fire! Old Orlick knowed you was burnt, Old Orlick knowed you was smuggling your uncle Provis away, Old Orlick’s a match for you and know’d you’d come to-night! Now I’ll tell you something more, wolf, and this ends it. There’s them that’s as good a match for your uncle Provis as Old Orlick has been for you. Let him ’ware them, when he’s lost his nevvvy! Let him ’ware them, when no man can’t find a rag of his dear relation’s clothes, nor yet a bone of his body. There’s them that can’t and that won’t have Magwitch,—yes, *I* know the name!—alive in the same land with them, and that’s had such sure information of him when he was alive in another land, as that he couldn’t and shouldn’t leave it unbeknown and put them in danger. P’raps it’s them that writes fifty hands, and that’s not like sneaking you as writes but one. ’Ware Compeyson, Magwitch, and the gallows!”

He flared the candle at me again, smoking my face and hair, and for an instant blinding me, and turned his powerful back as he replaced the light on the table. I had thought a prayer, and had been with Joe and Bidy and Herbert, before he turned towards me again.

There was a clear space of a few feet between the table and the opposite wall. Within this space, he now slouched backwards and forwards. His great strength seemed to sit stronger upon him than ever before, as he did this with his hands hanging loose and heavy at his sides, and with his eyes scowling at me. I had no grain of hope left. Wild as my inward hurry was, and wonderful the force of the pictures that rushed by me instead of thoughts, I could yet clearly understand that, unless he had resolved that I was within a few moments of surely perishing out of all human knowledge, he would never have told me what he had told.

Of a sudden, he stopped, took the cork out of his bottle, and tossed it away. Light as it was, I heard it fall like a plummet. He swallowed slowly, tilting up the bottle by little and little, and now he looked at me no more. The last few drops of liquor he poured into the palm of his hand, and licked up. Then, with a sudden hurry of violence and swearing horribly, he threw the bottle from him, and stooped; and I saw in his hand a stone-hammer with a long heavy handle.

The resolution I had made did not desert me, for, without uttering one vain word of appeal to him, I shouted out with all my might, and struggled with all my might. It was only my head and my legs that I could move, but to that extent I struggled with all the force, until then unknown, that was within me. In the same instant I heard responsive shouts, saw figures and a gleam of light dash in at the door, heard voices and tumult, and saw Orlick emerge from a struggle of men, as if it were

tumbling water, clear the table at a leap, and fly out into the night.

After a blank, I found that I was lying unbound, on the floor, in the same place, with my head on some one's knee. My eyes were fixed on the ladder against the wall, when I came to myself,—had opened on it before my mind saw it,—and thus as I recovered consciousness, I knew that I was in the place where I had lost it.

Too indifferent at first, even to look round and ascertain who supported me, I was lying looking at the ladder, when there came between me and it a face. The face of Trabb's boy!

"I think he's all right!" said Trabb's boy, in a sober voice; "but ain't he just pale though!"

At these words, the face of him who supported me looked over into mine, and I saw my supporter to be—

"Herbert! Great Heaven!"

"Softly," said Herbert. "Gently, Handel. Don't be too eager."

"And our old comrade, Startop!" I cried, as he too bent over me.

"Remember what he is going to assist us in," said Herbert, "and be calm."

The allusion made me spring up; though I dropped again from the pain in my arm. "The time has not gone by, Herbert, has it? What night is to-night? How long have I been here?" For, I had a strange and strong misgiving that I had been lying there a long time—a day and a night,—two days and nights,—more.

"The time has not gone by. It is still Monday night."

"Thank God!"

"And you have all to-morrow, Tuesday, to rest in," said Herbert. "But you can't help groaning, my dear Handel. What hurt have you got? Can you stand?"

"Yes, yes," said I, "I can walk. I have no hurt but in this throbbing arm."

They laid it bare, and did what they could. It was violently swollen and inflamed, and I could scarcely endure to have it touched. But, they tore up their handkerchiefs to make fresh bandages, and carefully replaced it in the sling, until we could get to the town and obtain some cooling lotion to put upon it. In a

little while we had shut the door of the dark and empty sluice-house, and were passing through the quarry on our way back. Trabb's boy—Trabb's overgrown young man now—went before us with a lantern, which was the light I had seen come in at the door. But, the moon was a good two hours higher than when I had last seen the sky, and the night, though rainy, was much lighter. The white vapour of the kiln was passing from us as we went by, and

as I had thought a prayer before, I thought a thanksgiving now.

Entreating Herbert to tell me how he had come to my rescue,—which at first he had flatly refused to do, but had insisted on my remaining quiet,—I learnt that I had in my hurry dropped the letter, open, in our chambers, where he, coming home to bring with him Startop whom he had met in the street on his way to me, found it, very soon after I was gone. Its tone made him uneasy, and the more so because of the inconsistency between it and the hasty letter I had left for him. His uneasiness increasing instead of subsiding, after a quarter of an hour's consideration, he set off for the coach-office with Startop, who volunteered his company, to make inquiry when the next coach went down. Finding that the afternoon coach was gone, and finding that his uneasiness grew into positive alarm, as obstacles came in his way, he resolved to follow in a post-chaise. So he and Startop arrived at the Blue Boar, fully expecting there to find me, or tidings of me; but, finding neither, went on to Miss Havisham's, where they lost me. Hereupon they went back to the hotel (doubtless at about the time when I was hearing the popular local version of my own story) to refresh themselves and to get some one to guide them out upon the marshes. Among the loungers under the Boar's archway happened to be Trabb's Boy,—true to his ancient habit of happening to be everywhere where he had no business,—and Trabb's boy had seen me passing from Miss Havisham's in the direction of my dining-place. Thus Trabb's boy became their guide, and with him they went out to the sluice-house, though by the town way to the marshes, which I had avoided. Now, as they went along, Herbert reflected, that I might, after all, have been brought there on some genuine and serviceable errand tending to Provis's safety, and, bethinking himself that in that case interruption must be mischievous, left his guide and Startop on the edge of the quarry, and went on by himself, and stole round the house two or three times, endeavouring to ascertain whether all was right within. As he could hear nothing but indistinct sounds of one deep rough voice (this was while my mind was so busy), he even at last began to doubt whether I was there, when suddenly I cried out loudly, and he answered the cries, and rushed in, closely followed by the other two.

When I told Herbert what had passed within the house, he was for our immediately going before a magistrate in the town, late at night as it was, and getting out a warrant. But, I had already considered that such a course, by detaining us there, or binding us to come back, might be fatal to Provis. There was no gainsaying this difficulty, and we relinquished all thoughts of pursuing Orlick at that time. For the present, under the circumstances, we deemed it prudent to make rather light of the matter to Trabb's boy; who, I am convinced, would have been much affected by disappointment, if he had known that his

intervention saved me from the limekiln. Not that Trabb's boy was of a malignant nature, but that he had too much spare vivacity, and that it was in his constitution to want variety and excitement at anybody's expense. When we parted, I presented him with two guineas (which seemed to meet his views), and told him that I was sorry ever to have had an ill opinion of him (which made no impression on him at all).

Wednesday being so close upon us, we determined to go back to London that night, three in the post-chaise; the rather, as we should then be clear away before the night's adventure began to be talked of. Herbert got a large bottle of stuff for my arm; and by dint of having this stuff dropped over it all the night through, I was just able to bear its pain on the journey. It was daylight when we reached the Temple, and I went at once to bed, and lay in bed all day.

My terror, as I lay there, of falling ill, and being unfitted for to-morrow, was so besetting, that I wonder it did not disable me of itself. It would have done so, pretty surely, in conjunction with the mental wear and tear I had suffered, but for the unnatural strain upon me that to-morrow was. So anxiously looked forward to, charged with such consequences, its results so impenetrably hidden, though so near.

No precaution could have been more obvious than our refraining from communication with him that day; yet this again increased my restlessness. I started at every footstep and every sound, believing that he was discovered and taken, and this was the messenger to tell me so. I persuaded myself that I knew he was taken; that there was something more upon my mind than a fear or a presentiment; that the fact had occurred, and I had a mysterious knowledge of it. As the days wore on, and no ill news came, as the day closed in and darkness fell, my overshadowing dread of being disabled by illness before to-morrow morning altogether mastered me. My burning arm throbbed, and my burning head throbbed, and I

fancied I was beginning to wander. I counted up to high numbers, to make sure of myself, and repeated passages that I knew in prose and verse. It happened sometimes that in the mere escape of a fatigued mind, I dozed for some moments or forgot; then I would say to myself with a start, "Now it has come, and I am turning delirious!"

They kept me very quiet all day, and kept my arm constantly dressed, and gave me cooling drinks. Whenever I fell asleep, I awoke with the notion I had had in the sluice-house, that a long time had elapsed and the opportunity to save him was gone. About midnight I got out of bed and went to Herbert, with the conviction that I had been asleep for four-and-twenty hours, and that Wednesday was past. It was the last self-exhausting effort of my fretfulness, for after that I slept soundly.

Wednesday morning was dawning when I looked out of window. The winking lights upon the bridges were already pale, the coming sun was like a marsh of fire on the horizon. The river, still dark and mysterious, was spanned by bridges that were turning coldly grey, with here and there at top a warm touch from the burning in the sky. As I looked along the clustered roofs, with church-towers and spires shooting into the unusually clear air, the sun rose up, and a veil seemed to be drawn from the river, and millions of sparkles burst out upon its waters. From me too, a veil seemed to be drawn, and I felt strong and well.

Herbert lay asleep in his bed, and our old fellow-student lay asleep on the sofa. I could not dress myself without help; but I made up the fire, which was still burning, and got some coffee ready for them. In good time they too started up strong and well, and we admitted the sharp morning air at the windows, and looked at the tide that was still flowing towards us.

"When it turns at nine o'clock," said Herbert, cheerfully, "look out for us, and stand ready, you over there at Mill Pond Bank!"

Chapter LIV

It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade. We had our pea-coats with us, and I took a bag. Of all my worldly possessions I took no more than the few necessities that filled the bag. Where I might go, what I might do, or when I might return, were questions utterly unknown to me; nor did I vex my mind with them, for it was wholly set on Provis's safety. I only wondered for the passing moment, as I stopped at the door and looked back, under what altered circumstances I should next see those rooms, if ever.

We loitered down to the Temple stairs, and stood loitering there, as if we were not quite decided to go upon the water at all. Of course, I had taken care that the boat should be ready and everything in order. After a little show of indecision, which there were none to see but the two or three amphibious creatures belonging to our Temple stairs, we went on board and cast off; Herbert in the bow, I steering. It was then about high-water,—half-past eight.

Our plan was this. The tide, beginning to run down at nine, and being with us until three, we intended still to creep on after it had turned, and row against it until dark. We should then be well in those long reaches below Gravesend, between Kent and Essex, where the river is broad and solitary, where the water-side inhabitants are very few, and where lone public-houses are scattered here and there, of which we could choose one for a resting-place. There, we meant to lie by all night. The steamer for Hamburg and the steamer for Rotterdam would start from London at about nine on Thursday morning. We should know at what time to expect them, according to

where we were, and would hail the first; so that, if by any accident we were not taken abroad, we should have another chance. We knew the distinguishing marks of each vessel.

The relief of being at last engaged in the execution of the purpose was so great to me that I felt it difficult to realise the condition in which I had been a few hours before. The crisp air, the sunlight, the movement on the river, and the moving river itself,—the road that ran with us, seeming to sympathise with us, animate us, and encourage us on,—freshened me with new hope. I felt mortified to be of so little use in the boat; but, there were few better oarsmen than my two friends, and they rowed with a steady stroke that was to last all day.

At that time, the steam-traffic on the Thames was far below its present extent, and watermen's boats were far more numerous. Of barges, sailing colliers, and coasting-traders, there were perhaps, as many as now; but of steam-ships, great and small, not a tithe or a twentieth part so many. Early as it was, there were

plenty of scullers going here and there that morning, and plenty of barges dropping down with the tide; the navigation of the river between bridges, in an open boat, was a much easier and commoner matter in those days than it is in these; and we went ahead among many skiffs and wherries briskly.

Old London Bridge was soon passed, and old Billingsgate Market with its oyster-boats and Dutchmen, and the White Tower and Traitor's Gate, and we were in among the tiers of shipping. Here were the Leith, Aberdeen, and Glasgow steamers, loading and unloading goods, and looking immensely high out of the water as we passed alongside; here, were colliers by the score and score, with the coal-whippers plunging off stages on deck, as counterweights to measures of coal swinging up, which were then rattled over the side into barges; here, at her moorings was to-morrow's steamer for Rotterdam, of which we took good notice; and here to-morrow's for Hamburg, under whose bowsprit we crossed. And now I, sitting in the stern, could see, with a faster beating heart, Mill Pond Bank and Mill Pond stairs.

"Is he there?" said Herbert.

"Not yet."

"Right! He was not to come down till he saw us. Can you see his signal?"

"Not well from here; but I think I see it.—Now I see him! Pull both. Easy, Herbert. Oars!"

We touched the stairs lightly for a single moment, and he was on board, and we were off again. He had a boat-cloak with him, and a black canvas bag; and he looked as like a river-pilot as my heart could have wished.

"Dear boy!" he said, putting his arm on my shoulder, as he took his seat. "Faithful dear boy, well done. Thankye, thankye!"

Again among the tiers of shipping, in and out, avoiding rusty chain-cables frayed hempen hawsers and bobbing

buoys, sinking for the moment floating broken baskets, scattering floating chips of wood and shaving, cleaving floating scum of coal, in and out, under the figure-head of the *John of Sunderland* making a speech to the winds (as is done by many Johns), and the *Betsy of Yarmouth* with a firm formality of bosom and her knobby eyes starting two inches out of her head; in and out, hammers going in ship-builders' yards, saws going at timber, clashing engines going at things unknown, pumps going in leaky ships, capstans going, ships going out to sea, and unintelligible sea-creatures roaring curses over the bulwarks at respondent lightermen, in and out,—out at last upon the clearer river, where the ships' boys might take their fenders in, no longer fishing in troubled waters with them over the side, and where the festooned sails might fly out to the wind.

At the stairs where we had taken him abroad, and ever since, I had looked warily for any token of our being suspected. I had seen none. We certainly had not been, and at that time as certainly we were not either attended or followed by any boat. If we had been waited on by any boat, I should have run in to shore, and have obliged her to go on, or to make her purpose evident. But we held our own without any appearance of molestation.

He had his boat-cloak on him, and looked, as I have said, a natural part of the scene. It was remarkable (but perhaps the wretched life he had led accounted for it) that he was the least anxious of any of us. He was not indifferent, for he told me that he hoped to live to see his gentleman one of the best of gentlemen in a foreign country; he was not disposed to be passive or resigned, as I understood it; but he had no notion of meeting danger half way. When it came upon him, he confronted it, but it must come before he troubled himself.

"If you knowed, dear boy," he said to me, "what it is to sit here alonger my dear boy and have my smoke, arter having been day by day betwixt four walls, you'd envy me. But you don't know what it is."

"I think I know the delights of freedom," I answered.

"Ah," said he, shaking his head gravely. "But you don't know it equal to me. You must have been under lock and key, dear boy, to know it equal to me,—but I ain't a-going to be low."

It occurred to me as inconsistent, that, for any mastering idea, he should have endangered his freedom, and even his life. But I reflected that perhaps freedom without danger was too much apart from all the habit of his existence to be to him what it would be to another man. I was not far out, since he said, after smoking a little:

"You see, dear boy, when I was over yonder, t'other side the world, I was always a looking to this side; and it come flat to be there, for all I was a growing rich. Everybody knowed Magwitch, and Magwitch could come, and Magwitch could go, and nobody's head would be troubled about him. They ain't so easy concerning me here, dear boy,—wouldn't be, leastwise, if they knowed where I was."

"If all goes well," said I, "you will be perfectly free and safe again within a few hours."

"Well," he returned, drawing a long breath, "I hope so."

"And think so?"

He dipped his hand in the water over the boat's gunwale, and said, smiling with that softened air upon him which was not new to me:—

"Ay, I s'pose I think so, dear boy. We'd be puzzled to be more quiet and easy-going than we are at present. But—it's a flowing so soft and pleasant through the water, p'raps, as makes me think it—I was a thinking through my smoke just then, that we can no more see to the bottom of the next few hours than we can see to the bottom of this river what I catches hold of. Nor yet we can't no more hold their tide than I can hold this. And it's run through my fingers and gone, you see!" holding up his dripping hand.

"But for your face I should think you were a little despondent," said I.

"Not a bit on it, dear boy! It comes of flowing on so quiet, and of that there rippling at the boat's head making a sort of a Sunday tune. Maybe I'm a growing a trifle old besides."

He put his pipe back in his mouth with an undisturbed expression of face, and sat as composed and contented as if we were already out of England. Yet he was as submissive to a word of advice as if he had been in constant terror; for, when we ran ashore to get some bottles of beer into the boat, and he was stepping out, I hinted that I thought he would be safest where he was, and he said. "Do you, dear boy?" and quietly sat down again.

The air felt cold upon the river, but it was a bright day, and the sunshine was very cheering. The tide ran strong, I took care to lose none of it, and our steady stroke carried us on thoroughly well. By imperceptible degrees, as the tide ran out, we lost more and more of the nearer woods and hills, and dropped lower and lower between the muddy banks, but the tide was yet with us when we were off Gravesend. As our charge was wrapped in his cloak, I purposely passed within a boat or two's length of the floating Custom House, and so out to catch the stream, alongside of two emigrant ships, and under the bows of a large transport with troops on the forecastle looking down at us. And soon the tide began to slacken, and the craft lying at anchor to swing, and presently they had all swung round, and the ships that were taking advantage of the new tide to get up to the Pool began to crowd upon us in a fleet, and we kept under the shore, as much out of the strength of the tide now as we could, standing carefully off from low shallows and mudbanks.

Our oarsmen were so fresh, by dint of having occasionally let her drive with the tide for a minute or

two, that a quarter of an hour's rest proved full as much as they wanted. We got ashore among some slippery stones while we ate and drank what we had with us, and looked about. It was like my own marsh country, flat and monotonous, and with a dim horizon; while the winding river turned and turned, and the great floating buoys upon it turned and turned, and everything else seemed stranded and still. For now the last of the fleet of ships was round the last low point we had headed; and the last green barge, straw-laden, with a brown sail, had followed; and some ballast-lighters, shaped like a child's first rude imitation of a boat, lay low in the mud; and a little squat shoal-lighthouse on open piles stood crippled in the mud on stilts and crutches; and slimy stakes stuck out of the mud, and slimy stones stuck out of the mud, and red landmarks and tidemarks stuck out of the mud, and an old landing-stage and an old roofless building slipped into the mud, and all about us was stagnation and mud.

We pushed off again, and made what way we could. It was much harder work now, but Herbert and Startop persevered, and rowed and rowed and rowed until the sun went down. By that time the river had lifted us a little, so that we could see above the bank. There was the red sun, on the low level of the shore, in a purple haze, fast deepening into black; and there was the solitary flat marsh; and far away there were the rising grounds, between which and us there seemed to be no life, save here and there in the foreground a melancholy gull.

As the night was fast falling, and as the moon, being past the full, would not rise early, we held a little council; a short one, for clearly our course was to lie by at the first lonely tavern we could find. So, they plied their oars once more, and I looked out for anything like a house. Thus we held on, speaking little, for four or five dull miles. It was very cold, and, a collier coming by us, with her galley-fire smoking and flaring, looked like a comfortable home. The night was as dark by this time as it would be until morning; and what light we had, seemed to come more from the river than the sky, as the oars in their dipping struck at a few reflected stars.

At this dismal time we were evidently all possessed by the idea that we were followed. As the tide made, it flapped heavily at irregular intervals against the shore; and whenever such a sound came, one or other of us was sure to start, and look in that direction. Here and there, the set of the current had worn down the bank into a little creek, and we were all suspicious of such places, and eyed them nervously. Sometimes, "What was that ripple?" one of us would say in a low voice. Or another, "Is that a boat yonder?" And afterwards we would fall into a dead silence, and I would sit impatiently thinking with what an unusual amount of noise the oars worked in the thowels.

At length we descried a light and a roof, and presently afterwards ran alongside a little causeway made of stones that had been picked up hard by. Leaving the rest in the

boat, I stepped ashore, and found the light to be in a window of a public-house. It was a dirty place enough, and I dare say not unknown to smuggling adventurers; but there was a good fire in the kitchen, and there were eggs and bacon to eat, and various liquors to drink. Also, there were two double-bedded rooms,—“such as they were,” the landlord said. No other company was in the house than the landlord, his wife, and a grizzled male creature, the “Jack” of the little causeway, who was as slimy and smeary as if he had been low-water mark too.

With this assistant, I went down to the boat again, and we all came ashore, and brought out the oars, and rudder and boat-hook, and all else, and hauled her up for the night. We made a very good meal by the kitchen fire, and then apportioned the bedrooms: Herbert and Startop were to occupy one; I and our charge the other. We found the air as carefully excluded from both, as if air were fatal to life; and there were more dirty clothes and bandboxes under the beds than I should have thought the family possessed. But we considered ourselves well off, notwithstanding, for a more solitary place we could not have found.

While we were comforting ourselves by the fire after our meal, the Jack—who was sitting in a corner, and who had a bloated pair of shoes on, which he had exhibited while we were eating our eggs and bacon, as interesting relics that he had taken a few days ago from the feet of a drowned seaman washed ashore—asked me if we had seen a four-oared galley going up with the tide? When I told him No, he said she must have gone down then, and yet she “took up too,” when she left there.

“They must ha’ thought better on’t for some reason or another,” said the Jack, “and gone down.”

“A four-oared galley, did you say?” said I.

“A four,” said the Jack, “and two sitters.”

“Did they come ashore here?”

“They put in with a stone two-gallon jar for some beer. I’d ha’ been glad to pison the beer myself,” said the Jack, “or put some rattling physic in it.”

“Why?”

“I know why,” said the Jack. He spoke in a slushy voice, as if much mud had washed into his throat.

“He thinks,” said the landlord, a weakly meditative man with a pale eye, who seemed to rely greatly on his Jack,—“he thinks they was, what they wasn’t.”

“I knows what I thinks,” observed the Jack.

“*You* thinks Custom ’Us, Jack?” said the landlord.

“I do,” said the Jack.

“Then you’re wrong, Jack.”

“AM I!”

In the infinite meaning of his reply and his boundless

confidence in his views, the Jack took one of his bloated shoes off, looked into it, knocked a few stones out of it on the kitchen floor, and put it on again. He did this with the air of a Jack who was so right that he could afford to do anything.

“Why, what do you make out that they done with their buttons then, Jack?” asked the landlord, vacillating weakly.

“Done with their buttons?” returned the Jack. “Chucked ’em overboard. Swallowed ’em. Sowed ’em, to come up small salad. Done with their buttons!”

“Don’t be cheeky, Jack,” remonstrated the landlord, in a melancholy and pathetic way.

“A Custom ’Us officer knows what to do with his Buttons,” said the Jack, repeating the obnoxious word with the greatest contempt, “when they comes betwixt him and his own light. A four and two sitters don’t go hanging and hovering, up with one tide and down with another, and both with and against another, without there being Custom ’Us at the bottom of it.” Saying which he went out in disdain; and the landlord, having no one to reply upon, found it impracticable to pursue the subject.

This dialogue made us all uneasy, and me very uneasy. The dismal wind was muttering round the house, the tide was flapping at the shore, and I had a feeling that we were caged and threatened. A four-oared galley hovering about in so unusual a way as to attract this notice was an ugly circumstance that I could not get rid of. When I had induced Provis to go up to bed, I went outside with my two companions (Startop by this time knew the state of the case), and held another council. Whether we should remain at the house until near the steamer’s time, which would be about one in the afternoon, or whether we should put off early in the morning, was the question we discussed. On the whole we deemed it the better course to lie where we were, until within an hour or so of the steamer’s time, and then to get out in her track, and drift easily with the tide. Having settled to do this, we returned into the house and went to bed.

I lay down with the greater part of my clothes on, and slept well for a few hours. When I awoke, the wind had risen, and the sign of the house (the Ship) was creaking and banging about, with noises that startled me. Rising softly, for my charge lay fast asleep, I looked out of the window. It commanded the causeway where we had hauled up our boat, and, as my eyes adapted themselves to the light of the clouded moon, I saw two men looking into her. They passed by under the window, looking at nothing else, and they did not go down to the landing-place which I could discern to be empty, but struck across the marsh in the direction of the Nore.

My first impulse was to call up Herbert, and show him the two men going away. But reflecting, before I got into his room, which was at the back of the house and adjoined

mine, that he and Startop had had a harder day than I, and were fatigued, I forbore. Going back to my window, I could see the two men moving over the marsh. In that light, however, I soon lost them, and, feeling very cold, lay down to think of the matter, and fell asleep again.

We were up early. As we walked to and fro, all four together, before breakfast, I deemed it right to recount what I had seen. Again our charge was the least anxious of the party. It was very likely that the

men belonged to the Custom House, he said quietly, and that they had no thought of us. I tried to persuade myself that it was so,—as, indeed, it might easily be. However, I proposed that he and I should walk away together to a distant point we could see, and that the boat should take us aboard there, or as near there as might prove feasible, at about noon. This being considered a good precaution, soon after breakfast he and I set forth, without saying anything at the tavern.

He smoked his pipe as we went along, and sometimes stopped to clap me on the shoulder. One would have supposed that it was I who was in danger, not he, and that he was reassuring me. We spoke very little. As we approached the point, I begged him to remain in a sheltered place, while I went on to reconnoitre; for it was towards it that the men had passed in the night. He complied, and I went on alone. There was no boat off the point, nor any boat drawn up anywhere near it, nor were there any signs of the men having embarked there. But, to be sure, the tide was high, and there might have been some footprints under water.

When he looked out from his shelter in the distance, and saw that I waved my hat to him to come up, he rejoined me, and there we waited; sometimes lying on the bank, wrapped in our coats, and sometimes moving about to warm ourselves, until we saw our boat coming round. We got aboard easily, and rowed out into the track of the steamer. By that time it wanted but ten minutes of one o'clock, and we began to look out for her smoke.

But, it was half-past one before we saw her smoke, and soon afterwards we saw behind it the smoke of another steamer. As they were coming on at full speed, we got the two bags ready, and took that opportunity of saying good-bye to Herbert and Startop. We had all shaken hands cordially, and neither Herbert's eyes nor mine were quite dry, when I saw a four-oared galley shoot out from under the bank but a little way ahead of us, and row out into the same track.

A stretch of shore had been as yet between us and the steamer's smoke, by reason of the bend and wind of the river; but now she was visible, coming head on. I called to Herbert and Startop to keep before the tide, that she might see us lying by for her, and I adjured Provis to sit quite still, wrapped in his cloak. He answered cheerily, "Trust to me, dear boy," and sat like a statue. Meantime

the galley, which was very skilfully handled, had crossed us, let us come up with her, and fallen alongside. Leaving just room enough for the play of the oars, she kept alongside, drifting when we drifted, and pulling a stroke or two when we pulled. Of the two sitters one held the rudder-lines, and looked at us attentively,—as did all the rowers; the other sitter was wrapped up, much as Provis was, and seemed to shrink, and whisper some instruction to the steerer as he looked at us. Not a word was spoken in either boat.

Startop could make out, after a few minutes, which steamer was first, and gave me the word "Hamburg," in a low voice, as we sat face to face. She was nearing us very fast, and the beating of her peddles grew louder and louder. I felt as if her shadow were absolutely upon us, when the galley hailed us. I answered.

"You have a returned Transport there," said the man who held the lines. "That's the man, wrapped in the cloak. His name is Abel Magwitch, otherwise Provis. I apprehend that man, and call upon him to surrender, and you to assist."

At the same moment, without giving any audible direction to his crew, he ran the galley abroad of us. They had pulled one sudden stroke ahead, had got their oars in, had run athwart us, and were holding on to our gunwale, before we knew what they were doing. This caused great confusion on board the steamer, and I heard them calling to us, and heard the order given to stop the paddles, and heard them stop, but felt her driving down upon us irresistibly. In the same moment, I saw the steersman of the galley lay his hand on his prisoner's shoulder, and saw that both boats were swinging round with the force of the tide, and saw that all hands on board the steamer were running forward quite frantically. Still, in the same moment, I saw the prisoner start up, lean across his captor, and pull the cloak from the neck of the shrinking sitter in the galley. Still in the same moment, I saw that the face disclosed, was the face of the other convict of long ago. Still, in the same moment, I saw the face tilt backward with a white terror on it that I shall never forget, and heard a great cry on board the steamer, and a loud splash in the water, and felt the boat sink from under me.

It was but for an instant that I seemed to struggle with a thousand mill-weirs and a thousand flashes of light; that instant past, I was taken on board the galley. Herbert was there, and Startop was there; but our boat was gone, and the two convicts were gone.

What with the cries aboard the steamer, and the furious blowing off of her steam, and her driving on, and our driving on, I could not at first distinguish sky from water or shore from shore; but the crew of the galley righted her with great speed, and, pulling certain swift strong strokes ahead, lay upon their oars, every man looking silently and eagerly at the water astern. Presently a dark object was seen in it, bearing towards us on the tide. No man spoke,

but the steersman held up his hand, and all softly backed water, and kept the boat straight and true before it. As it came nearer, I saw it to be Magwitch, swimming, but not swimming freely. He was taken on board, and instantly manacled at the wrists and ankles.

The galley was kept steady, and the silent, eager look-out at the water was resumed. But, the Rotterdam steamer now came up, and apparently not understanding what had happened, came on at speed. By the time she had been hailed and stopped, both steamers were drifting away from us, and we were rising and falling in a troubled wake of water. The look-out was kept, long after all was still again and the two steamers were gone; but everybody knew that it was hopeless now.

At length we gave it up, and pulled under the shore towards the tavern we had lately left, where we were received with no little surprise. Here I was able to get some comforts for Magwitch,—Provis no longer,—who had received some very severe injury in the chest, and a deep cut in the head.

He told me that he believed himself to have gone under the keel of the steamer, and to have been struck on the head in rising. The injury to his chest (which rendered his breathing extremely painful) he thought he had received against the side of the galley. He added that he did not pretend to say what he might or might not have done to Compeyson, but that, in the moment of his laying his hand on his cloak to identify him, that villain had staggered up and staggered back, and they had both gone overboard together, when the sudden wrenching of him (Magwitch) out of our boat, and the endeavour of his captor to keep him in it, had capsized us. He told me in a whisper that they had gone down fiercely locked in each other's arms, and that there had been a struggle under water, and that he had disengaged himself, struck out, and swum away.

I never had any reason to doubt the exact truth of what he thus told me. The officer who steered the galley gave the same account of their going overboard.

When I asked this officer's permission to change the prisoner's wet clothes by purchasing any spare garments I could get at the public-house, he gave it readily: merely observing that he must take charge of everything his prisoner had about him. So the pocket-book which had once been in my hands passed into the officer's. He further gave me leave to accompany the prisoner to London; but declined to accord that grace to my two friends.

The Jack at the Ship was instructed where the drowned man had gone down, and undertook to search for the body in the places where it was likeliest to come ashore. His interest in its recovery seemed to me to be much heightened when he heard that it had stockings on. Probably, it took about a dozen drowned men to fit him out completely; and that may have been the reason why

the different articles of his dress were in various stages of decay.

We remained at the public-house until the tide turned, and then Magwitch was carried down to the galley and put on board. Herbert and Startop were to get to London by land, as soon as they could. We had a doleful parting, and when I took my place by Magwitch's side, I felt that that was my place henceforth while he lived.

For now, my repugnance to him had all melted away; and in the hunted, wounded, shackled creature who held my hand in his, I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor, and who had felt affectionately, gratefully, and generously, towards me with great constancy through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe.

His breathing became more difficult and painful as the night drew on, and often he could not repress a groan. I tried to rest him on the arm I could use, in any easy position; but it was dreadful to think that I could not be sorry at heart for his being badly hurt, since it was unquestionably best that he should die. That there were, still living, people enough who were able and willing to identify him, I could not doubt. That he would be leniently treated, I could not hope. He who had been presented in the worst light at his trial, who had since broken prison and had been tried again, who had returned from transportation under a life sentence, and who had occasioned the death of the man who was the cause of his arrest.

As we returned towards the setting sun we had yesterday left behind us, and as the stream of our hopes seemed all running back, I told him how grieved I was to think that he had come home for my sake.

"Dear boy," he answered, "I'm quite content to take my chance. I've seen my boy, and he can be a gentleman without me."

No. I had thought about that, while we had been there side by side. No. Apart from any inclinations of my own, I understood Wemmick's hint now. I foresaw that, being convicted, his possessions would be forfeited to the Crown.

"Lookee here, dear boy," said he "It's best as a gentleman should not be knowed to belong to me now. Only come to see me as if you come by chance alonger Wemmick. Sit where I can see you when I am sworn to, for the last o' many times, and I don't ask no more."

"I will never stir from your side," said I, "when I am suffered to be near you. Please God, I will be as true to you as you have been to me!"

I felt his hand tremble as it held mine, and he turned his face away as he lay in the bottom of the boat, and I heard that old sound in his throat,—softened now, like all the rest of him. It was a good thing that he had

touched this point, for it put into my mind what I might not otherwise have thought of until too late,—that he need never know how his hopes of enriching me had perished.

Chapter LV

He was taken to the Police Court next day, and would have been immediately committed for trial, but that it was necessary to send down for an old officer of the prison-ship from which he had once escaped, to speak to his identity. Nobody doubted it; but Compeyson, who had meant to depose to it, was tumbling on the tides, dead, and it happened that there was not at that time any prison officer in London who could give the required evidence. I had gone direct to Mr. Jaggars at his private house, on my arrival over night, to retain his assistance, and Mr. Jaggars on the prisoner's behalf would admit nothing. It was the sole resource; for he told me that the case must be over in five minutes when the witness was there, and that no power on earth could prevent its going against us.

I imparted to Mr. Jaggars my design of keeping him in ignorance of the fate of his wealth. Mr. Jaggars was querulous and angry with me for having "let it slip through my fingers," and said we must memorialise by and by, and try at all events for some of it. But he did not conceal from me that, although there might be many cases in which the forfeiture would not be exacted, there were no circumstances in this case to make it one of them. I understood that very well. I was not related to the outlaw, or connected with him by any recognisable tie; he had put his hand to no writing or settlement in my favour before his apprehension, and to do so now would be idle. I had no claim, and I finally resolved, and ever afterwards abided by the resolution, that my heart should never be sickened with the hopeless task of attempting to establish one.

There appeared to be reason for supposing that the drowned informer had hoped for a reward out of this forfeiture, and had obtained some accurate knowledge of Magwitch's affairs. When his body was found, many miles from the scene of his death, and so horribly disfigured that he was only recognisable by the contents of his pockets, notes were still legible, folded in a case he carried. Among these were the name of a banking-house in New South Wales, where a sum of money was, and the designation of certain lands of considerable value. Both these heads of information were in a list that Magwitch, while in prison, gave to Mr. Jaggars, of the possessions he supposed I should inherit. His ignorance, poor fellow, at last served him; he never mistrusted but that my inheritance was quite safe, with Mr. Jaggars's aid.

After three days' delay, during which the crown prosecution stood over for the production of the witness from the prison-ship, the witness came, and completed the easy case. He was committed to take his trial at the next Sessions, which would come on in a month.

It was at this dark time of my life that Herbert returned home one evening, a good deal cast down, and said,—

"My dear Handel, I fear I shall soon have to leave you."

His partner having prepared me for that, I was less surprised than he thought.

"We shall lose a fine opportunity if I put off going to Cairo, and I am very much afraid I must go, Handel, when you most need me."

"Herbert, I shall always need you, because I shall always love you; but my need is no greater now than at another time."

"You will be so lonely."

"I have not leisure to think of that," said I. "You know that I am always with him to the full extent of the time allowed, and that I should be with him all day long, if I could. And when I come away from him, you know that my thoughts are with him."

The dreadful condition to which he was brought, was so appalling to both of us, that we could not refer to it in plainer words.

"My dear fellow," said Herbert, "let the near prospect of our separation—for, it is very near—be my justification for troubling you about yourself. Have you thought of your future?"

"No, for I have been afraid to think of any future."

"But yours cannot be dismissed; indeed, my dear dear Handel, it must not be dismissed. I wish you would enter on it now, as far as a few friendly words go, with me."

"I will," said I.

"In this branch house of ours, Handel, we must have a —"

I saw that his delicacy was avoiding the right word, so I said, "A clerk."

"A clerk. And I hope it is not at all unlikely that he may expand (as a clerk of your acquaintance has expanded) into a partner. Now, Handel,—in short, my dear boy, will you come to me?"

There was something charmingly cordial and engaging in the manner in which after saying "Now, Handel," as if it were the grave beginning of a portentous business exordium, he had suddenly given up that tone, stretched out his honest hand, and spoken like a schoolboy.

"Clara and I have talked about it again and again," Herbert pursued, "and the dear little thing begged me only this evening, with tears in her eyes, to say to you that, if you will live with us when we come together, she will do her best to make you happy, and to convince her husband's friend that he is her friend too. We should get on so well, Handel!"

I thanked her heartily, and I thanked him heartily, but said I could not yet make sure of joining him as he so

kindly offered. Firstly, my mind was too preoccupied to be able to take in the subject clearly. Secondly,—Yes! Secondly, there was a vague something lingering in my thoughts that will come out very near the end of this slight narrative.

“But if you thought, Herbert, that you could, without doing any injury to your business, leave the question open for a little while—”

“For any while,” cried Herbert. “Six months, a year!”

“Not so long as that,” said I. “Two or three months at most.”

Herbert was highly delighted when we shook hands on this arrangement, and said he could now take courage to tell me that he believed he must go away at the end of the week.

“And Clara?” said I.

“The dear little thing,” returned Herbert, “holds dutifully to her father as long as he lasts; but he won’t last long. Mrs. Whimple confides to me that he is certainly going.”

“Not to say an unfeeling thing,” said I, “he cannot do better than go.”

“I am afraid that must be admitted,” said Herbert; “and then I shall come back for the dear little thing, and the dear little thing and I will walk quietly into the nearest church. Remember! The blessed darling comes of no family, my dear Handel, and never looked into the red book, and hasn’t a notion about her grandpapa. What a fortune for the son of my mother!”

On the Saturday in that same week, I took my leave of Herbert,—full of bright hope, but sad and sorry to leave me,—as he sat on one of the seaport mail coaches. I went into a coffee-house to write a little note to Clara, telling her he had gone off, sending his love to her over and over again, and then went to my lonely home,—if it deserved the name; for it was now no home to me, and I had no home anywhere.

On the stairs I encountered Wemmick, who was coming down, after an unsuccessful application of his knuckles to my door. I had not seen him alone since the disastrous issue of the attempted flight; and he had come, in his private and personal capacity, to say a few words of explanation in reference to that failure.

“The late Compeyson,” said Wemmick, “had by little and little got at the bottom of half of the regular business now transacted; and it was from the talk of some of his people in trouble (some of his people being always in trouble) that I heard what I did. I kept my ears open, seeming to have them shut, until I heard that he was absent, and I thought that would be the best time for making the attempt. I can only suppose now, that it was a part of his policy, as a very clever man, habitually to

deceive his own instruments. You don’t blame me, I hope, Mr. Pip? I am sure I tried to serve you, with all my heart.”

“I am as sure of that, Wemmick, as you can be, and I thank you most earnestly for all your interest and friendship.”

“Thank you, thank you very much. It’s a bad job,” said Wemmick, scratching his head, “and I assure you I haven’t been so cut up for a long time. What I look at is the sacrifice of so much portable property. Dear me!”

“What *I* think of, Wemmick, is the poor owner of the property.”

“Yes, to be sure,” said Wemmick. “Of course, there can be no objection to your being sorry for him, and I’d put down a five-pound note myself to get him out of it. But what I look at is this. The late Compeyson having been beforehand with him in intelligence of his return, and being so determined to bring him to book, I do not think he could have been saved. Whereas, the portable property certainly could have been saved. That’s the difference between the property and the owner, don’t you see?”

I invited Wemmick to come upstairs, and refresh himself with a glass of grog before walking to Walworth. He accepted the invitation. While he was drinking his moderate allowance, he said, with nothing to lead up to it, and after having appeared rather fidgety,—

“What do you think of my meaning to take a holiday on Monday, Mr. Pip?”

“Why, I suppose you have not done such a thing these twelve months.”

“These twelve years, more likely,” said Wemmick. “Yes. I’m going to take a holiday. More than that; I’m going to take a walk. More than that; I’m going to ask you to take a walk with me.”

I was about to excuse myself, as being but a bad companion just then, when Wemmick anticipated me.

“I know your engagements,” said he, “and I know you are out of sorts, Mr. Pip. But if you *could* oblige me, I should take it as a kindness. It ain’t a long walk, and it’s an early one. Say it might occupy you (including breakfast on the walk) from eight to twelve. Couldn’t you stretch a point and manage it?”

He had done so much for me at various times, that this was very little to do for him. I said I could manage it,—would manage it,—and he was so very much pleased by my acquiescence, that I was pleased too. At his particular request, I appointed to call for him at the Castle at half past eight on Monday morning, and so we parted for the time.

Punctual to my appointment, I rang at the Castle gate on the Monday morning, and was received by Wemmick himself, who struck me as looking tighter than usual, and having a sleeker hat on. Within, there were two glasses of

rum and milk prepared, and two biscuits. The Aged must have been stirring with the lark, for, glancing into the perspective of his bedroom, I observed that his bed was empty.

When we had fortified ourselves with the rum and milk and biscuits, and were going out for the walk with that training preparation on us, I was considerably surprised to see Wemmick take up a fishing-rod, and put it over his shoulder. "Why, we are not going fishing!" said I. "No," returned Wemmick, "but I like to walk with one."

I thought this odd; however, I said nothing, and we set off. We went towards Camberwell Green, and when we were thereabouts, Wemmick said suddenly

"Halloa! Here's a church!"

There was nothing very surprising in that; but again, I was rather surprised, when he said, as if he were animated by a brilliant idea,—

"Let's go in!"

We went in, Wemmick leaving his fishing-rod in the porch, and looked all round. In the mean time, Wemmick was diving into his coat-pockets, and getting something out of paper there.

"Halloa!" said he. "Here's a couple of pair of gloves! Let's put 'em on!"

As the gloves were white kid gloves, and as the post-office was widened to its utmost extent, I now began to have my strong suspicions. They were strengthened into certainty when I beheld the Aged enter at a side door, escorting a lady.

"Halloa!" said Wemmick. "Here's Miss Skiffins! Let's have a wedding."

That discreet damsel was attired as usual, except that she was now engaged in substituting for her green kid gloves a pair of white. The Aged was likewise occupied in preparing a similar sacrifice for the altar of Hymen. The old gentleman, however, experienced so much difficulty in getting his gloves on, that Wemmick found it necessary to put him with his back against a pillar, and then to get behind the pillar himself and pull away at them, while I for my part held the old gentleman round the waist, that he might present an equal and safe resistance. By dint of this ingenious scheme, his gloves were got on to perfection.

The clerk and clergyman then appearing, we were ranged in order at those fatal rails. True to his notion of seeming to do it all without preparation, I heard Wemmick say to himself, as he took something out of his waistcoat-pocket before the service began, "Halloa! Here's a ring!"

I acted in the capacity of backer, or best-man, to the bridegroom; while a little limp pew-opener in a soft

bonnet like a baby's, made a feint of being the bosom friend of Miss Skiffins. The responsibility of giving the lady away devolved upon the Aged, which led to the clergyman's being unintentionally scandalised, and it happened thus. When he said, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" the old gentleman, not in the least knowing what point of the ceremony we had arrived at, stood most amiably beaming at the ten commandments. Upon which, the clergyman said again, "WHO giveth this woman to be married to this man?" The old gentleman being still in a state of most estimable unconsciousness, the bridegroom cried out in his accustomed voice, "Now Aged P. you know; who giveth?" To which the Aged replied with great briskness, before saying that *he* gave, "All right, John, all right, my boy!" And the clergyman came to so gloomy a pause upon it, that I had doubts for the moment whether we should get completely married that day.

It was completely done, however, and when we were going out of church Wemmick took the cover off the font, and put his white gloves in it, and put the cover on again. Mrs. Wemmick, more heedful of the future, put her white gloves in her pocket and assumed her green. "Now, Mr. Pip," said Wemmick, triumphantly shouldering the fishing-rod as we came out, "let me ask you whether anybody would suppose this to be a wedding-party!"

Breakfast had been ordered at a pleasant little tavern, a mile or so away upon the rising ground beyond the green; and there was a bagatelle board in the room, in case we should desire to unbend our minds after the solemnity. It was pleasant to observe that Mrs. Wemmick no longer unwound Wemmick's arm when it adapted itself to her figure, but sat in a high-backed chair against the wall, like a violoncello in its case, and submitted to be embraced as that melodious instrument might have done.

We had an excellent breakfast, and when any one declined anything on table, Wemmick said, "Provided by contract, you know; don't be afraid of it!" I drank to the new couple, drank to the Aged, drank to the Castle, saluted the bride at parting, and made myself as agreeable as I could.

Wemmick came down to the door with me, and I again shook hands with him, and wished him joy.

"Thankee!" said Wemmick, rubbing his hands. "She's such a manager of fowls, you have no idea. You shall have some eggs, and judge for yourself. I say, Mr. Pip!" calling me back, and speaking low. "This is altogether a Walworth sentiment, please."

"I understand. Not to be mentioned in Little Britain," said I.

Wemmick nodded. "After what you let out the other day, Mr. Jagers may as well not know of it. He might think my brain was softening, or something of the kind."

Chapter LVI

He lay in prison very ill, during the whole interval between his committal for trial and the coming round of the Sessions. He had broken two ribs, they had wounded one of his lungs, and he breathed with great pain and difficulty, which increased daily. It was a consequence of his hurt that he spoke so low as to be scarcely audible; therefore he spoke very little. But he was ever ready to listen to me; and it became the first duty of my life to say to him, and read to him, what I knew he ought to hear.

Being far too ill to remain in the common prison, he was removed, after the first day or so, into the infirmary. This gave me opportunities of being with him that I could not otherwise have had. And but for his illness he would have been put in irons, for he was regarded as a determined prison-breaker, and I know not what else.

Although I saw him every day, it was for only a short time; hence, the regularly recurring spaces of our separation were long enough to record on his face any slight changes that occurred in his physical state. I do not recollect that I once saw any change in it for the better; he wasted, and became slowly weaker and worse, day by day, from the day when the prison door closed upon him.

The kind of submission or resignation that he showed was that of a man who was tired out. I sometimes derived an impression, from his manner or from a whispered word or two which escaped him, that he pondered over the question whether he might have been a better man under better circumstances. But he never justified himself by a hint tending that way, or tried to bend the past out of its eternal shape.

It happened on two or three occasions in my presence, that his desperate reputation was alluded to by one or other of the people in attendance on him. A smile crossed his face then, and he turned his eyes on me with a trustful look, as if he were confident that I had seen some small redeeming touch in him, even so long ago as when I was a little child. As to all the rest, he was humble and contrite, and I never knew him complain.

When the Sessions came round, Mr. Jagers caused an application to be made for the postponement of his trial until the following Sessions. It was obviously made with the assurance that he could not live so long, and was refused. The trial came on at once, and, when he was put to the bar, he was seated in a chair. No objection was made to my getting close to the dock, on the outside of it, and holding the hand that he stretched forth to me.

The trial was very short and very clear. Such things as could be said for him were said,—how he had taken to industrious habits, and had thriven lawfully and reputably. But nothing could unsay the fact that he had returned, and was there in presence of the Judge and Jury. It was impossible to try him for that, and do otherwise than find him guilty.

At that time, it was the custom (as I learnt from my terrible experience of that Sessions) to devote a concluding day to the passing of Sentences, and to make a finishing effect with the Sentence of Death. But for the indelible picture that my remembrance now holds before me, I could scarcely believe, even as I write these words, that I saw two-and-thirty men and women put before the Judge to receive that sentence together. Foremost among the two-and-thirty was he; seated, that he might get breath enough to keep life in him.

The whole scene starts out again in the vivid colours of the moment, down to the drops of April rain on the windows of the court, glittering in the rays of April sun. Penned in the dock, as I again stood outside it at the corner with his hand in mine, were the two-and-thirty men and women; some defiant, some stricken with terror, some sobbing and weeping, some covering their faces, some staring gloomily about. There had been shrieks from among the women convicts; but they had been stilled, and a hush had succeeded. The sheriffs with their great chains and nosegays, other civic gewgaws and monsters, criers, ushers, a great gallery full of people,—a large theatrical audience,—looked on, as the two-and-thirty and the Judge were solemnly confronted. Then the Judge addressed them. Among the wretched creatures before him whom he must single out for special address was one who almost from his infancy had been an offender against the laws; who, after repeated imprisonments and punishments, had been at length sentenced to exile for a term of years; and who, under circumstances of great violence and daring, had made his escape and been re-sentenced to exile for life. That miserable man would seem for a time to have become convinced of his errors, when far removed from the scenes of his old offences, and to have lived a peaceable and honest life. But in a fatal moment, yielding to those propensities and passions, the indulgence of which had so long rendered him a scourge to society, he had quitted his haven of rest and repentance, and had come back to the country where he was proscribed. Being here presently denounced, he had for a time succeeded in evading the officers of Justice, but being at length seized while in the act of flight, he had resisted them, and had—he best knew whether by express design, or in the blindness of his hardihood—caused the death of his denouncer, to whom his whole career was known. The appointed punishment for his return to the land that had cast him out, being Death, and his case being this aggravated case, he must prepare himself to Die.

The sun was striking in at the great windows of the court, through the glittering drops of rain upon the glass, and it made a broad shaft of light between the two-and-thirty and the Judge, linking both together, and perhaps reminding some among the audience how both were passing on, with absolute equality, to the greater

Judgment that knoweth all things, and cannot err. Rising for a moment, a distinct speck of face in this way of light, the prisoner said, "My Lord, I have received my sentence of Death from the Almighty, but I bow to yours," and sat down again. There was some hushing, and the Judge went on with what he had to say to the rest. Then they were all formally doomed, and some of them were supported out, and some of them sauntered out with a haggard look of bravery, and a few nodded to the gallery, and two or three shook hands, and others went out chewing the fragments of herb they had taken from the sweet herbs lying about. He went last of all, because of having to be helped from his chair, and to go very slowly; and he held my hand while all the others were removed, and while the audience got up (putting their dresses right, as they might at church or elsewhere), and pointed down at this criminal or at that, and most of all at him and me.

I earnestly hoped and prayed that he might die before the Recorder's Report was made; but, in the dread of his lingering on, I began that night to write out a petition to the Home Secretary of State, setting forth my knowledge of him, and how it was that he had come back for my sake. I wrote it as fervently and pathetically as I could; and when I had finished it and sent it in, I wrote out other petitions to such men in authority as I hoped were the most merciful, and drew up one to the Crown itself. For several days and nights after he was sentenced I took no rest except when I fell asleep in my chair, but was wholly absorbed in these appeals. And after I had sent them in, I could not keep away from the places where they were, but felt as if they were more hopeful and less desperate when I was near them. In this unreasonable restlessness and pain of mind I would roam the streets of an evening, wandering by those offices and houses where I had left the petitions. To the present hour, the weary western streets of London on a cold, dusty spring night, with their ranges of stern, shut-up mansions, and their long rows of lamps, are melancholy to me from this association.

The daily visits I could make him were shortened now, and he was more strictly kept. Seeing, or fancying, that I was suspected of an intention of carrying poison to him, I asked to be searched before I sat down at his bedside, and told the officer who was always there, that I was willing to do anything that would assure him of the singleness of my designs. Nobody was hard with him or with me. There was duty to be done, and it was done, but not harshly. The officer always gave me the assurance that he was worse, and some other sick prisoners in the room, and some other prisoners who attended on them as sick nurses, (malefactors, but not incapable of kindness, God be thanked!) always joined in the same report.

As the days went on, I noticed more and more that he would lie placidly looking at the white ceiling, with an absence of light in his face until some word of mine brightened it for an instant, and then it would subside

again. Sometimes he was almost or quite unable to speak, then he would answer me with slight pressures on my hand, and I grew to understand his meaning very well.

The number of the days had risen to ten, when I saw a greater change in him than I had seen yet. His eyes were turned towards the door, and lighted up as I entered.

"Dear boy," he said, as I sat down by his bed: "I thought you was late. But I knowed you couldn't be that."

"It is just the time," said I. "I waited for it at the gate."

"You always waits at the gate; don't you, dear boy?"

"Yes. Not to lose a moment of the time."

"Thank'ee dear boy, thank'ee. God bless you! You've never deserted me, dear boy."

I pressed his hand in silence, for I could not forget that I had once meant to desert him.

"And what's the best of all," he said, "you've been more comfortable alonger me, since I was under a dark cloud, than when the sun shone. That's best of all."

He lay on his back, breathing with great difficulty. Do what he would, and love me though he did, the light left his face ever and again, and a film came over the placid look at the white ceiling.

"Are you in much pain to-day?"

"I don't complain of none, dear boy."

"You never do complain."

He had spoken his last words. He smiled, and I understood his touch to mean that he wished to lift my hand, and lay it on his breast. I laid it there, and he smiled again, and put both his hands upon it.

The allotted time ran out, while we were thus; but, looking round, I found the governor of the prison standing near me, and he whispered, "You needn't go yet." I thanked him gratefully, and asked, "Might I speak to him, if he can hear me?"

The governor stepped aside, and beckoned the officer away. The change, though it was made without noise, drew back the film from the placid look at the white ceiling, and he looked most affectionately at me.

"Dear Magwitch, I must tell you now, at last. You understand what I say?"

A gentle pressure on my hand.

"You had a child once, whom you loved and lost."

A stronger pressure on my hand.

"She lived, and found powerful friends. She is living now. She is a lady and very beautiful. And I love her!"

With a last faint effort, which would have been powerless but for my yielding to it and assisting it, he raised my hand to his lips. Then, he gently let it sink upon his breast again, with his own hands lying on it. The placid look at the white ceiling came back, and passed away, and his head dropped quietly on his breast.

Mindful, then, of what we had read together, I thought of the two men who went up into the Temple to pray, and I knew there were no better words that I could say beside his bed, than "O Lord, be merciful to him a sinner!"

Chapter LVII

Now that I was left wholly to myself, I gave notice of my intention to quit the chambers in the Temple as soon as my tenancy could legally determine, and in the meanwhile to underlet them. At once I put bills up in the windows; for, I was in debt, and had scarcely any money, and began to be seriously alarmed by the state of my affairs. I ought rather to write that I should have been alarmed if I had had energy and concentration enough to help me to the clear perception of any truth beyond the fact that I was falling very ill. The late stress upon me had enabled me to put off illness, but not to put it away; I knew that it was coming on me now, and I knew very little else, and was even careless as to that.

For a day or two, I lay on the sofa, or on the floor,—anywhere, according as I happened to sink down,—with a heavy head and aching limbs, and no purpose, and no power. Then there came, one night which appeared of great duration, and which teemed with anxiety and horror; and when in the morning I tried to sit up in my bed and think of it, I found I could not do so.

Whether I really had been down in Garden Court in the dead of the night, groping about for the boat that I supposed to be there; whether I had two or three times come to myself on the staircase with great terror, not knowing how I had got out of bed; whether I had found myself lighting the lamp, possessed by the idea that he was coming up the stairs, and that the lights were blown out; whether I had been inexpressibly harassed by the distracted talking, laughing, and groaning of some one, and had half suspected those sounds to be of my own making; whether there had been a closed iron furnace in a dark corner of the room, and a voice had called out, over and over again, that Miss Havisham was consuming within it,—these were things that I tried to settle with myself and get into some order, as I lay that morning on my bed. But the vapour of a limekiln would come between me and them, disordering them all, and it was through the vapour at last that I saw two men looking at me.

"What do you want?" I asked, starting; "I don't know you."

"Well, sir," returned one of them, bending down and touching me on the shoulder, "this is a matter that you'll soon arrange, I dare say, but you're arrested."

"What is the debt?"

"Hundred and twenty-three pound, fifteen, six. Jeweller's account, I think."

"What is to be done?"

"You had better come to my house," said the man. "I keep a very nice house."

I made some attempt to get up and dress myself. When I next attended to them, they were standing a little off from the bed, looking at me. I still lay there.

"You see my state," said I. "I would come with you if I could; but indeed I am quite unable. If you take me from here, I think I shall die by the way."

Perhaps they replied, or argued the point, or tried to encourage me to believe that I was better than I thought. Forasmuch as they hang in my memory by only this one slender thread, I don't know what they did, except that they forbore to remove me.

That I had a fever and was avoided, that I suffered greatly, that I often lost my reason, that the time seemed interminable, that I confounded impossible existences with my own identity; that I was a brick in the house-wall, and yet entreating to be released from the giddy place where the builders had set me; that I was a steel beam of a vast engine, clashing and whirling over a gulf, and yet that I implored in my own person to have the engine stopped, and my part in it hammered off; that I passed through these phases of disease, I know of my own remembrance, and did in some sort know at the time. That I sometimes struggled with real people, in the belief that they were murderers, and that I would all at once comprehend that they meant to do me good, and would then sink exhausted in their arms, and suffer them to lay me down, I also knew at the time. But, above all, I knew that there was a constant tendency in all these people,—who, when I was very ill, would present all kinds of extraordinary transformations of the human face, and would be much dilated in size,—above all, I say, I knew that there was an extraordinary tendency in all these people, sooner or later, to settle down into the likeness of Joe.

After I had turned the worst point of my illness, I began to notice that while all its other features changed, this one consistent feature did not change. Whoever came about me, still settled down into Joe. I opened my eyes in the night, and I saw, in the great chair at the bedside, Joe. I opened my eyes in the day, and, sitting on the window-seat, smoking his pipe in the shaded open window, still I saw Joe. I asked for cooling drink, and the dear hand that gave it me was Joe's. I sank back on my pillow after drinking, and the face that looked so hopefully and tenderly upon me was the face of Joe.

At last, one day, I took courage, and said, "Is it Joe?"

And the dear old home-voice answered, "Which it air, old chap."

"O Joe, you break my heart! Look angry at me, Joe. Strike me, Joe. Tell me of my ingratitude. Don't be so good to me!"

For Joe had actually laid his head down on the pillow at my side, and put his arm round my neck, in his joy that I knew him.

"Which dear old Pip, old chap," said Joe, "you and me was ever friends. And when you're well enough to go out for a ride—what larks!"

After which, Joe withdrew to the window, and stood with his back towards me, wiping his eyes. And as my extreme weakness prevented me from getting up and going to him, I lay there, penitently whispering, "O God bless him! O God bless this gentle Christian man!"

Joe's eyes were red when I next found him beside me; but I was holding his hand, and we both felt happy.

"How long, dear Joe?"

"Which you meanersay, Pip, how long have your illness lasted, dear old chap?"

"Yes, Joe."

"It's the end of May, Pip. To-morrow is the first of June."

"And have you been here all that time, dear Joe?"

"Pretty nigh, old chap. For, as I says to Biddy when the news of your being ill were brought by letter, which it were brought by the post, and being formerly single he is now married though underpaid for a deal of walking and shoe-leather, but wealth were not a object on his part, and marriage were the great wish of his hart—"

"It is so delightful to hear you, Joe! But I interrupt you in what you said to Biddy."

"Which it were," said Joe, "that how you might be amongst strangers, and that how you and me having been ever friends, a wisit at such a moment might not prove unacceptable. And Biddy, her word were, 'Go to him, without loss of time.' That," said Joe, summing up with his judicial air, "were the word of Biddy. 'Go to him,' Biddy say, 'without loss of time.' In short, I shouldn't greatly deceive you," Joe added, after a little grave reflection, "if I represented to you that the word of that young woman were, 'without a minute's loss of time.'"

There Joe cut himself short, and informed me that I was to be talked to in great moderation, and that I was to take a little nourishment at stated frequent times, whether I felt inclined for it or not, and that I was to submit myself to all his orders. So I kissed his hand, and lay quiet, while he proceeded to indite a note to Biddy, with my love in it.

Evidently Biddy had taught Joe to write. As I lay in bed looking at him, it made me, in my weak state, cry again with pleasure to see the pride with which he set about his letter. My bedstead, divested of its curtains, had been removed, with me upon it, into the sitting-room, as the airiest and largest, and the carpet had been taken away, and the room kept always fresh and wholesome night and day. At my own writing-table, pushed into a corner and cumbered with little bottles, Joe now sat down to his great

work, first choosing a pen from the pen-tray as if it were a chest of large tools, and tucking up his sleeves as if he were going to wield a crow-bar or sledgehammer. It was necessary for Joe to hold on heavily to the table with his left elbow, and to get his right leg well out behind him, before he could begin; and when he did begin he made every downstroke so slowly that it might have been six feet long, while at every upstroke I could hear his pen spluttering extensively. He had a curious idea that the inkstand was on the side of him where it was not, and constantly dipped his pen into space, and seemed quite satisfied with the result. Occasionally, he was tripped up by some orthographical stumbling-block; but on the whole he got on very well indeed; and when he had signed his name, and had removed a finishing blot from the paper to the crown of his head with his two forefingers, he got up and hovered about the table, trying the effect of his performance from various points of view, as it lay there, with unbounded satisfaction.

Not to make Joe uneasy by talking too much, even if I had been able to talk much, I deferred asking him about Miss Havisham until next day. He shook his head when I then asked him if she had recovered.

"Is she dead, Joe?"

"Why you see, old chap," said Joe, in a tone of remonstrance, and by way of getting at it by degrees, "I wouldn't go so far as to say that, for that's a deal to say; but she ain't—"

"Living, Joe?"

"That's nigher where it is," said Joe; "she ain't living."

"Did she linger long, Joe?"

"Arter you was took ill, pretty much about what you might call (if you was put to it) a week," said Joe; still determined, on my account, to come at everything by degrees.

"Dear Joe, have you heard what becomes of her property?"

"Well, old chap," said Joe, "it do appear that she had settled the most of it, which I meanersay tied it up, on Miss Estella. But she had wrote out a little coddleshell in her own hand a day or two afore the accident, leaving a cool four thousand to Mr. Matthew Pocket. And why, do you suppose, above all things, Pip, she left that cool four thousand unto him? 'Because of Pip's account of him, the said Matthew.' I am told by Biddy, that air the writing," said Joe, repeating the legal turn as if it did him infinite good, "'account of him the said Matthew.' And a cool four thousand, Pip!"

I never discovered from whom Joe derived the conventional temperature of the four thousand pounds; but it appeared to make the sum of money more to him, and he had a manifest relish in insisting on its being cool.

This account gave me great joy, as it perfected the only good thing I had done. I asked Joe whether he had heard if any of the other relations had any legacies?

“Miss Sarah,” said Joe, “she have twenty-five pound perannium fur to buy pills, on account of being bilious. Miss Georgiana, she have twenty pound down. Mrs.—what’s the name of them wild beasts with humps, old chap?”

“Camels?” said I, wondering why he could possibly want to know.

Joe nodded. “Mrs. Camels,” by which I presently understood he meant Camilla, “she have five pound fur to buy rushlights to put her in spirits when she wake up in the night.”

The accuracy of these recitals was sufficiently obvious to me, to give me great confidence in Joe’s information. “And now,” said Joe, “you ain’t that strong yet, old chap, that you can take in more nor one additional shovelful to-day. Old Orlick he’s been a bustin’ open a dwelling-ouse.”

“Whose?” said I.

“Not, I grant you, but what his manners is given to blusterous,” said Joe, apologetically; “still, a Englishman’s ouse is his Castle, and castles must not be busted ’cept when done in war time. And wotsume’er the failings on his part, he were a corn and seedsman in his hart.”

“Is it Pumblechook’s house that has been broken into, then?”

“That’s it, Pip,” said Joe; “and they took his till, and they took his cash-box, and they dranked his wine, and they partook of his wittles, and they slapped his face, and they pulled his nose, and they tied him up to his bedpust, and they giv’ him a dozen, and they stuffed his mouth full of flowering annuals to prewent his crying out. But he knowed Orlick, and Orlick’s in the county jail.”

By these approaches we arrived at unrestricted conversation. I was slow to gain strength, but I did slowly and surely become less weak, and Joe stayed with me, and I fancied I was little Pip again.

For the tenderness of Joe was so beautifully proportioned to my need, that I was like a child in his hands. He would sit and talk to me in the old confidence, and with the old simplicity, and in the old unassertive protecting way, so that I would half believe that all my life since the days of the old kitchen was one of the mental troubles of the fever that was gone. He did everything for me except the household work, for which he had engaged a very decent woman, after paying off the laundress on his first arrival. “Which I do assure you, Pip,” he would often say, in explanation of that liberty; “I found her a tapping the spare bed, like a cask of beer, and drawing off the feathers in a bucket, for sale. Which she would have tapped yourn next, and draw’d it off with you a laying on it, and was then a carrying away the coals gradiwallly in the soup-tureen and wegetable-dishes, and the wine and spirits in your Wellington boots.”

We looked forward to the day when I should go out for a ride, as we had once looked forward to the day of

my apprenticeship. And when the day came, and an open carriage was got into the Lane, Joe wrapped me up, took me in his arms, carried me down to it, and put me in, as if I were still the small helpless creature to whom he had so abundantly given of the wealth of his great nature.

And Joe got in beside me, and we drove away together into the country, where the rich summer growth was already on the trees and on the grass, and sweet summer scents filled all the air. The day happened to be Sunday, and when I looked on the loveliness around me, and thought how it had grown and changed, and how the little wild-flowers had been forming, and the voices of the birds had been strengthening, by day and by night, under the sun and under the stars, while poor I lay burning and tossing on my bed, the mere remembrance of having burned and tossed there came like a check upon my peace. But when I heard the Sunday bells, and looked around a little more upon the outspread beauty, I felt that I was not nearly thankful enough,—that I was too weak yet to be even that,—and I laid my head on Joe’s shoulder, as I had laid it long ago when he had taken me to the Fair or where not, and it was too much for my young senses.

More composure came to me after a while, and we talked as we used to talk, lying on the grass at the old Battery. There was no change whatever in Joe. Exactly what he had been in my eyes then, he was in my eyes still; just as simply faithful, and as simply right.

When we got back again, and he lifted me out, and carried me—so easily!—across the court and up the stairs, I thought of that eventful Christmas Day when he had carried me over the marshes. We had not yet made any allusion to my change of fortune, nor did I know how much of my late history he was acquainted with. I was so doubtful of myself now, and put so much trust in him, that I could not satisfy myself whether I ought to refer to it when he did not.

“Have you heard, Joe,” I asked him that evening, upon further consideration, as he smoked his pipe at the window, “who my patron was?”

“I heerd,” returned Joe, “as it were not Miss Havisham, old chap.”

“Did you hear who it was, Joe?”

“Well! I heerd as it were a person what sent the person what giv’ you the bank-notes at the Jolly Bargemen, Pip.”

“So it was.”

“Astonishing!” said Joe, in the placidest way.

“Did you hear that he was dead, Joe?” I presently asked, with increasing diffidence.

“Which? Him as sent the bank-notes, Pip?”

“Yes.”

“I think,” said Joe, after meditating a long time, and looking rather evasively at the window-seat, “as I *did* hear tell that how he were something or another in a general way in that direction.”

“Did you hear anything of his circumstances, Joe?”

“Not partickler, Pip.”

“If you would like to hear, Joe—” I was beginning, when Joe got up and came to my sofa.

“Lookee here, old chap,” said Joe, bending over me. “Ever the best of friends; ain’t us, Pip?”

I was ashamed to answer him.

“Wery good, then,” said Joe, as if I *had* answered; “that’s all right; that’s agreed upon. Then why go into subjects, old chap, which as betwixt two sech must be for ever onnecessary? There’s subjects enough as betwixt two sech, without onnecessary ones. Lord! To think of your poor sister and her Rampages! And don’t you remember Tickler?”

“I do indeed, Joe.”

“Lookee here, old chap,” said Joe. “I done what I could to keep you and Tickler in sunders, but my power were not always fully equal to my inclinations. For when your poor sister had a mind to drop into you, it were not so much,” said Joe, in his favourite argumentative way, “that she dropped into me too, if I put myself in opposition to her, but that she dropped into you always heavier for it. I noticed that. It ain’t a grab at a man’s whisker, not yet a shake or two of a man (to which your sister was quite welcome), that ’ud put a man off from getting a little child out of punishment. But when that little child is dropped into heavier for that grab of whisker or shaking, then that man naterally up and says to himself, ‘Where is the good as you are a-doing? I grant you I see the ’arm,’ says the man, ‘but I don’t see the good. I call upon you, sir, therefore, to pint out the good.’”

“The man says?” I observed, as Joe waited for me to speak.

“The man says,” Joe assented. “Is he right, that man?”

“Dear Joe, he is always right.”

“Well, old chap,” said Joe, “then abide by your words. If he’s always right (which in general he’s more likely wrong), he’s right when he says this: Supposing ever you kep any little matter to yourself, when you was a little child, you kep it mostly because you know’d as J. Gargery’s power to part you and Tickler in sunders were not fully equal to his inclinations. Theerfore, think no more of it as betwixt two sech, and do not let us pass remarks upon onnecessary subjects. Biddy giv’ herself a deal o’ trouble with me afore I left (for I am almost awful dull), as I should view it in this light, and, viewing it in this light, as I should so put it. Both of which,” said Joe, quite charmed

with his logical arrangement, “being done, now this to you a true friend, say. Namely. You mustn’t go a overdoing on it, but you must have your supper and your wine and water, and you must be put betwixt the sheets.”

The delicacy with which Joe dismissed this theme, and the sweet tact and kindness with which Biddy—who with her woman’s wit had found me out so soon—had prepared him for it, made a deep impression on my mind. But whether Joe knew how poor I was, and how my great expectations had all dissolved, like our own marsh mists before the sun, I could not understand.

Another thing in Joe that I could not understand when it first began to develop itself, but which I soon arrived at a sorrowful comprehension of, was this: As I became stronger and better, Joe became a little less easy with me. In my weakness and entire dependence on him, the dear fellow had fallen into the old tone, and called me by the old names, the dear “old Pip, old chap,” that now were music in my ears. I too had fallen into the old ways, only happy and thankful that he let me. But, imperceptibly, though I held by them fast, Joe’s hold upon them began to slacken; and whereas I wondered at this, at first, I soon began to understand that the cause of it was in me, and that the fault of it was all mine.

Ah! Had I given Joe no reason to doubt my constancy, and to think that in prosperity I should grow cold to him and cast him off? Had I given Joe’s innocent heart no cause to feel instinctively that as I got stronger, his hold upon me would be weaker, and that he had better loosen it in time and let me go, before I plucked myself away?

It was on the third or fourth occasion of my going out walking in the Temple Gardens leaning on Joe’s arm, that I saw this change in him very plainly. We had been sitting in the bright warm sunlight, looking at the river, and I chanced to say as we got up,—

“See, Joe! I can walk quite strongly. Now, you shall see me walk back by myself.”

“Which do not overdo it, Pip,” said Joe; “but I shall be happy fur to see you able, sir.”

The last word grated on me; but how could I remonstrate! I walked no further than the gate of the gardens, and then pretended to be weaker than I was, and asked Joe for his arm. Joe gave it me, but was thoughtful.

I, for my part, was thoughtful too; for, how best to check this growing change in Joe was a great perplexity to my remorseful thoughts. That I was ashamed to tell him exactly how I was placed, and what I had come down to, I do not seek to conceal; but I hope my reluctance was not quite an unworthy one. He would want to help me out of his little savings, I knew, and I knew that he ought not to help me, and that I must not suffer him to do it.

It was a thoughtful evening with both of us. But, before we went to bed, I had resolved that I would wait over to-

morrow,—to-morrow being Sunday,—and would begin my new course with the new week. On Monday morning I would speak to Joe about this change, I would lay aside this last vestige of reserve, I would tell him what I had in my thoughts (that Secondly, not yet arrived at), and why I had not decided to go out to Herbert, and then the change would be conquered for ever. As I cleared, Joe cleared, and it seemed as though he had sympathetically arrived at a resolution too.

We had a quiet day on the Sunday, and we rode out into the country, and then walked in the fields.

"I feel thankful that I have been ill, Joe," I said.

"Dear old Pip, old chap, you're a'most come round, sir."

"It has been a memorable time for me, Joe."

"Likeways for myself, sir," Joe returned.

"We have had a time together, Joe, that I can never forget. There were days once, I know, that I did for a while forget; but I never shall forget these."

"Pip," said Joe, appearing a little hurried and troubled, "there has been larks. And, dear sir, what have been betwixt us—have been."

At night, when I had gone to bed, Joe came into my room, as he had done all through my recovery. He asked me if I felt sure that I was as well as in the morning?

"Yes, dear Joe, quite."

"And are always a getting stronger, old chap?"

"Yes, dear Joe, steadily."

Joe patted the coverlet on my shoulder with his great good hand, and said, in what I thought a husky voice, "Good night!"

When I got up in the morning, refreshed and stronger yet, I was full of my resolution to tell Joe all, without delay. I would tell him before breakfast. I would dress at once and go to his room and surprise him; for, it was the first day I had been up early. I went to his room, and he was not there. Not only was he not there, but his box was gone.

I hurried then to the breakfast-table, and on it found a letter. These were its brief contents:—

"Not wishful to intrude I have departed fur you are well again dear Pip and will do better without

JO.

"P.S. Ever the best of friends."

Enclosed in the letter was a receipt for the debt and costs on which I had been arrested. Down to that moment, I had vainly supposed that my creditor had withdrawn, or suspended proceedings until I should be quite recovered. I had never dreamed of Joe's having paid the money; but Joe had paid it, and the receipt was in his name.

What remained for me now, but to follow him to the dear old forge, and there to have out my disclosure to him, and my penitent remonstrance with him, and there to relieve my mind and heart of that reserved Secondly, which had begun as a vague something lingering in my thoughts, and had formed into a settled purpose?

The purpose was, that I would go to Biddy, that I would show her how humbled and repentant I came back, that I would tell her how I had lost all I once hoped for, that I would remind her of our old confidences in my first unhappy time. Then I would say to her, "Biddy, I think you once liked me very well, when my errant heart, even while it strayed away from you, was quieter and better with you than it ever has been since. If you can like me only half as well once more, if you can take me with all my faults and disappointments on my head, if you can receive me like a forgiven child (and indeed I am as sorry, Biddy, and have as much need of a hushing voice and a soothing hand), I hope I am a little worthier of you than I was,—not much, but a little. And, Biddy, it shall rest with you to say whether I shall work at the forge with Joe, or whether I shall try for any different occupation down in this country, or whether we shall go away to a distant place where an opportunity awaits me which I set aside, when it was offered, until I knew your answer. And now, dear Biddy, if you can tell me that you will go through the world with me, you will surely make it a better world for me, and me a better man for it, and I will try hard to make it a better world for you."

Such was my purpose. After three days more of recovery, I went down to the old place to put it in execution. And how I sped in it is all I have left to tell.

Chapter LVIII

The tidings of my high fortunes having had a heavy fall had got down to my native place and its neighbourhood before I got there. I found the Blue Boar in possession of the intelligence, and I found that it made a great change in the Boar's demeanour. Whereas the Boar had cultivated my good opinion with warm assiduity when I was coming into property, the Boar was exceedingly cool on the subject now that I was going out of property.

It was evening when I arrived, much fatigued by the journey I had so often made so easily. The Boar could not put me into my usual bedroom, which was engaged (probably by some one who had expectations), and could only assign me a very indifferent chamber among the pigeons and post-chaises up the yard. But I had as sound a sleep in that lodging as in the most superior accommodation the Boar could have given me, and the quality of my dreams was about the same as in the best bedroom.

Early in the morning, while my breakfast was getting ready, I strolled round by Satis House. There were printed bills on the gate and on bits of carpet hanging out of the windows, announcing a sale by auction of the Household

Furniture and Effects, next week. The House itself was to be sold as old building materials, and pulled down. LOT 1 was marked in whitewashed knock-knee letters on the brew house; LOT 2 on that part of the main building which had been so long shut up. Other lots were marked off on other parts of the structure, and the ivy had been torn down to make room for the inscriptions, and much of it trailed low in the dust and was withered already. Stepping in for a moment at the open gate, and looking around me with the uncomfortable air of a stranger who had no business there, I saw the auctioneer's clerk walking on the casks and telling them off for the information of a catalogue-compiler, pen in hand, who made a temporary desk of the wheeled chair I had so often pushed along to the tune of Old Clem.

When I got back to my breakfast in the Boar's coffee-room, I found Mr. Pumblechook conversing with the landlord. Mr. Pumblechook (not improved in appearance by his late nocturnal adventure) was waiting for me, and addressed me in the following terms:—

"Young man, I am sorry to see you brought low. But what else could be expected! what else could be expected!"

As he extended his hand with a magnificently forgiving air, and as I was broken by illness and unfit to quarrel, I took it.

"William," said Mr. Pumblechook to the waiter, "put a muffin on table. And has it come to this! Has it come to this!"

I frowningly sat down to my breakfast. Mr. Pumblechook stood over me and poured out my tea—before I could touch the teapot—with the air of a benefactor who was resolved to be true to the last.

"William," said Mr. Pumblechook, mournfully, "put the salt on. In happier times," addressing me, "I think you took sugar? And did you take milk? You did. Sugar and milk. William, bring a watercress."

"Thank you," said I, shortly, "but I don't eat watercresses."

"You don't eat 'em," returned Mr. Pumblechook, sighing and nodding his head several times, as if he might have expected that, and as if abstinence from watercresses were consistent with my downfall. "True. The simple fruits of the earth. No. You needn't bring any, William."

I went on with my breakfast, and Mr. Pumblechook continued to stand over me, staring fishily and breathing noisily, as he always did.

"Little more than skin and bone!" mused Mr. Pumblechook, aloud. "And yet when he went from here (I may say with my blessing), and I spread afore him my humble store, like the Bee, he was as plump as a Peach!"

This reminded me of the wonderful difference between the servile manner in which he had offered his hand in my new prosperity, saying, "May I?" and the ostentatious

clemency with which he had just now exhibited the same fat five fingers.

"Hah!" he went on, handing me the bread and butter. "And air you a-going to Joseph?"

"In heaven's name," said I, firing in spite of myself, "what does it matter to you where I am going? Leave that teapot alone."

It was the worst course I could have taken, because it gave Pumblechook the opportunity he wanted.

"Yes, young man," said he, releasing the handle of the article in question, retiring a step or two from my table, and speaking for the behoof of the landlord and waiter at the door, "I *will* leave that teapot alone. You are right, young man. For once you are right. I forgot myself when I take such an interest in your breakfast, as to wish your frame, exhausted by the debilitating effects of prodigygality, to be stimulated by the 'olesome nourishment of your forefathers. And yet," said Pumblechook, turning to the landlord and waiter, and pointing me out at arm's length, "this is him as I ever sported with in his days of happy infancy! Tell me not it cannot be; I tell you this is him!"

A low murmur from the two replied. The waiter appeared to be particularly affected.

"This is him," said Pumblechook, "as I have rode in my shay-cart. This is him as I have seen brought up by hand. This is him untoe the sister of which I was uncle by marriage, as her name was Georgiana M'ria from her own mother, let him deny it if he can!"

The waiter seemed convinced that I could not deny it, and that it gave the case a black look.

"Young man," said Pumblechook, screwing his head at me in the old fashion, "you air a-going to Joseph. What does it matter to me, you ask me, where you air a-going? I say to you, Sir, you air a-going to Joseph."

The waiter coughed, as if he modestly invited me to get over that.

"Now," said Pumblechook, and all this with a most exasperating air of saying in the cause of virtue what was perfectly convincing and conclusive, "I will tell you what to say to Joseph. Here is Squires of the Boar present, known and respected in this town, and here is William, which his father's name was Potkins if I do not deceive myself."

"You do not, sir," said William.

"In their presence," pursued Pumblechook, "I will tell you, young man, what to say to Joseph. Says you, 'Joseph, I have this day seen my earliest benefactor and the founder of my fortun's. I will name no names, Joseph, but so they are pleased to call him up town, and I have seen that man.'"

"I swear I don't see him here," said I.

"Say that likewise," retorted Pumblechook. "Say you said that, and even Joseph will probably betray surprise."

"There you quite mistake him," said I. "I know better."

"Says you," Pumblechook went on, "Joseph, I have seen that man, and that man bears you no malice and bears me no malice. He knows your character, Joseph, and is well acquainted with your pig-headedness and ignorance; and he knows my character, Joseph, and he knows my want of gratitude. Yes, Joseph,' says you," here Pumblechook shook his head and hand at me, "he knows my total deficiency of common human gratitude. *He* knows it, Joseph, as none can. *You* do not know it, Joseph, having no call to know it, but that man do."

Windy donkey as he was, it really amazed me that he could have the face to talk thus to mine.

"Says you, 'Joseph, he gave me a little message, which I will now repeat. It was that, in my being brought low, he saw the finger of Providence. He knowed that finger when he saw Joseph, and he saw it plain. It panted out this writing, Joseph. *Reward of ingratitude to his earliest benefactor, and founder of fortune's*. But that man said he did not repent of what he had done, Joseph. Not at all. It was right to do it, it was kind to do it, it was benevolent to do it, and he would do it again."

"It's pity," said I, scornfully, as I finished my interrupted breakfast, "that the man did not say what he had done and would do again."

"Squires of the Boar!" Pumblechook was now addressing the landlord, "and William! I have no objections to your mentioning, either up town or down town, if such should be your wishes, that it was right to do it, kind to do it, benevolent to do it, and that I would do it again."

With those words the Impostor shook them both by the hand, with an air, and left the house; leaving me much more astonished than delighted by the virtues of that same indefinite "it." I was not long after him in leaving the house too, and when I went down the High Street I saw him holding forth (no doubt to the same effect) at his shop door to a select group, who honoured me with very unfavourable glances as I passed on the opposite side of the way.

But, it was only the pleasanter to turn to Biddy and to Joe, whose great forbearance shone more brightly than before, if that could be, contrasted with this brazen pretender. I went towards them slowly, for my limbs were weak, but with a sense of increasing relief as I drew nearer to them, and a sense of leaving arrogance and untruthfulness further and further behind.

The June weather was delicious. The sky was blue, the larks were soaring high over the green corn, I thought all that countryside more beautiful and peaceful by far than I had ever known it to be yet. Many pleasant pictures of the

life that I would lead there, and of the change for the better that would come over my character when I had a guiding spirit at my side whose simple faith and clear home wisdom I had proved, beguiled my way. They awakened a tender emotion in me; for my heart was softened by my return, and such a change had come to pass, that I felt like one who was toiling home barefoot from distant travel, and whose wanderings had lasted many years.

The schoolhouse where Biddy was mistress I had never seen; but, the little roundabout lane by which I entered the village, for quietness' sake, took me past it. I was disappointed to find that the day was a holiday; no children were there, and Biddy's house was closed. Some hopeful notion of seeing her, busily engaged in her daily duties, before she saw me, had been in my mind and was defeated.

But the forge was a very short distance off, and I went towards it under the sweet green limes, listening for the clink of Joe's hammer. Long after I ought to have heard it, and long after I had fancied I heard it and found it but a fancy, all was still. The limes were there, and the white thorns were there, and the chestnut-trees were there, and their leaves rustled harmoniously when I stopped to listen; but, the clink of Joe's hammer was not in the midsummer wind.

Almost fearing, without knowing why, to come in view of the forge, I saw it at last, and saw that it was closed. No gleam of fire, no glittering shower of sparks, no roar of bellows; all shut up, and still.

But the house was not deserted, and the best parlour seemed to be in use, for there were white curtains fluttering in its window, and the window was open and gay with flowers. I went softly towards it, meaning to peep over the flowers, when Joe and Biddy stood before me, arm in arm.

At first Biddy gave a cry, as if she thought it was my apparition, but in another moment she was in my embrace. I wept to see her, and she wept to see me; I, because she looked so fresh and pleasant; she, because I looked so worn and white.

"But dear Biddy, how smart you are!"

"Yes, dear Pip."

"And Joe, how smart *you* are!"

"Yes, dear old Pip, old chap."

I looked at both of them, from one to the other, and then—

"It's my wedding-day!" cried Biddy, in a burst of happiness, "and I am married to Joe!"

They had taken me into the kitchen, and I had laid my head down on the old deal table. Biddy held one of my hands to her lips, and Joe's restoring touch was on my

shoulder. "Which he warn't strong enough, my dear, fur to be surprised," said Joe. And Biddy said, "I ought to have thought of it, dear Joe, but I was too happy." They were both so overjoyed to see me, so proud to see me, so touched by my coming to them, so delighted that I should have come by accident to make their day complete!

My first thought was one of great thankfulness that I had never breathed this last baffled hope to Joe. How often, while he was with me in my illness, had it risen to my lips! How irrevocable would have been his knowledge of it, if he had remained with me but another hour!

"Dear Biddy," said I, "you have the best husband in the whole world, and if you could have seen him by my bed you would have—But no, you couldn't love him better than you do."

"No, I couldn't indeed," said Biddy.

"And, dear Joe, you have the best wife in the whole world, and she will make you as happy as even you deserve to be, you dear, good, noble Joe!"

Joe looked at me with a quivering lip, and fairly put his sleeve before his eyes.

"And Joe and Biddy both, as you have been to church to-day, and are in charity and love with all mankind, receive my humble thanks for all you have done for me, and all I have so ill repaid! And when I say that I am going away within the hour, for I am soon going abroad, and that I shall never rest until I have worked for the money with which you have kept me out of prison, and have sent it to you, don't think, dear Joe and Biddy, that if I could repay it a thousand times over, I suppose I could cancel a farthing of the debt I owe you, or that I would do so if I could!"

They were both melted by these words, and both entreated me to say no more.

"But I must say more. Dear Joe, I hope you will have children to love, and that some little fellow will sit in this chimney-corner of a winter night, who may remind you of another little fellow gone out of it for ever. Don't tell him, Joe, that I was thankless; don't tell him, Biddy, that I was ungenerous and unjust; only tell him that I honoured you both, because you were both so good and true, and that, as your child, I said it would be natural to him to grow up a much better man than I did."

"I ain't a-going," said Joe, from behind his sleeve, "to tell him nothink o' that natur, Pip. Nor Biddy ain't. Nor yet no one ain't."

"And now, though I know you have already done it in your own kind hearts, pray tell me, both, that you forgive me! Pray let me hear you say the words, that I may carry the sound of them away with me, and then I shall be able to believe that you can trust me, and think better of me, in the time to come!"

"O dear old Pip, old chap," said Joe. "God knows as I forgive you, if I have anythink to forgive!"

"Amen! And God knows I do!" echoed Biddy.

"Now let me go up and look at my old little room, and rest there a few minutes by myself. And then, when I have eaten and drunk with you, go with me as far as the finger-post, dear Joe and Biddy, before we say good-bye!"

I sold all I had, and put aside as much as I could, for a composition with my creditors,—who gave me ample time to pay them in full,—and I went out and joined Herbert. Within a month, I had quitted England, and within two months I was clerk to Clarriker and Co., and within four months I assumed my first undivided responsibility. For the beam across the parlour ceiling at Mill Pond Bank had then ceased to tremble under old Bill Barley's growls and was at peace, and Herbert had gone away to marry Clara, and I was left in sole charge of the Eastern Branch until he brought her back.

Many a year went round before I was a partner in the House; but I lived happily with Herbert and his wife, and lived frugally, and paid my debts, and maintained a constant correspondence with Biddy and Joe. It was not until I became third in the Firm, that Clarriker betrayed me to Herbert; but he then declared that the secret of Herbert's partnership had been long enough upon his conscience, and he must tell it. So he told it, and Herbert was as much moved as amazed, and the dear fellow and I were not the worse friends for the long concealment. I must not leave it to be supposed that we were ever a great House, or that we made mints of money. We were not in a grand way of business, but we had a good name, and worked for our profits, and did very well. We owed so much to Herbert's ever cheerful industry and readiness, that I often wondered how I had conceived that old idea of his inaptitude, until I was one day enlightened by the reflection, that perhaps the inaptitude had never been in him at all, but had been in me.

Chapter LIX

For eleven years, I had not seen Joe nor Biddy with my bodily eyes,—though they had both been often before my fancy in the East,—when, upon an evening in December, an hour or two after dark, I laid my hand softly on the latch of the old kitchen door. I touched it so softly that I was not heard, and looked in unseen. There, smoking his pipe in the old place by the kitchen firelight, as hale and as strong as ever, though a little grey, sat Joe; and there, fenced into the corner with Joe's leg, and sitting on my own little stool looking at the fire, was—I again!

"We giv' him the name of Pip for your sake, dear old chap," said Joe, delighted, when I took another stool by the child's side (but I did *not* rumple his hair), "and we hoped he might grow a little bit like you, and we think he do."

I thought so too, and I took him out for a walk next morning, and we talked immensely, understanding one another to perfection. And I took him down to the churchyard, and set him on a certain tombstone there, and he showed me from that elevation which stone was sacred to the memory of Philip Pirrip, late of this Parish, and Also Georgiana, Wife of the Above.

"Biddy," said I, when I talked with her after dinner, as her little girl lay sleeping in her lap, "you must give Pip to me one of these days; or lend him, at all events."

"No, no," said Biddy, gently. "You must marry."

"So Herbert and Clara say, but I don't think I shall, Biddy. I have so settled down in their home, that it's not at all likely. I am already quite an old bachelor."

Biddy looked down at her child, and put its little hand to her lips, and then put the good matronly hand with which she had touched it into mine. There was something in the action, and in the light pressure of Biddy's wedding-ring, that had a very pretty eloquence in it.

"Dear Pip," said Biddy, "you are sure you don't fret for her?"

"O no,—I think not, Biddy."

"Tell me as an old, old friend. Have you quite forgotten her?"

"My dear Biddy, I have forgotten nothing in my life that ever had a foremost place there, and little that ever had any place there. But that poor dream, as I once used to call it, has all gone by, Biddy,—all gone by!"

Nevertheless, I knew, while I said those words, that I secretly intended to revisit the site of the old house that evening, alone, for her sake. Yes, even so. For Estella's sake.

I had heard of her as leading a most unhappy life, and as being separated from her husband, who had used her with great cruelty, and who had become quite renowned as a compound of pride, avarice, brutality, and meanness. And I had heard of the death of her husband, from an accident consequent on his ill-treatment of a horse. This release had befallen her some two years before; for anything I knew, she was married again.

The early dinner hour at Joe's, left me abundance of time, without hurrying my talk with Biddy, to walk over to the old spot before dark. But, what with loitering on the way to look at old objects and to think of old times, the day had quite declined when I came to the place.

There was no house now, no brewery, no building whatever left, but the wall of the old garden. The cleared space had been enclosed with a rough fence, and looking over it, I saw that some of the old ivy had struck root anew, and was growing green on low quiet mounds of ruin. A gate in the fence standing ajar, I pushed it open, and went in.

A cold silvery mist had veiled the afternoon, and the moon was not yet up to scatter it. But, the stars were shining beyond the mist, and the moon was coming, and the evening was not dark. I could trace out where every part of the old house had been, and where the brewery had been, and where the gates, and where the casks. I had done so, and was looking along the desolate garden walk, when I beheld a solitary figure in it.

The figure showed itself aware of me, as I advanced. It had been moving towards me, but it stood still. As I drew nearer, I saw it to be the figure of a woman. As I drew nearer yet, it was about to turn away, when it stopped, and let me come up with it. Then, it faltered, as if much surprised, and uttered my name, and I cried out,—

"Estella!"

"I am greatly changed. I wonder you know me."

The freshness of her beauty was indeed gone, but its indescribable majesty and its indescribable charm remained. Those attractions in it, I had seen before; what I had never seen before, was the saddened, softened light of the once proud eyes; what I had never felt before was the friendly touch of the once insensible hand.

We sat down on a bench that was near, and I said, "After so many years, it is strange that we should thus meet again, Estella, here where our first meeting was! Do you often come back?"

"I have never been here since."

"Nor I."

The moon began to rise, and I thought of the placid look at the white ceiling, which had passed away. The moon began to rise, and I thought of the pressure on my hand when I had spoken the last words he had heard on earth.

Estella was the next to break the silence that ensued between us.

"I have very often hoped and intended to come back, but have been prevented by many circumstances. Poor, poor old place!"

The silvery mist was touched with the first rays of the moonlight, and the same rays touched the tears that dropped from her eyes. Not knowing that I saw them, and setting herself to get the better of them, she said quietly,

"Were you wondering, as you walked along, how it came to be left in this condition?"

"Yes, Estella."

"The ground belongs to me. It is the only possession I have not relinquished. Everything else has gone from me, little by little, but I have kept this. It was the subject of the only determined resistance I made in all the wretched years."

"Is it to be built on?"

“At last, it is. I came here to take leave of it before its change. And you,” she said, in a voice of touching interest to a wanderer,—“you live abroad still?”

“Still.”

“And do well, I am sure?”

“I work pretty hard for a sufficient living, and therefore—yes, I do well.”

“I have often thought of you,” said Estella.

“Have you?”

“Of late, very often. There was a long hard time when I kept far from me the remembrance of what I had thrown away when I was quite ignorant of its worth. But since my duty has not been incompatible with the admission of that remembrance, I have given it a place in my heart.”

“You have always held your place in my heart,” I answered.

And we were silent again until she spoke.

“I little thought,” said Estella, “that I should take leave of you in taking leave of this spot. I am very glad to do so.”

“Glad to part again, Estella? To me, parting is a painful thing. To me, the remembrance of our last parting has been ever mournful and painful.”

“But you said to me,” returned Estella, very earnestly, “‘God bless you, God forgive you!’ And if you could say that to me then, you will not hesitate to say that to me now,—now, when suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape. Be as considerate and good to me as you were, and tell me we are friends.”

“We are friends,” said I, rising and bending over her, as she rose from the bench.

“And will continue friends apart,” said Estella.

I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her.

The End

Adrift in New York

by Horatio Alger

Originally Published January 1, 1902

Adrift in New York is a novel by Horatio Alger set in New York City during the late 19th century. The story follows the journey of protagonist Mark Manning as he navigates the challenges and opportunities of urban life. Mark, a young country boy, faces numerous setbacks and trials as he tries to make a better life for himself. Despite the harsh realities of the city, Mark remains hopeful and determined. He encounters various characters who offer support and teach him valuable life lessons, highlighting the importance of genuine connections in a cold and unforgiving city. Mark's relentless pursuit of success leads him to a wealthy mentor, Richard Hunter, who recognizes his work ethic and integrity. Through hard work and honesty, Mark eventually achieves wealth and success beyond his dreams. The novel presents a positive and uplifting portrayal of the American Dream, emphasizing that anyone can achieve success through perseverance and refusing to give up. Adrift in New York is a timeless novel that explores the trials and triumphs of urban life, capturing the essence of New York City and showcasing the importance of perseverance, loyalty, and integrity in achieving success.

ADRIFT IN NEW YORK
Tom and Florence Braving the World

Chapter I
The Missing Heir

"Uncle, you are not looking well tonight."

"I'm not well, Florence. I sometimes doubt if I shall ever be any better."

"Surely, uncle, you cannot mean----"

"Yes, my child, I have reason to believe that I am nearing the end."

"I cannot bear to hear you speak so, uncle," said Florence Linden, in an irrepressible agitation. "You are not an old man. You are but fifty-four."

"True, Florence, but it is not years only that make a man old. Two great sorrows have embittered my life. First, the death of my dearly beloved wife, and next, the loss of my boy, Harvey."

"It is long since I have heard you refer to my cousin's loss. I thought you had become reconciled--no, I do not mean that, -- I thought your regret might be less poignant."

"I have not permitted myself to speak of it, but I have never ceased to think of it day and night."

John Linden paused sadly, then resumed:

"If he had died, I might, as you say, have become reconciled; but he was abducted at the age of four by a revengeful servant whom I had discharged from my employment. Heaven knows whether he is living or dead, but it is impressed upon my mind that he still lives, it may be in misery, it may be as a criminal, while I, his unhappy father, live on in luxury which I cannot enjoy, with no one to care for me----"

Florence Linden sank impulsively on her knees beside her uncle's chair.

"Don't say that, uncle," she pleaded. "You know that I love you, Uncle John."

"And I, too, uncle."

There was a shade of jealousy in the voice of Curtis Waring as he entered the library through the open door, and approaching his uncle, pressed his hand.

He was a tall, dark-complexioned man, of perhaps thirty-five, with shifty, black eyes and thin lips, shaded by a dark mustache. It was not a face to trust.

Even when he smiled the expression of his face did not soften. Yet he could moderate his voice so as to express tenderness and sympathy.

He was the son of an elder sister of Mr. Linden, while Florence was the daughter of a younger brother.

Both were orphans, and both formed a part of Mr. Linden's household, and owed everything to his bounty.

Curtis was supposed to be in some business downtown; but he received a liberal allowance from his uncle, and often drew upon him for outside assistance.

As he stood with his uncle's hand in his, he was necessarily brought near Florence, who instinctively drew a little away, with a slight shudder indicating repugnance.

Slight as it was, Curtis detected it, and his face darkened.

John Linden looked from one to the other. "Yes," he said, "I must not forget that I have a nephew and a niece. You are both dear to me, but no one can take the place of the boy I have lost."

"But it is so long ago, uncle," said Curtis. "It must be fourteen years."

"It is fourteen years."

"And the boy is long since dead!"

"No, no!" said John Linden, vehemently. "I do not, I will not, believe it. He still lives, and I live only in the hope of one day clasping him in my arms."

"That is very improbable, uncle," said Curtis, in a tone of annoyance.

"There isn't one chance in a hundred that my cousin still lives. The grave has closed over him long since. The sooner you make up your mind to accept the inevitable the better."

The drawn features of the old man showed that the words had a depressing effect upon his mind, but Florence interrupted her cousin with an indignant protest.

"How can you speak so, Curtis?" she exclaimed. "Leave Uncle John the hope that he has so long cherished. I have a presentiment that Harvey still lives."

John Linden's face brightened up

"You, too, believe it possible, Florence?" he said, eagerly.

"Yes, uncle. I not only believe it possible, but probable. How old would Harvey be if he still lived?"

"Eighteen--nearly a year older than yourself."

"How strange! I always think of him as a little boy."

"And I, too, Florence. He rises before me in his little velvet suit, as he was when I last saw him, with his sweet, boyish face, in which his mother's looks were reflected."

"Yet, if still living," interrupted Curtis, harshly, "he is a rough street boy, perchance serving his time at Blackwell's Island, and, a hardened young ruffian, whom it would be bitter mortification to recognize as your son."

"That's the sorrowful part of it," said his uncle, in a voice of anguish. "That is what I most dread."

"Then, since even if he were living you would not care

to recognize him, why not cease to think of him, or else regard him as dead?"

"Curtis Waring, have you no heart?" demanded Florence, indignantly.

"Indeed, Florence, you ought to know," said Curtis, sinking his voice into softly modulated accents.

"I know nothing of it," said Florence, coldly, rising from her recumbent position, and drawing aloof from Curtis.

"You know that the dearest wish of my heart is to find favor in your eyes. Uncle, you know my wish, and approve of it, do you not?"

"Yes, Curtis; you and Florence are equally dear to me, and it is my hope that you may be united. In that case, there will be no division of my fortune. It will be left to you jointly."

"Believe me, sir," said Curtis, with faltering voice, feigning an emotion which he did not feel, "believe me, that I fully appreciate your goodness. I am sure Florence joins with me----"

"Florence can speak for herself," said his cousin, coldly. "My uncle needs no assurance from me. He is always kind, and I am always grateful."

John Linden seemed absorbed in thought.

"I do not doubt your affection," he said; "and I have shown it by making you my joint heirs in the event of your marriage; but it is only fair to say that my property goes to my boy, if he still lives."

"But, sir," protested Curtis, "is not that likely to create unnecessary trouble? It can never be known, and meanwhile----"

"You and Florence will hold the property in trust."

"Have you so specified in your will?" asked Curtis.

"I have made two wills. Both are in yonder secretary. By the first the property is bequeathed to you and Florence. By the second and later, it goes to my lost boy in the event of his recovery. Of course, you and Florence are not forgotten, but the bulk of the property goes to Harvey."

"I sincerely wish the boy might be restored to you," said Curtis; but his tone belied his words. "Believe me, the loss of the property would affect me little, if you could be made happy by realizing your warmest desire; but, uncle, I think it only the part of a friend to point out to you, as I have already done, the baselessness of any such expectation."

"It may be as you say, Curtis," said his uncle, with a sigh. "If I were thoroughly convinced of it, I would destroy the later will, and leave my property absolutely to you and Florence."

"No, uncle," said Florence, impulsively, "make no change; let the will stand."

Curtis, screened from his uncle's view, darted a glance of bitter indignation at Florence.

"Is the girl mad?" he muttered to himself. "Must she forever balk me?"

"Let it be so for the present, then," said Mr. Linden, wearily. "Curtis, will you ring the bell? I am tired, and shall retire to my couch early."

"Let me help you, Uncle John," said Florence, eagerly.

"It is too much for your strength, my child. I am growing more and more helpless."

"I, too, can help," said Curtis.

John Linden, supported on either side by his nephew and niece, left the room, and was assisted to his chamber.

Curtis and Florence returned to the library.

"Florence," said her cousin, "my uncle's intentions, as expressed to-night, make it desirable that there should be an understanding between us. Take a seat beside me"--leading her to a sofa--"and let us talk this matter over."

With a gesture of repulsion Florence declined the proffered seat, and remained standing.

"As you please," she answered, coldly.

"Will you be seated?"

"No; our interview will be brief."

"Then I will come to the point. Uncle John wishes to see us united."

"It can never be!" said Florence, decidedly.

Curtis bit his lip in mortification, for her tone was cold and scornful.

Mingled with this mortification was genuine regret, for, so far as he was capable of loving any one, he loved his fair young cousin.

"You profess to love Uncle John, and yet you would disappoint his cherished hope!" he returned.

"Is it his cherished hope?"

"There is no doubt about it. He has spoken to me more than once on the subject. Feeling that his end is near, he wishes to leave you in charge of a protector."

"I can protect myself," said Florence, proudly.

"You think so. You do not consider the hapless lot of a penniless girl in a cold and selfish world."

"Penniless?" repeated Florence, in an accent of surprise.

"Yes, penniless. Our uncle's bequest to you is conditional upon your acceptance of my hand."

"Has he said this?" asked Florence, sinking into an armchair, with a helpless look.

"He has told me so more than once," returned Curtis, smoothly. "You don't know how near to his heart this marriage is. I know what you would say: If the property

comes to me I could come to your assistance, but I am expressly prohibited from doing so. I have pleaded with my uncle in your behalf, but in vain."

Florence was too clear-sighted not to penetrate his falsehood.

"If my uncle's heart is hardened against me," she said, "I shall be too wise to turn to you. I am to understand, then, that my choice lies between poverty and a union with you?"

"You have stated it correctly, Florence."

"Then," said Florence, arising, "I will not hesitate. I shrink from poverty, for I have been reared in luxury, but I will sooner live in a hovel--"

"Or a tenement house," interjected Curtis, with a sneer.

"Yes, or a tenement house, than become the wife of one I loathe."

"Girl, you shall bitterly repent that word!" said Curtis, stung to fury.

She did not reply, but, pale and sorrowful, glided from the room to weep bitter tears in the seclusion of her chamber.

Chapter II

A Stranger Visitor.

Curtis Waring followed the retreating form of his cousin with a sardonic smile.

"She is in the toils! She cannot escape me!" he muttered. "But"—and here his brow darkened—"it vexes me to see how she repels my advances, as if I were some loathsome thing! If only she would return my love—for I do love her, cold as she is—I should be happy. Can there be a rival? But no! we live so quietly that she has met no one who could win her affection. Why can she not turn to me? Surely, I am not so ill-favored, and though twice her age, I am still a young man. Nay, it is only a young girl's caprice. She shall yet come to my arms, a willing captive."

His thoughts took a turn, as he arose from his seat, and walked over to the secretary.

"So it is here that the two wills are deposited!" he said to himself; "one making me a rich man, the other a beggar! While the last is in existence I am not safe. The boy may be alive, and liable to turn up at any moment. If only he were dead—or the will destroyed ----" Here he made a suggestive pause.

He took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and tried one after another, but without success. He was so absorbed in his work that he did not notice the entrance of a dark-browed, broad-shouldered man, dressed in a shabby corduroy suit, till the intruder indulged in a short cough, intended to draw attention.

Starting with guilty consciousness, Curtis turned sharply around, and his glance fell on the intruder.

"Who are you?" he demanded, angrily. "And how dare you enter a gentleman's house unbidden?"

"Are you the gentleman?" asked the intruder, with intentional insolence.

"Yes."

"You own this house?"

"Not at present. It is my uncle's."

"And that secretary--pardon my curiosity--is his?"

"Yes; but what business is it of yours?"

"Not much. Only it makes me laugh to see a gentleman picking a lock. You should leave such business to men like me!"

"You are an insolent fellow!" said Curtis, more embarrassed than he liked to confess, for this rough-looking man had become possessed of a dangerous secret. "I am my uncle's confidential agent, and it was on business of his that I wished to open the desk."

"Why not go to him for the key?"

"Because he is sick. But, pshaw! why should I apologize or give any explanation to you? What can you know of him or me?"

"More, perhaps, than you suspect," said the intruder, quietly.

"Then, you know, perhaps, that I am my uncle's heir?"

"Don't be too sure of that."

"Look here, fellow," said Curtis, thoroughly provoked, "I don't know who you are nor what you mean, but let me inform you that your presence here is an intrusion, and the sooner you leave the house the better!"

"I will leave it when I get ready."

Curtis started to his feet, and advanced to his visitor with an air of menace.

"Go at once," he exclaimed, angrily, "or I will kick you out of the door!"

"What's the matter with the window?" returned the stranger, with an insolent leer.

"That's as you prefer, but if you don't leave at once I will eject you."

By way of reply, the rough visitor coolly seated himself in a luxurious easy-chair, and, looking up into the angry face of Waring, said:

"Oh, no, you won't."

"And why not, may I ask?" said Curtis, with a feeling of uneasiness for which he could not account.

"Why not? Because, in that case, I should seek an interview with your uncle, and tell him----"

"What?"

"That his son still lives; and that I can restore him to his----"

The face of Curtis Waring blanched; he staggered as if he had been struck; and he cried out, hoarsely:

"It is a lie!"

"It is the truth, begging your pardon. Do you mind my smoking?" and he coolly produced a common clay pipe, filled and lighted it.

"Who are you?" asked Curtis, scanning the man's features with painful anxiety.

"Have you forgotten Tim Bolton?"

"Are you Tim Bolton?" faltered Curtis.

"Yes; but you don't seem glad to see me?"

"I thought you were----"

"In Australia. So I was three years since. Then I got homesick, and came back to New York."

"You have been here three years?"

"Yes," chuckled Bolton. "You didn't suspect it, did you?"

"Where?" asked Curtis, in a hollow voice.

"I keep a saloon on the Bowery. There's my card. Call around when convenient."

Curtis was about to throw the card into the grate, but on second thought dropped it into his pocket.

"And the boy?" he asked, slowly.

"Is alive and well. He hasn't been starved. Though I dare say you wouldn't have grieved if he had."

"And he is actually in this city?"

"Just so."

"Does he know anything of--you know what I mean."

"He doesn't know that he is the son of a rich man, and heir to the property which you look upon as yours. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Yes. What is he doing? Is he at work?"

"He helps me some in the saloon, sells papers in the evenings, and makes himself generally useful."

"Has he any education?"

"Well, I haven't sent him to boarding school or college," answered

Tim. "He don't know no Greek, or Latin, or mathematics--pshaw, that's a hard word. You didn't tell me you wanted him made a scholar of. I didn't. I wanted never to see or hear from him again. What made you bring him back to New York?"

"Couldn't keep away, governor. I got homesick, I did. There ain't but one Bowery in the world, and I hankered after that----"

"Didn't I pay you money to keep away, Tim Bolton?"

"I don't deny it; but what's three thousand dollars? Why, the kid's cost me more than that. I've had the care of him for fourteen years, and it's only about two hundred a year."

"You have broken your promise to me!" said Curtis, sternly.

"There's worse things than breaking your promise," retorted Bolton.

Scarcely had he spoken than a change came over his face, and he stared open-mouthed behind him and beyond Curtis.

Startled himself, Curtis turned, and saw, with a feeling akin to dismay, the tall figure of his uncle standing on the threshold of the left portal, clad in a morning gown, with his eyes fixed inquiringly upon Bolton and himself.

Chapter III

An Unholy Compact

"Who is that man, Curtis?" asked John Linden, pointing his thin finger at Tim Bolton, who looked strangely out of place, as, with clay pipe, he sat in the luxurious library on a sumptuous chair.

"That man?" stammered Curtis, quite at a loss what to say.

"Yes."

"He is a poor man out of luck, who has applied to me for assistance," answered Curtis, recovering his wits.

"That's it, governor," said Bolton, thinking it necessary to confirm the statement. "I've got five small children at home almost starvin', your honor."

"That is sad. What is your business, my man?"

It was Bolton's turn to be embarrassed.

"My business?" he repeated.

"That is what I said."

"I'm a blacksmith, but I'm willing to do any honest work."

"That is commendable; but don't you know that it is very ill-bred to smoke a pipe in a gentleman's house?"

"Excuse me, governor!"

And Bolton extinguished his pipe, and put it away in a pocket of his corduroy coat.

"I was just telling him the same thing," said Curtis. "Don't trouble yourself any further, uncle. I will inquire into the man's circumstances, and help him if I can."

"Very well, Curtis. I came down because I thought I heard voices."

John Linden slowly returned to his chamber and left the two alone.

"The governor's getting old," said Bolton. "When I was butler here, fifteen years ago, he looked like a young man. He didn't suspect that he had ever seen me before."

"Nor that you had carried away his son, Bolton."

"Who hired me to do it? Who put me up to the job, as far as that goes?"

"Hush! Walls have ears. Let us return to business."

"That suits me."

"Look here, Tim Bolton," said Curtis, drawing up a chair, and lowering his voice to a confidential pitch, "you say you want money?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, I don't give money for nothing."

"I know that. What's wanted now?"

"You say the boy is alive?"

"He's very much alive."

"Is there any necessity for his living?" asked Curtis, in a sharp, hissing tone, fixing his eyes searchingly on Bolton, to see how his hint would be taken.

"You mean that you want me to murder him?" said Bolton, quickly.

"Why not? You don't look over scrupulous."

"I am a bad man, I admit it," said Bolton, with a gesture of repugnance, "a thief, a low blackguard, perhaps, but, thank Heaven! I am no murderer! And if I was, I wouldn't spill a drop of that boy's blood for the fortune that is his by right."

"I didn't give you credit for so much sentiment, Bolton," said Curtis, with a sneer. "You don't look like it, but appearances are deceitful. We'll drop the subject. You can serve me in another way. Can you open this secretary?"

"Yes; that's in my line."

"There is a paper in it that I want. It is my uncle's will. I have a curiosity to read it."

"I understand. Well, I'm agreeable."

"If you find any money or valuables, you are welcome to them. I only want the paper. When will you make the attempt?" "To-morrow night. When will it be safe?"

"At eleven o'clock. We all retire early in this house. Can you force an entrance?"

"Yes; but it will be better for you to leave the outer door unlocked."

"I have a better plan. Here is my latchkey."

"Good! I may not do the job myself, but I will see that it is done. How shall I know the will?"

"It is in a big envelope, tied with a narrow tape. Probably it is inscribed: 'My will.'"

"Suppose I succeed, when shall I see you?"

"I will come around to your place on the Bowery. Good-night!"

Curtis Waring saw Bolton to the door, and let him out. Returning, he flung himself on a sofa.

"I can make that man useful!" he reflected. "There is an

element of danger in the boy's presence in New York; but it will go hard if I can't get rid of him! Tim Bolton is unexpectedly squeamish, but there are others to whom I can apply. With gold everything is possible. It's time matters came to a finish. My uncle's health is rapidly failing-- the doctor hints that he has heart disease--and the fortune for which I have been waiting so long will soon be mine, if I work my cards right. I can't afford to make any mistakes now."

Chapter IV

Florence

Florence Linden sat in the library the following evening in an attitude of depression. Her eyelids were swollen, and it was evident she had been weeping. During the day she had had an interview with her uncle, in which he harshly insisted upon her yielding to his wishes, and marrying her cousin, Curtis.

"But, uncle," she objected, "I do not love him."

"Marry him, and love will come."

"Never!" she said, vehemently.

"You speak confidently, miss," said Mr. Linden, with irritation.

"Listen, Uncle John. It is not alone that I do not love him. I dislike him--I loathe--him."

"Nonsense! that is a young girl's extravagant nonsense."

"No, uncle."

"There can be no reason for such a foolish dislike. What can you have against him?"

"It is impressed upon me, uncle, that Curtis is a bad man. There is something false--treacherous--about him."

"Pooh! child! you are more foolish than I thought. I don't say Curtis is an angel. No man is; at least, I never met any such. But he is no worse than the generality of men. In marrying him you will carry out my cherished wish. Florence, I have not long to live. I shall be glad to see you well established in life before I leave you. As the wife of Curtis you will have a recognized position. You will go on living in this house, and the old home will be maintained."

"But why is it necessary for me to marry at all, Uncle John?"

"You will be sure to marry some one. Should I divide my fortune between you and Curtis, you would become the prey of some unscrupulous fortune hunter."

"Better that than become the wife of Curtis Waring----"

"I see, you are incorrigible," said her uncle, angrily. "Do you refuse obedience to my wishes?"

"Command me in anything else, Uncle John, and I will obey," pleaded Florence.

"Indeed! You only thwart me in my cherished wish, but

are willing to obey me in unimportant matters. You forget the debt you owe me."

"I forget nothing, dear uncle. I do not forget that, when I was a poor little child, helpless and destitute, you took me in your arms, gave me a home, and have cared for me from that time to this as only a parent could."

"You remember that, then?"

"Yes, uncle. I hope you will not consider me wholly ungrateful."

"It only makes matters worse. You own your obligations, yet refuse to make the only return I desire. You refuse to comfort me in the closing days of my life by marrying your cousin."

"Because that so nearly concerns my happiness that no one has a right to ask me to sacrifice all I hold dear."

"I see you are incorrigible," said John Linden, stormily. "Do you know what will be the consequences?"

"I am prepared for all."

"Then listen! If you persist in balking me, I shall leave the entire estate to Curtis."

"Do with your money as you will, uncle. I have no claim to more than I have received."

"You are right there; but that is not all."

Florence fixed upon him a mute look of inquiry.

"I will give you twenty-four hours more to come to your senses. Then, if you persist in your ingratitude and disobedience, you must find another home."

"Oh, uncle, you do not mean that?" exclaimed Florence, deeply moved.

"I do mean it, and I shall not allow your tears to move me. Not another word, for I will not hear it. Take twenty-four hours to think over what I have said."

Florence bowed her head on her hands, and gave herself up to sorrowful thoughts. But she was interrupted by the entrance of the servant, who announced:

"Mr. Percy de Brabazon."

An effeminate-looking young man, foppishly dressed, followed the servant into the room, and made it impossible for Florence to deny herself, as she wished to do.

"I hope I see you well, Miss Florence," he simpered.

"Thank you, Mr. de Brabazon," said Florence, coldly. "I have a slight headache."

"I am awfully sorry, I am, upon my word, Miss Florence. My doctor tells me it is only those whose bowins are vewy active that are troubled with headaches."

"Then, I presume, Mr. de Brabazon," said Florence, with intentional sarcasm, "that you never have a headache."

"Weally, Miss Florence, that is vewy clevah. You will have your joke."

"It was no joke, I assure you, Mr. de Brabazon."

"I--I thought it might be. Didn't I see you at the opewa last evening?"

"Possibly. I was there."

"I often go to the opewa. It's so--so fashionable, don't you know?"

"Then you don't go to hear the music?"

"Oh, of course, but one can't always be listening to the music, don't you know. I had a fwiend with me last evening--an Englishman--a charming fellow, I assure you. He's the second cousin of a lord, and yet--you'll hardly credit it--we're weally vewy intimate. He tells me, Miss Florence, that I'm the perfect image of his cousin, Lord Fitz Noodle."

"I am not at all surprised."

"Weally, you are vewy kind, Miss Florence. I thought it a great compliment. I don't know how it is, but ewevybody takes me for an Englishman. Strange, isn't it?"

"I am very glad."

"May I ask why, Miss Florence?"

"Because---- Well, perhaps I had better not explain. It seems to give you pleasure. You would, probably, prefer to be an Englishman."

"I admit that I have a great admiration for the English character. It's a gweat pity we have no lords in America. Now, if you would only allow me to bring my English fwiend here----

"I don't care to make any new acquaintances. Even if I did, I prefer my own countrymen. Don't you like America, Mr. de Brabazon?"

"Oh, of courth, if we only had some lords here."

"We have plenty of flunkys."

"That's awfully clevah, 'pon my word."

"Is it? I am afraid you are too complimentary. You are very good-natured."

"I always feel good-natured in your company, Miss Florence. I--wish I could always be with you."

"Really! Wouldn't that be a trifle monotonous?" asked Florence, sarcastically.

"Not if we were married," said Percy, boldly breaking the ice.

"What do you mean, Mr. de Brabazon?"

"I hope you will excuse me, Miss Florence--Miss Linden, I mean; but I'm awfully in love with you, and have been ever so long--but I never dared to tell you so. I felt so nervous, don't you know? Will you marry me? I'll be awfully obliged if you will."

Mr. de Brabazon rather awkwardly slipped from his chair, and sank on one knee before Florence.

"Please arise, Mr. de Brabazon," said Florence, hurriedly. "It is quite out of the question--what you ask--I assure you."

"Ah! I see how it is," said Percy, clasping his hands sadly. "You love another."

"Not that I am aware of."

"Then I may still hope?"

"I cannot encourage you, Mr. de Brabazon. My heart is free, but it can never be yours."

"Then," said Percy, gloomily, "there is only one thing for me to do."

"What is that?"

"I shall go to the Bwooklyn Bwidge, climb to the parapet, jump into the water, and end my misewable life."

"You had better think twice before adopting such a desperate resolution, Mr. de Brabazon. You will meet others who will be kinder to you than I have been----"

"I can never love another. My heart is broken. Farewell, cruel girl. When you read the papers tomorrow morning, think of the unhappy Percy de Brabazon!"

Mr. de Brabazon folded his arms gloomily, and stalked out of the room.

"If my position were not so sad, I should be tempted to smile," said Florence. "Mr. de Brabazon will not do this thing. His emotions are as strong as those of a butterfly."

After a brief pause Florence seated herself at the table, and drew toward her writing materials.

"It is I whose heart should be broken!" she murmured; "I who am driven from the only home I have ever known. What can have turned against me my uncle, usually so kind and considerate? It must be that Curtis has exerted a baneful influence upon him. I cannot leave him without one word of farewell."

She took up a sheet of paper, and wrote, rapidly:

"Dear Uncle:

You have told me to leave your house, and obey. I cannot tell you how sad I feel, when I reflect that I have lost your love, and must go forth among strangers—I know not where. I was but a little girl when you gave me a home. I have grown up in an atmosphere of love, and I have felt very grateful to you for all you have done for me. I have tried to conform to your wishes, and I would obey you in all else--but I cannot marry Curtis; I think I would rather die. Let me still live with you as I have done. I do not care for any part of your money--leave it all to him, if you think best--but give me back my place in your heart. You are angry now, but you will some time pity and forgive your poor Florence, who will never cease to bless and pray for you.

*Good-bye!
Florence"*

She was about to sign herself Florence Linden, but reflected that she was no longer entitled to use a name which would seem to carry with it a claim upon her uncle.

The tears fell upon the paper as she was writing, but she heeded them not. It was the saddest hour of her life. Hitherto she had been shielded from all sorrow, and secure in the affection of her uncle, had never dreamed that there would come a time when she would feel obliged to leave all behind her, and go out into the world, friendless and penniless, but poorest of all in the loss of that love which she had hitherto enjoyed.

After completing the note, Florence let her head fall upon the table, and sobbed herself to sleep.

An hour and a half passed, the servant looked in, but noticing that her mistress was sleeping, contented herself with lowering the gas, but refrained from waking her.

And so she slept on till the French clock upon the mantle struck eleven.

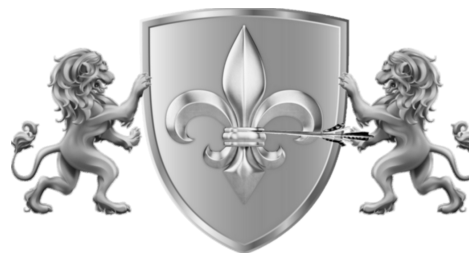
Five minutes later and the door of the room slowly opened, and a boy entered on tiptoe. He was roughly dressed. His figure was manly and vigorous, and despite his stealthy step and suspicious movements his face was prepossessing.

He started when he saw Florence.

"What, a sleeping gal!" he said to himself. "Tim told me I'd find the coast clear, but I guess she's sound asleep, and won't hear nothing. I don't half like this job, but I've got to do as Tim told me. He says he's my father, so I s'pose it's all right. All the same, I shall be nabbed some day, and then the family'll be disgraced. It's a queer life I've led ever since I can remember. Sometimes I feel like leaving Tim, and settin' up for myself. I wonder how 'twould seem to be respectable."

The boy approached the secretary, and with some tools he had brought essayed to open it. After a brief delay he succeeded, and lifted the cover. He was about to explore it, according to Tim's directions, when he heard a cry of fear, and turning swiftly saw Florence, her eyes dilated with terror, gazing at him.

"Who are you?" she asked in alarm, "and what are you doing there?"



Chapter V

Dodger

The boy sprang to the side of Florence, and seized her wrists in his strong young grasp.

"Don't you alarm the house," he said, "or I'll----"

"What will you do?" gasped Florence, in alarm. The boy was evidently softened by her beauty, and answered in a tone of hesitation:

"I don't know. I won't harm you if you keep quiet."

"What are you here for?" asked Florence, fixing her eyes on the boy's face; "are you a thief?"

"I don't know--yes, I suppose I am."

"How sad, when you are so young."

"What! miss, do you pity me?"

"Yes, my poor boy, you must be very poor, or you wouldn't bring yourself to steal."

"No. I ain't poor; leastways, I have enough to eat, and I have a place to sleep."

"Then why don't you earn your living by honest means?"

"I can't; I must obey orders."

"Whose orders?"

"Why, the guv'nor's, to be sure."

"Did he tell you to open that secretary?"

"Yes."

"Who is the guv'nor, as you call him?"

"I can't tell; it wouldn't be square."

"He must be a very wicked man."

"Well, he ain't exactly what you call an angel, but I've seen wuss men than the guv'nor

"Do you mind telling me your own name?"

"No; for I know you won't peach on me. Tom Dodger."

"Dodger?"

"Yes."

"That isn't a surname."

"It's all I've got. That's what I'm always called."

"It is very singular," said Florence, fixing a glance of mingled curiosity and perplexity upon the young visitor.

While the two were earnestly conversing in that subdued light, afforded by the lowered gaslight, Tim Bolton crept in through the door unobserved by either, tiptoed across the room to the secretary, snatched the will and a roll of bills, and escaped without attracting attention.

"Oh, I wish I could persuade you to give up this bad life," resumed Florence, earnestly, "and become honest."

"Do you really care what becomes of me, miss?" asked Dodger, slowly.

"I do, indeed."

"That's very kind of you, miss; but I don't understand it. You are a rich young lady, and I'm only a poor boy, livin' in a Bowery dive."

"What's that?"

"Never mind, miss, such as you wouldn't understand. Why, all my life I've lived with thieves, and drunkards, and bunco men, and----"

"But I'm sure you don't like it. You are fit for something better."

"Do you really think so?" asked Dodger, doubtfully.

"Yes; you have a good face. You were meant to be good and honest, I am sure."

"Would you trust me?" asked the boy, earnestly, fixing his large, dark eyes eloquently on the face of Florence.

"Yes, I would if you would only leave your evil companions, and become true to your better nature."

"No one ever spoke to me like that before, miss," said Dodger, his expressive features showing that he was strongly moved. "You think I could be good if I tried hard, and grow up respectable?"

"I am sure you could," said Florence, confidently.

There was something in this boy, young outlaw though he was, that moved her powerfully, and even fascinated her, though she hardly realized it. It was something more than a feeling of compassion for a wayward and misguided youth.

"I could if I was rich like you, and lived in a nice house, and 'sociated with swells. If you had a father like mine----"

"Is he a bad man?"

"Well, he don't belong to the church. He keeps a gin mill, and has ever since I was a kid."

"Have you always lived with him?"

"Yes, but not in New York."

"Where then?"

"In Melbourne."

"That's in Australia."

"Yes, miss."

"How long since you came to New York?"

"I guess it's about three years."

"And you have always had this man as a guardian? Poor boy!"

"You've got a different father from me, miss?"

Tears forced themselves to the eyes of Florence, as this remark brought forcibly to her mind the position in which she was placed.

"Alas!" she answered, impulsively, "I am alone in the world!"

"What! ain't the old gentleman that lives here your father?"

"He is my uncle; but he is very, very angry with me, and has this very day ordered me to leave the house."

"Why, what a cantankerous old ruffian he is, to be sure!" exclaimed the boy, indignantly.

"Hush! you must not talk against my uncle. He has always been kind to me till now."

"Why, what's up? What's the old gentleman mad about?"

"He wants me to marry my cousin Curtis--a man I do not even like."

"That's a shame! Is it the dude I saw come out of the house a little while ago?"

"Oh, no; that's a different gentleman. It's Mr. de Brabazon."

"You don't want to marry him, do you?"

"No, no!"

"I'm glad of that. He don't look as if he knew enough to come in when it rained."

"The poor young man is not very brilliant, but I think I would rather marry him than Curtis Waring."

"I've seen him, too. He's got dark hair and a dark complexion, and a wicked look in his eye."

"You, too, have noticed that?"

"I've seen such as him before. He's a bad man."

"Do you know anything about him?" asked Florence, eagerly.

"Only his looks."

"I am not deceived," murmured Florence, "it's not wholly prejudice. The boy distrusts him, too. So you see, Dodger," she added, aloud, "I am not a rich young lady, as you suppose. I must leave this house, and work for my living. I have no home any more."

"If you have no home," said Dodger, impulsively, "come home with me."

"To the home you have described, my poor boy? How could I do that?"

"No; I will hire a room for you in a quiet street, and you shall be my sister. I will work for you and give you my money."

"You are kind, and I am glad to think I have found a friend when I need one most. But I could not accept stolen money. It would be as bad as if I, too, were a thief."

"I am not a thief! That is, I won't be any more."

"And you will give up your plan of robbing my uncle?"

"Yes, I will; though I don't know what my guv'nor will say. He'll half murder me, I expect. He'll be sure to cut up rough."

"Do right, Dodger, whatever happens. Promise me that you will never steal again?"

"There's my hand, miss--I promise. Nobody ever talked to me like you. I never thought much about bein' respectable, and growin' up to be somebody, but if you take an interest in me, I'll try hard to do right."

At this moment, Mr. Linden, clad in a long morning gown, and holding a candle in his hand, entered the room, and started in astonishment when he saw Florence clasping the hand of one whose appearance led him to stamp as a young rough.

"Shameless girl!" he exclaimed, in stern reproof. "So this is the company you keep when you think I am out of the way!"

Chapter VI

A Tempest

The charge was so strange and unexpected that Florence was overwhelmed. She could only murmur:

"Oh, uncle!"

Her young companion was indignant. Already he felt that Florence had consented to accept him as a friend, and he was resolved to stand by her.

"I say, old man," he bristled up, "don't you go to insult her! She's an angel!"

"No doubt you think so," rejoined Mr. Linden, in a tone of sarcasm. "Upon my word, miss, I congratulate you on your elevated taste. So this is your reason for not being willing to marry your Cousin Curtis?"

"Indeed, uncle, you are mistaken. I never met this boy till to-night."

"Don't try to deceive me. Young man, did you open my secretary?"

"Yes, sir."

"And robbed it into the bargain," continued Linden, going to the secretary, and examining it. He did not, however, miss the will, but only the roll of bills. "Give me back the money you have taken from me, you young rascal!"

"I took nothing, sir."

"It's a lie! The money is gone, and no one else could have taken it."

"I don't allow no one to call me a liar. Just take that back, old man, or I----"

"Indeed, uncle, he took nothing, for he had only just opened the secretary when I woke up and spoke to him."

"You stand by him, of course, shameless girl! I blush to think that you are my niece. I am glad to think that my eyes are opened before it is too late."

The old merchant rang the bell violently, and aroused the house. Dodger made no attempt to escape, but stood beside Florence in the attitude of a protector. But a short time elapsed before Curtis Waring and the servants entered the room, and gazed with wonder at the tableau presented by the excited old man and the two young people.

"My friends," said John Linden, in a tone of excitement, "I call you to witness that this girl, whom I blush to acknowledge as my niece, has proved herself unworthy of my kindness. In your presence I cut her off, and bid her never again darken my door."

"But what has she done, uncle?" asked Curtis. He was prepared for the presence of Dodger, whom he rightly concluded to be the agent of Tim

Bolton, but he could not understand why Florence should be in the library at this late hour. Nor was he able to understand the evidently friendly relations between her and the young visitor.

"What has she done?" repeated John Linden. "She has introduced that young ruffian into the house to rob me. Look at that secretary! He has forced it open, and stolen a large sum of money."

"It is not true, sir," said Dodger, calmly, "about taking the money, I mean. I haven't taken a cent."

"Then why did you open the secretary?"

"I did mean to take money, but she stopped me."

"Oh, she stopped you?" repeated Linden, with withering sarcasm. "Then, perhaps, you will tell me where the money is gone?"

"He hasn't discovered about the will," thought Curtis, congratulating himself; "if the boy has it, I must manage to give him a chance to escape."

"You can search me if you want to," continued Dodger, proudly. "You won't find no money on me."

"Do you think I am a fool, you young burglar?" exclaimed John Linden, angrily.

"Uncle, let me speak to the boy," said Curtis, soothingly. "I think he will tell me."

"As you like, Curtis; but I am convinced that he is a thief."

Curtis Waring beckoned Dodger into an adjoining room.

"Now, my boy," he said, smoothly, "give me what you took from the secretary, and I will see that you are not arrested."

"But, sir, I didn't take nothing--it's just as I told the old duffer. The girl waked up just as I'd got the secretary open, and I didn't have a chance."

"But the money is gone," said Curtis, in an incredulous tone.

"I don't know nothing about that."

"Come, you'd better examine your pockets. In the hurry of the moment you may have taken it without knowing it."

"No, I couldn't."

"Didn't you take a paper of any kind?" asked Curtis, eagerly. "Sometimes papers are of more value than money."

"No, I didn't take no paper, though Tim told me to."

Curtis quietly ignored the allusion to Tim, for it did not suit his purpose to get Tim into trouble. His unscrupulous agent knew too much that would compromise his principal.

"Are you willing that I should examine you?"

"Yes, I am. Go ahead."

Curtis thrust his hand into the pockets of the boy, who, boy as he was, was as tall as himself, but was not repaid by the discovery of anything. He was very much perplexed.

"Didn't you throw the articles on the floor?" he demanded, suspiciously.

"No, I didn't."

"You didn't give them to the young lady?"

"No; if I had she'd have said so."

"Humph! this is strange. What is your name?"

"Dodger."

"That's a queer name; have you no other?"

"Not as I know of."

"With whom do you live?"

"With my father. Leastways, he says he's my father."

There was a growing suspicion in the mind of Curtis Waring. He scanned the boy's features with attention. Could this ill-dressed boy--astreet boy in appearance--be his long-lost and deeply wronged cousin?

"Who is it that says he is your father?" he demanded, abruptly.

"Do you want to get him into trouble?"

"No, I don't want to get him into trouble, or you either. Better tell me all, and I will be your friend."

"You're a better sort than I thought at first," said Dodger. "The man I live with is called Tim Bolton."

"I thought so," quickly ejaculated Curtis. He had scarcely got out the words before he was sensible that he had made a mistake.

"What! do you know Tim?" inquired Dodger, in surprise.

"I mean," replied Curtis, lamely, "that I have heard of this man Bolton. He keeps a saloon on the Bowery, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"I thought you would be living with some such man. Did he come to the house with you tonight?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"He stayed outside."

"Perhaps he is there now."

"Don't you go to having him arrested," said Dodger, suspiciously.

"I will keep my promise. Are you sure you didn't pass out the paper and the money to him? Think now."

"No, I didn't. I didn't have a chance. When I came into the room yonder I saw the gal asleep, and I thought she wouldn't hear me, but when I got the desk open she spoke to me, and asked me what I was doin'."

"And you took nothing?"

"No."

"It seems very strange. I cannot understand it. Yet my uncle says the money is gone. Did anyone else enter the room while you were talking with Miss Linden?"

"I didn't see any one."

"What were you talking about?"

"She said the old man wanted her to marry you, and she didn't want to."

"She told you that?" exclaimed Curtis, in displeasure.

"Yes, she did. She said she'd rather marry the dude that was here early this evenin'."

"Mr. de Brabazon!"

"Yes, that's the name."

"Upon my word, she was very confidential. You are a queer person for her to select as a confidant."

"Maybe so, sir; but she knows I'm her friend."

"You like the young lady, then? Perhaps you would like to marry her yourself?"

"As if she'd take any notice of a poor boy like me. I told her if her uncle sent her away, I'd take care of her and be a brother to her."

"How would Mr. Tim Bolton--that's his name, isn't it?--like that?"

"I wouldn't take her to where he lives."

"I think, myself, it would hardly be a suitable home for a young lady brought up on Madison Avenue. There is certainly no accounting for tastes. Miss Florence----"

"That's her name, is it?"

"Yes; didn't she tell you?"

"No; but it's a nice name."

"She declines my hand, and accepts your protection. It will certainly be a proud distinction to become Mrs. Dodger."

"Don't laugh at her!" said Dodger, suspiciously.

"I don't propose to. But I think we may as well return to the library."

"Well," said Mr. Linden, as his nephew returned with Dodger.

"I have examined the boy, and found nothing on his person," said Curtis; "I confess I am puzzled. He appears to have a high admiration for Florence----"

"As I supposed."

"She has even confided to him her dislike for me, and he has offered her his protection."

"Is this so, miss?" demanded Mr. Linden, sternly.

"Yes, uncle," faltered Florence.

"Then you can join the young person you have selected whenever you please. For your sake I will not have him arrested for attempted burglary. He is welcome to what he has taken, since he is likely to marry into the family. You may stay here to-night, and he can call for you in the morning."

John Linden closed the secretary, and left the room, leaving Florence sobbing. The servants, too, retired, and Curtis was left alone with her.

"Florence," he said, "accept my hand, and I will reconcile my uncle to you. Say but the word, and----"

"I can never speak it, Curtis! I will take my uncle at his word. Dodger, call for me to-morrow at eight, and I will accept your friendly services in finding me a new home."

"I'll be on hand, miss. Good-night!"

"Be it so, obstinate girl!" said Curtis, angrily. "The time will come when you will bitterly repent your mad decision."



Chapter VII

Florence Leaves Home

Florence passed a sleepless night. It had come upon her so suddenly, this expulsion from the home of her childhood, that she could not fully realize it. She could not feel that she was taking her last look at the familiar room, and well-remembered dining-room, where she had sat down for the last time for breakfast. She was alone at the breakfast table, for the usual hour was half-past eight, and she had appointed Dodger to call for her at eight.

"Is it true, Miss Florence, that you're going away?" asked Jane, the warm-hearted table girl, as she waited upon Florence.

"Yes, Jane," answered Florence, sadly.

"It's a shame, so it is! I didn't think your uncle would be so hard-hearted."

"He is disappointed because I won't marry my Cousin Curtis."

"I don't blame you for it, miss. I never liked Mr. Waring. He isn't half good enough for you."

"I say nothing about that, Jane; but I will not marry a man I do not love."

"Nor would I, miss. Where are you going, if I may make so bold?"

"I don't know, Jane," said Florence, despondently.

"But you can't walk about the streets."

"A trusty friend is going to call for me at eight o'clock; when he comes admit him."

"It is a--a young gentleman?"

"You wouldn't call him such. He is a boy, a poor boy; but I think he is a true friend. He says he will find me a comfortable room somewhere, where I can settle down and look for work."

"Are you going to work for a living, Miss Florence?" asked Jane, horrified.

"I must, Jane."

"It's a great shame--you, a lady born."

"No, Jane, I do not look upon it in that light. I shall be happier for having my mind and my hands occupied."

"What work will you do?"

"I don't know yet. Dodger will advise me."

"Who, miss?"

"Dodger."

"Who is he?"

"It's the boy I spoke of."

"Shure, he's got a quare name."

"Yes; but names don't count for much. It's the heart I think of, and this boy has a kind heart."

"Have you known him long?"

"I saw him yesterday for the first time."

"Is it the young fellow who was here last night?"

"Yes."

"He isn't fit company for the likes of you, Miss Florence."

"You forget, Jane, that I am no longer a rich young lady. I am poorer than even you. This Dodger is kind, and I feel that I can trust him."

"If you are poor, Miss Florence," said Jane, hesitatingly, "would you mind borrowing some money of me? I've got ten dollars upstairs in my trunk, and I don't need it at all. It's proud I'll be to lend it to you."

"Thank you, Jane," said Florence, gratefully. "I thought I had but one friend. I find I have two----"

"Then you'll take the money? I'll go right up and get it."

"No, Jane; not at present. I have twenty dollars in my purse, and it will last me till I can earn more."

"But, miss, twenty dollars will soon go," said Jane, disappointed.

"If I find that I need the sum you so kindly offer me, I will let you know, I promise that."

"Thank you, miss."

At this point a bell rang from above.

"It's from Mr. Curtis' room," said Jane.

"Go and see what he wants."

Jane returned in a brief time with a note in her hand.

"Mr. Curtis asked me if you were still here," she explained, "and when I told him you were he asked me to give you this."

Florence took the note, and, opening it, read these lines:

"Florence: Now that you have had time to think over your plan of leaving your old home, I hope you have come to see how foolish it is. Reflect that, if carried out, a life of poverty and squalid wretchedness amid homely and uncongenial surroundings awaits you; while, as my wife, you will live a life of luxury and high social position. There are many young ladies who would be glad to accept the chance which you so recklessly reject. By accepting my hand you will gratify our excellent uncle, and make me the happiest of mortals. You will acquit me of mercenary motives, since you are now penniless, and your disobedience leaves me sole heir to Uncle John. I love you, and it will be my chief object, if you will permit it, to make you happy."

Curtis Waring"

Florence ran her eyes rapidly over this note, but her heart did not respond, and her resolution was not shaken.

"Tell Mr. Waring there is no answer, Jane, if he inquires," she said.

"Was he tryin' to wheedle you into marryin' him?" asked Jane.

"He wished me to change my decision."

"I'm glad you've given him the bounce," said Jane, whose expressions were not always refined. "I wouldn't marry him myself."

Florence smiled. Jane was red haired, and her nose was what is euphemistically called *_retroussée_*. Even in her own circles she was not regarded as beautiful, and was hardly likely to lead a rich man to overlook her humble station, and sue for her hand.

"Then, Jane, you at least will not blame me for refusing my cousin's hand?"

"That I won't, miss. Do you know, Miss Florence"--and here Jane lowered her voice--"I've a suspicion that Mr. Curtis is married already?"

"What do you mean, Jane?" asked Florence, startled.

"There was a poor young woman called here last month and inquired for Mr. Curtis. She was very sorrowful-like, and poorly dressed. He came up when she was at the door, and he spoke harshlike, and told her to walk away with him. What they said I couldn't hear, but I've a suspicion that she was married to him, secret-like for I saw a wedding ring upon her finger."

"But, Jane, it would be base and infamous for him to ask for my hand when he was already married."

"I can't help it, miss. That's just what he wouldn't mind doin'. Oh, he's a sly deceiver, Mr. Curtis. I'd like to see him foolin' around me."

Jane nodded her head with emphasis, as if to intimate the kind of reception Curtis Waring would get if he attempted to trifle with her virgin affections.

"I hope what you suspect is not true," said Florence, gravely. "I do not like or respect Curtis, but I don't like to think he would be so base as that. If you ever see this young woman again, try to find out where she lives. I would like to make her acquaintance, and be a friend to her if she needs one."

"Shure, Miss Florence, you will be needin' a friend yourself."

"It is true, Jane. I forgot that I am no longer a young lady of fortune, but a penniless girl, obliged to work for a living."

"What would your uncle say if he knew that Mr. Curtis had a wife?"

"We don't know that he has one, and till we do, it would not be honorable to intimate such a thing to Uncle John."

"Shure, he wouldn't be particular. It's all his fault that you're obliged to leave home, and go into the streets. Why couldn't he take no for an answer, and marry somebody else, if he can find anybody to have him?"

"I wish, indeed, that he had fixed his affections elsewhere," responded Florence, with a sigh.

"Shure, he's twice as old as you, Miss Florence, anyway."

"I shouldn't mind that so much, if that was the only objection."

"It'll be a great deal better marryin' a young man."

"I don't care to marry any one, Jane. I don't think I shall ever marry."

"It's all very well to say that, Miss Florence. Lots of girls say so, but they change their minds. I don't mean to live out always myself."

"Is there any young man you are interested in, Jane?"

"Maybe there is, and maybe there isn't, Miss Florence. If I ever do get married I'll invite you to the wedding."

"And I'll promise to come if I can. But I hear the bell. I think my friend Dodger has come."

"Shall I ask him in, miss?"

"No. Tell him I will be ready to accompany him at once."

She went out into the hall, and when the door was opened the visitor proved to be Dodger. He had improved his appearance so far as his limited means would allow. His hands and face were thoroughly clean; he had bought a new collar and necktie; his shoes were polished, and despite his shabby suit, he looked quite respectable. Getting a full view of him, Florence saw that his face was frank and handsome, his eyes bright, and his teeth like pearls.

"Shure, he's a great deal better lookin' than Mr. Curtis," whispered Jane. "Here, Mr. Dodger, take Miss Florence's valise, and mind you take good care of her."

"I will," answered Dodger, heartily. "Come, Miss Florence, if you don't mind walking over to Fourth Avenue, we'll take the horse cars."

So, under strange guidance, Florence Linden left her luxurious home, knowing not what awaited her. What haven of refuge she might find she knew not. She, like Dodger, was adrift in New York.



Chapter VIII

A Friendly Compact

Florence, as she stepped on the sidewalk, turned, and fixed a last sad look on the house that had been her home for so many years. She had never anticipated such a sundering of home ties, and even now she found it difficult to realize that the moment had come when her life was to be rent in twain, and the sunlight of prosperity was to be darkened and obscured by a gloomy and uncertain future.

She had hastily packed a few indispensable articles in a valise which she carried in her hand.

"Let me take your bag, Miss Florence," said Dodger, reaching out his hand.

"I don't want to trouble you, Dodger."

"It ain't no trouble, Miss Florence. I'm stronger than you, and it looks better for me to carry it."

"You are very kind, Dodger. What would I do without you?"

"There's plenty that would be glad of the chance of helping you," said Dodger, with a glance of admiration at the fair face of his companion.

"I don't know where to find them," said Florence, sadly. "Even my uncle has turned against me."

"He's an old chump!" ejaculated Dodger, in a tone of disgust.

"Hush! I cannot hear a word against him. He has always been kind and considerate till now. It is the evil influence of my Cousin Curtis that has turned him against me. When he comes to himself I am sure he will regret his cruelty."

"He would take you back if you would marry your cousin."

"Yes; but that I will never do!" exclaimed Florence, with energy.

"Bully for you!" said Dodger. "Excuse me," he said, apologetically. "I ain't used to talkin' to young ladies, and perhaps that ain't proper for me to say."

"I don't mind, Dodger; your heart is in the right place."

"Thank you, Miss Florence. I'm glad you've got confidence in me. I'll try to deserve it."

"Where are we going?" asked the young lady, whose only thought up to this moment had been to get away from the presence of Curtis and his persecutions.

They had now reached Fourth Avenue, and a surface car was close at hand.

"We're going to get aboard that car," said Dodger,

signaling with his free hand. "I'll tell you more when we're inside."

Florence entered the car, and Dodger, following, took a seat at her side.

They presented a noticeable contrast, for Florence was dressed as becomed her station, while Dodger, in spite of his manly, attractive face, was roughly attired, and looked like a working boy.

When the conductor came along, he drew out a dime, and tendered it in payment of the double fare. The money was in the conductor's hand before Florence was fully aware.

"You must not pay for me, Dodger," she said.

"Why not?" asked the boy. "Ain't we friends?"

"Yes, but you have no money to spare. Here, let me return the money."

And she offered him a dime from her own purse.

"You can pay next time, Miss Florence. It's all right. Now, I'll tell you where we are goin'. A friend of mine, Mrs. O'Keefe, has a lodgin' house, just off the Bowery. I saw her last night, and she says she's got a good room that she can give you for two dollars a week--I don't know how much you'd be willing to pay, but----"

"I can pay that for a time at least. I have a little money, and I must find some work to do soon. Is this Mrs. O'Keefe a nice lady?"

"She ain't a lady at all," answered Dodger, bluntly. "She keeps an apple-stand near the corner of Bowery and Grand Street; but she's a good, respectable woman, and she's good-hearted. She'll be kind to you, and try to make things pleasant; but if you ain't satisfied----"

"It will do for the present. Kindness is what I need, driven as I am from the home of my childhood. But you, Dodger, where do you live?"

"I'm goin' to take a small room in the same house, Miss Florence."

"I shall be glad to have you near me."

"I am proud to hear you say that. I'm a poor boy, and you're a rich lady, but---"

"Not rich, Dodger. I am as poor as yourself."

"You're a reg'lar lady, anyway. You ain't one of my kind, but I'm going to improve and raise myself. I was readin' the other day of a rich man that was once a poor boy, and sold papers like me. But there's one thing in the way--I ain't got no eddication."

"You can read and write, can't you, Dodger?"

"Yes; I can read pretty well, but I can't write much."

"I will teach you in the evenings, when we are both at leisure."

"Will you?" asked the boy, with a glad smile. "You're very kind--I'd like a teacher like you."

"Then it's a bargain, Dodger," and Florence's face for the first time lost its sad look, as she saw an opportunity of helping one who had befriended her. "But you must promise to study faithfully."

"That I will. If I don't, I'll give you leave to lick me."

"I shan't forget that," said Florence, amused. "I will buy a ruler of good hard wood, and then you must look out. But, tell me, where have you lived hitherto?"

"I don't like to tell you, Miss Florence. I've lived ever since I was a kid with a man named Tim Bolton. He keeps a saloon on the Bowery, near Houston Street. It's a tough place, I tell you. I've got a bed in one corner--it's tucked away in a closet in the day."

"I suppose it is a drinking saloon?"

"Yes, that's what it is."

"And kept open very late?"

"Pretty much all night."

"Is this Tim Bolton any relation of yours?"

"He says he's my father; but I don't believe it."

"Have you always lived with him?"

"Ever since I was a small kid."

"Have you always lived in New York?"

"No; I was out in Australia. Tim was out in the country part of the time, and part of the time he kept a saloon in Melbourne. There was thieves and burglars used to come into his place. I knew what they were, though they didn't think I did."

"How terrible for a boy to be subjected to such influences."

"But I've made up my mind I won't live with Tim no longer. I can earn my own livin' sellin' papers, or smashin' baggage, and keep away from Tim. I'd have done it before if I'd had a friend like you to care for me."

"We will stand by each other, Dodger. Heaven knows I need a friend, and if I can be a friend to you, and help you, I will."

"We'll get out here, Miss Florence. I told Mrs. O'Keefe I'd call at her stand, and she'll go over and show you your room."

They left the car at the corner of Grand Street, and Dodger led the way to an apple-stand, presided over by a lady of ample proportions, whose broad, Celtic face seemed to indicate alike shrewd good sense and a kindly spirit.

"Mrs. O'Keefe," said Dodger, "this is the young lady I spoke to you about--Miss Florence Linden."

"It's welcome you are, my dear, and I'm very glad to make your acquaintance. You look like a rare leddy, and I don't know how you'll like the room I've got for you."

"I cannot afford to be particular, Mrs. O'Keefe. I have had a--a reverse of circumstances, and I must be content with an humble home."

"Then I'll go over and show it to you. Here, Kitty, come and mind the stand," she called to a girl about thirteen across the street, "and don't let anybody steal the apples. Look out for Jimmy Mahone, he stole a couple of apples right under my nose this mornin', the young spalpeen!"

As they were crossing the street, a boy of fourteen ran up to Dodger.

"Dodger," said he, "you'd better go right over to Tim Bolton's. He's in an awful stew--says he'll skin you alive if you don't come to the s'loon right away."

Chapter IX

The New Home

"You can tell Tim Bolton," said Dodger, "that I don't intend to come back at all."

"You don't mean it, Dodger?" said Ben Holt, incredulously.

"Yes, I do. I'm going to set up for myself."

"Oh, Dodger," said Florence, "I'm afraid you will get into trouble for my sake!"

"Don't worry about that, Miss Florence. I'm old enough to take care of myself, and I've got tired of livin' with Tim."

"But he may beat you!"

"He'll have to get hold of me first."

They had reached a four-story tenement of shabby brick, which was evidently well filled up by a miscellaneous crowd of tenants; shop girls, mechanics, laborers and widows, living by their daily toil.

Florence had never visited this part of the city, and her heart sank within her as she followed Mrs. O'Keefe through a dirty hallway, up a rickety staircase, to the second floor.

"One more flight of stairs, my dear," said Mrs. O'Keefe, encouragingly. "I've got four rooms upstairs; one of them is for you, and one for Dodger."

Florence did not reply. She began to understand at what cost she had secured her freedom from a distasteful marriage.

In her Madison Avenue home all the rooms were light, clean and luxuriously furnished. Here---- But words were inadequate to describe the contrast.

Mrs. O'Keefe threw open the door of a back room about

twelve feet square, furnished in the plainest manner, uncarpeted, except for a strip that was laid, like a rug, beside the bedstead.

There was a washstand, with a mirror, twelve by fifteen inches, placed above it, a pine bureau, a couple of wooden chairs, and a cane-seated rocking-chair.

"There, my dear, what do you say to that?" asked Mrs. O'Keefe, complacently. "All nice and comfortable as you would wish to see."

"It is--very nice," said Florence, faintly, sacrificing truth to politeness.

"And who do you think used to live here?" asked the apple-woman.

"I'm sure I don't know."

"The bearded woman in the dime museum," answered Mrs. O'Keefe, nodding

her head. "She lived with me three months, and she furnished the room herself. When she went away she was hard up, and I bought the furniture of her cheap. You remember Madam Berger, don't you, Dodger?"

"Oh, yes, I seen her often."

"She got twenty-five dollars a week, and she'd ought to have saved money, but she had a good-for-nothin' husband that drank up all her hard earnin's."

"I hope she didn't drink herself," said Florence, who shuddered at the idea of succeeding a drunken tenant.

"Not a drop. She was a good, sober lady, if she did work in a dime museum. She only left here two weeks ago. It isn't every one I'd be willin' to take in her place, but I see you're a real leddy, let alone that Dodger recommends you. I hope you'll like the room, and I'll do all I can to make things pleasant. You can go into my room any hour, my dear, and do your little cookin' on my stove. I s'pose you'll do your own cookin'?"

"Well, not just at present," faltered Florence. "I am afraid I don't know much about cooking."

"You'll find it a deal cheaper, and it's more quiet and gentile than goin' to the eatin'-houses. I'll help you all I can, and glad to."

"Thank you, Mrs. O'Keefe, you are very kind," said Florence, gratefully. "Perhaps just at first you wouldn't object to taking me as a boarder, and letting me take my meals with you. I don't think I would like to go to the eating-houses alone."

"To be sure, my dear, if you wish it, and I'll be glad of your company. I'll make the terms satisfactory."

"I have no doubt of that," said Florence, feeling very much relieved.

"If I might be so bold, what kind of work are you going to do?"

"I hardly know. It has come upon me so suddenly. I

shall have to do something, for I haven't got much money. What I should like best would be to write----

"Is it for the papers you mean?"

"Oh, no; I mean for some author or lawyer."

"I don't know much about that," said Mrs. O'Keefe. "In fact, I don't mind tellin' you, my dear, that I can't write myself, but I earn a good livin' all the same by my apple-stand. I tell you, my dear," she continued in a confidential tone, "there is a good dale of profit in sellin' apples. It's better than sewin' or writin'. Of course, a young leddy like you wouldn't like to go into the business."

Florence shook her head, with a smile.

"No, Mrs. O'Keefe," she said. "I am afraid I haven't a business turn, and I should hardly like so public an employment."

"Lor', miss, it's nothin' if you get used to it. There's nothin' dull about my business, unless it rains, and you get used to havin' people look at you."

"It isn't all that are worth looking at like you, Mrs. O'Keefe," said Dodger, slyly.

"Oh, go away wid your fun, Dodger," said the apple-woman, good-naturedly. "I ain't much to look at, I know."

"I think there's a good deal of you to look at, Mrs. O'Keefe. You must weigh near three hundred."

"I've a good mind to box your ears, Dodger. I only weigh a hundred and ninety-five. But I can't be bothered wid your jokes. Can you sew, Miss Florence?"

"Yes; but I would rather earn my living some other way, if possible."

"Small blame to you for that. I had a girl in Dodger's room last year who used to sew for a livin'. Early and late she worked, poor thing, and she couldn't make but two dollars a week."

"How could she live?" asked Florence, startled, for she knew very little of the starvation wages paid to toiling women.

"She didn't live. She just faded away, and it's my belief the poor thing didn't get enough to eat. Every day or two I'd make an excuse to take her in something from my own table, a plate of meat, or a bit of toast and a cup of tay, makin' belave she didn't get a chance to cook for herself, but she got thinner and thinner, and her poor cheeks got hollow, and she died in the hospital at last."

The warm-hearted apple-woman wiped away a tear with the corner of her apron, as she thought of the poor girl whose sad fate she described.

"You won't die of consumption, Mrs. O'Keefe," said Dodger. "It'll take a good while for you to fade away."

"Hear him now," said the apple-woman, laughing. "He will have his joke, Miss Florence, but he's a good bye for

all that, and I'm glad he's goin' to lave Tim Bolton, that ould thafe of the worruld."

"Now, Mrs. O'Keefe, you know you'd marry Tim if he'd only ask you."

"Marry him, is it? I'd lay my broom over his head if he had the impudence to ask me. When Maggie O'Keefe marries ag'in, she won't marry a man wid a red nose."

"Break it gently to him, Mrs. O'Keefe. Tim is just the man to break his heart for love of you."

Mrs. O'Keefe aimed a blow at Dodger, but he proved true to his name, and skillfully evaded it.

"I must be goin'," he said. "I've got to work, or I can't pay room rent when the week comes round."

"What are you going to do, Dodger?" asked Florence.

"It isn't time for the evenin' papers yet, so I shall go 'round to the piers and see if I can't get a job at smashin' baggage."

"But I shouldn't think any one would want to do that," said Florence, puzzled.

"It's what we boys call it. It's just carryin' valises and bundles. Sometimes I show strangers the way to Broadway. Last week an old man paid me a dollar to show him the way to the Cooper Institute. He was a gentleman, he was. I'd like to meet him ag'in. Good-by, Miss Florence; I'll be back some time this afternoon."

"And I must be goin', too," said Mrs. O'Keefe. "I can't depend on that Kitty; she's a wild slip of a girl, and just as like as not I'll find a dozen apples stole when I get back. I hope you won't feel lonely, my dear."

"I think I will lie down a while," said Florence. "I have a headache."

She threw herself on the bed, and a feeling of loneliness and desolation came over her.

Her new friends were kind, but they could not make up to her for her uncle's love, so strangely lost, and the home she had left behind.



Chapter X

The Arch Conspirator

In the house on Madison Avenue, Curtis Waring was left in possession of the field. Through his machinations Florence had been driven from Home and disinherited.

He was left sole heir to his uncle's large property with the prospect of soon succeeding, for though only fifty-four, John Linden looked at least ten years older, and was as feeble as many men past seventy.

Yet, as Curtis seated himself at the breakfast table an hour after Florence had left the house, he looked far from happy or triumphant.

One thing he had not succeeded in, the conquest of his cousin's heart. Though he loved himself best, he was really in love with Florence, so far as he was capable of being in love with any one.

She was only half his age--scarcely that--but he persuaded himself that the match was in every way suitable.

He liked to fancy her at the head of his table, after the death of his uncle, which he anticipated in a few months at latest.

The more she appeared to dislike him, the more he determined to marry her, even against her will.

She was the only one likely to inherit John Linden's wealth, and by marrying her he would make sure of it.

Yet she had been willing to leave the home of her youth, to renounce luxury for a life of poverty, rather than to marry him.

When he thought of this his face became set and its expression stern and determined.

"Florence shall yet be mine," he declared, resolutely. "I will yet be master of her fate, and bend her to my will. Foolish girl, how dare she match her puny strength against the resolute will of Curtis Waring?"

"Was there any one else whom she loved?" he asked himself, anxiously. No, he could think of none. On account of his uncle's chronic invalidism, they had neither gone into society, nor entertained visitors, and in the midst of a great city Florence and her uncle had practically led the lives of recluses.

There had been no opportunity to meet young men who might have proved claimants for her hand.

"When did Miss Florence leave the house, Jane?" he inquired, as he seated himself at the table.

"Most an hour since," the girl answered, coldly, for she disliked Curtis as much as she loved and admired Florence.

"It is sad, very sad that she should be so headstrong," said Curtis, with hypocritical sorrow.

"It is sad for her to go away from her own uncle's house," returned Jane.

"And very--very foolish."

"I don't know about that, sir. She had her reasons," said Jane, significantly.

Curtis coughed.

He had no doubt that Florence had talked over the matter with her hand-maiden.

"Did she say where she was going, Jane?" he asked.

"I don't think the poor child knew herself, sir."

"Did she go alone?"

"No, sir; the boy that was here last night called for her."

"That ragamuffin!" said Curtis, scornfully. "She certainly shows extraordinary taste for a young lady of family."

"The boy seems a very kind and respectable boy," said Jane, who had been quite won by Dodger's kindness to her young mistress.

"He may be respectable, though I am not so sure of that; but his position in life is very humble. He is probably a bootblack; a singular person to select for the friend of a girl like Florence."

"There's them that stands higher than isn't half so good," retorted Jane, with more zeal than good grammar.

"Did Miss Florence take a cab?"

"No; she just walked."

"But she took some clothing with her?"

"She took a handbag--that is all. She will send for her trunk."

"If you find out where she is living, just let me know, Jane."

"I will if she is willing to have me," answered Jane, independently.

"Look here, Jane," said Curtis, angrily, "don't forget that you are not her servant, but my uncle's. It is to him you look for wages, not to Miss Florence."

"I don't need to be told that, sir. I know that well enough."

"Then you know that it is to him that your faithful services are due, not to Florence?"

"I'm faithful to both, Mr. Waring."

"You are aware that my uncle is justly displeased with my cousin?"

"I know he's displeased, but I am sure he has no good reason to be."

Curtis Waring bit his lips. The girl, servant as she was, seemed to be openly defying him. His imperious temper could ill brook this.

"Take care!" he said, with a frown. "You seem to be lacking in respect to me. You don't appear to understand my position in this house."

"Oh, yes, I do. I know you have schemed to get my poor young mistress out of the house, and have succeeded."

"I have a great mind to discharge you, girl," said Curtis, with lowering brow.

"I am not your servant, sir. You have nothing to do with me."

"You will see whether I have or not. I will let you remain for a time, as it is your attachment to Miss Florence that has made you forget yourself. You will find that it is for your interest to treat me respectfully."

A feeble step was heard at the door, and John Linden entered the breakfast-room. His face was sad, and he heaved a sigh as he glanced mechanically at the head of the table, where Florence usually sat.

Curtis Waring sprang to his feet, and placing himself at his uncle's side, led him to his seat.

"How do you feel this morning, uncle?" he asked, with feigned solicitude.

"Ill, Curtis. I didn't sleep well last night."

"I don't wonder, sir. You had much to try you."

"Is--is Florence here?"

"No, sir," answered Jane, promptly. "She left the house an hour ago."

A look of pain appeared on John Linden's pale face.

"Did--did she leave a message for me?" he asked, slowly.

"She asked me to bid you good-by for her," answered Jane, quickly.

"Uncle, don't let yourself be disturbed now with painful thoughts. Eat your breakfast first, and then we will speak of Florence."

John Linden ate a very light breakfast. He seemed to have lost his appetite and merely toyed with his food.

When he arose from the table, Curtis supported him to the library.

"It is very painful to me--this conduct of Florence's, Curtis," he said, as he sank into his armchair.

"I understand it fully, uncle," said Curtis. "When I think of it, it makes me very angry with the misguided girl."

"Perhaps I have been too harsh--too stern!"

"You, uncle, too harsh! Why, you are the soul of gentleness. Florence has shown herself very ungrateful."

"Yet, Curtis, I love that girl. Her mother seemed to live again in her. Have I not acted cruelly in requiring her to obey me or leave the house?"

"You have acted only for good. You are seeking her happiness."

"You really think this, Curtis?"

"I am sure of it."

"But how will it all end?" asked Linden, bending an anxious look upon his wily nephew.

"By Florence yielding."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes. Listen, uncle; Florence is only capricious, like most girls of her age. She foolishly desires to have her own way. It is nothing more serious, I can assure you."

"But she has left the house. That seems to show that she is in earnest."

"She thinks, uncle, that by doing so she can bend you to her wishes. She hasn't the slightest idea of any permanent separation. She is merely experimenting upon your weakness. She expects you will recall her in a week, at the latest. That is all of it."

Like most weak men, it made Mr. Linden angry to have his strength doubted.

"You think that?" he said.

"I have no doubt of it."

"She shall find that I am resolute," he said, irritably. "I will not recall her."

"Bravo, uncle! Only stick to that, and she will yield unconditionally within a fortnight. A little patience, and you will carry your point. Then all will be smooth sailing."

"I hope so, Curtis. Your words have cheered me. I will be patient. But I hope I shan't have to wait long. Where is the morning paper?"

"I shall have to humor and deceive him," thought Curtis. "I shall have a difficult part to play, but I am sure to succeed at last."

Chapter XI

Florence Secures Employment

For a few days after being installed in her new home Florence was like one dazed.

She could not settle her mind to any plan of self-support.

She was too unhappy in her enforced exile from her home, and it saddened her to think that the uncle who had always been so kind was permanently estranged from her.

Though Mrs. O'Keefe was kind, and Dodger was her faithful friend, she could not accustom herself to her poor surroundings.

She had not supposed luxury so essential to her happiness.

It was worse for her because she had nothing to do but give way to her morbid fancies.

This Mrs. O'Keefe was clear-sighted enough to see.

"I am sorry to see you so downcast like, my dear young lady," she said.

"How can I help it, Mrs. O'Keefe?" returned Florence.

"Try not to think of your wicked cousin, my dear."

"It isn't of him that I think--it is of my uncle. How could he be so cruel, and turn against me after years of kindness?"

"It's that wicked Curtis that is settin' him against you, take my word for it, Miss Florence. Shure, he must be wake-minded to let such a spalpeen set him against a swate young leddy like you."

"He is weak in body, not in mind, Mrs. O'Keefe. You are right in thinking that it is Curtis that is the cause of my misfortune."

"Your uncle will come to his right mind some day, never fear! And now, my dear, shall I give you a bit of advice?"

"Go on, my kind friend. I will promise to consider whatever you say."

"Then you'd better get some kind of work to take up your mind--a bit of sewin', or writin', or anything that comes to hand. I suppose you wouldn't want to mind my apple-stand a couple of hours every day?"

"No," answered Florence. "I don't feel equal to that."

"It would do you no end of good to be out in the open air. It would bring back the roses to your pale cheeks. If you coop yourself up in this dark room, you'll fade away and get thin."

"You are right. I will make an effort and go out. Besides, I must see about work."

Here Dodger entered the room in his usual breezy way. In his hand he brandished a morning paper.

"How are you feelin', Florence?" he asked; he had given up saying Miss Florence at her request. "Here's an advertisement that'll maybe suit you."

"Show it to me, Dodger," said Florence, beginning to show some interest.

The boy directed her attention to the following advertisement:

"Wanted.--A governess for a girl of twelve. Must be a good performer on the piano, and able to instruct in French and the usual English branches. Terms must be moderate.

Apply to Mrs. Leighton, at 127 W. -- Street."

"There, Florence, what do you say to that? That's better than sewin'."

"I don't know, Dodger, whether I am competent."

"You play on the pianner, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well enough to teach?"

"I think so; but I may not have the gift of teaching."

"Yes, you have. Haven't you been teachin' me every evenin'? You make everything just as clear as mud--no, I don't mean that. You just explain so that I can't help understandin'."

"Then," said Florence, "I suppose I am at liberty to refer to you."

"Yes; you can tell the lady to call at the office of Dodger, Esq., any mornin' after sunrise, and he'll give her full particulars."

Florence did not immediately decide to apply for the situation, but the more she thought of it the more she felt inclined to do so. The little experience she had had with Dodger satisfied her that she should enjoy teaching better than sewing or writing.

Accordingly, an hour later, she put on her street dress and went uptown to the address given in the advertisement.

No. 127 was a handsome brown-stone house, not unlike the one in which

Florence had been accustomed to live. It was a refreshing contrast to the poor tenement in which she lived at present.

"Is Mrs. Leighton at home?" inquired Florence. "Yes, miss," answered the servant, respectfully. "Whom shall I say?"

"I have come to apply for the situation of governess," answered Florence, feeling rather awkward as she made the statement.

"Ah," said the servant, with a perceptible decline in respect. "Won't you step in?"

"Thank you."

"Well, she do dress fine for a governess," said Nancy to herself. "It's likely she'll put on airs."

The fact was that Florence was dressed according to her past social position--in a costly street attire--but it had never occurred to her that she was too well dressed for a governess.

She took her seat in the drawing-room, and five minutes later there was a rustling heard, and Mrs. Leighton walked into the room.

"Are you the applicant for the position of governess?" she asked, surveying the elegantly attired young lady seated on the sofa.

"Yes, Mrs. Leighton," answered Florence, easily, for she felt more at home in a house like this than in the tenement.

"Have you taught before?"

"Very little," answered Florence, smiling to herself, as

she wondered what Mrs. Leighton would say if she could see Dodger, the only pupil she ever had. "However, I like teaching, and I like children."

"Pardon me, but you don't look like a governess, Miss----"

"Linden," suggested Florence, filling out the sentence. "Do governesses have a peculiar look?"

"I mean as to dress. You are more expensively dressed than the average governess can afford."

"It is only lately that my circumstances required me to support myself. I should not be able to buy such a dress out of my present earnings."

"I am glad to hear you say that, for I do not propose to give a large salary."

"I do not expect one," said Florence, quietly. "You consider yourself competent to instruct in music, French and the English branches?"

"Oh, yes."

"Do you speak French?"

"Yes, madam."

"Would you favor me with a specimen of your piano playing?"

There was a piano in the back parlor. Florence removed her gloves, and taking a seat before it, dashed into a spirited selection from Strauss.

Mrs. Leighton listened with surprised approval.

"Certainly you are a fine performer," she said. "What--if I should engage you--would you expect in the way of compensation?"

"How much time would you expect me to give?"

"Three hours daily--from nine to twelve."

"I hardly know what to say. What did you expect to pay?"

"About fifty cents an hour."

Florence knew very well, from the sums that had been paid for her own education, that this was miserably small pay; but it was much more than she could earn by sewing.

"I will teach a month on those terms," she said, after a pause.

Mrs. Leighton looked well pleased. She knew that she was making a great bargain.

"Oh, by the way," she said, "can you give references?"

"I can refer you to Madam Morrison," naming the head of a celebrated female seminary. "She educated me."

"That will be quite satisfactory," said Mrs. Leighton, graciously. "Can you begin to-morrow?"

"Yes, madam."

"You will then see your pupil. At present she is out."

Florence bowed and withdrew.

She had been afraid Mrs. Leighton would inquire where she lived, and she would hardly dare to name the humble street which she called home.

She walked toward Fifth Avenue, when, just as she was turning the corner, she met Mr. Percy de Brabazon, swinging a slender cane, and dressed in the extreme of the fashion.

"Miss Linden!" he exclaimed, eagerly. "This is--aw--indeed a pleasure. Where are you walking this fine morning? May I--aw--have the pleasure of accompanying you?"

Florence stopped short in deep embarrassment.

Chapter XII

A Friend, Though A Dude

Percy de Brabazon looked sincerely glad to meet Florence, and she herself felt some pleasure in meeting one who reminded her of her former life.

But it was quite impossible that she should allow him to accompany her to her poor home on the East Side.

"Thank you, Mr. de Brabazon, but my engagements this morning will hardly permit me to accept your escort," she said.

"I suppose that means that you are going shopping; but I don't mind it, I assure you, and I will carry your bundles," he added, magnanimously.

"That would never do. What! the fashionable Mr. de Brabazon carrying bundles? You would lose your social status."

"I don't mind, Miss Florence, as long as you give me--aw--an approving smile."

"I will give it now, as I bid you good-morning."

"May I--aw--have the pleasure of calling upon you to-morrow evening, Miss Linden?"

"It is evident that you have not heard that I am no longer residing with my uncle."

Mr. de Brabazon looked surprised.

"No, I had not heard. May I ask--aw--where you are residing?"

"With friends," answered Florence, briefly. "As you are a friend and will be likely to hear it, I may as well mention that my uncle is displeased with me, and has practically disowned me."

"Then, Miss Florence," said Mr. de Brabazon, eagerly, "won't you accept--aw--my heart and hand? My mother will be charmed to receive you, and I--aw--will strive to make you happy."

"I appreciate your devotion, I do, indeed, Mr. de Brabazon," said Florence, earnestly; "but I must decline your offer. I will not marry without love."

"I don't mind that," said Percy, "if you'll agree to take a

feller; you'll learn in time to like him a little. I am wick--I know you don't care for that--but I can give you as good a home as your uncle. If you would give me hope--aw----"

"I am afraid I cannot, Mr. de Brabazon, but if you will allow me to look upon you as a friend, I will call upon you if I have need of a friend's services."

"Will you, weally?"

"Yes, there is my hand on it. I ought to tell you that I must now earn my own living, and am to give lessons to a young pupil in West ---- Street, three hours daily."

"You don't mean to say you are actually poor?" said Mr. de Brabazon, horrified.

"Yes, indeed, I am."

"Then, won't you let me lend you some money? I've got more than I need, I have, 'pon my honor."

"Thank you, I promise to call upon you if I need it."

Mr. de Brabazon looked pleased.

"Would you mind telling me where you are going to teach, Miss Florence?"

Florence hesitated, but there was something so sincere and friendly in the young man's manner--dude though he was--that she consented to grant his request.

"I am to teach the daughter of Mr. Robert Leighton."

"Why, Miss Leighton is my cousin," said Percy, in joyous excitement.

"Indeed! Had I known that I would hardly have told you."

"Don't be afraid! I will be vewy discreet," said Mr. de Brabazon.

"Thank you, and good-morning."

Florence went on her way, cheered and encouraged in spite of herself, by her success in obtaining employment, and by the friendly offers of Mr. de Brabazon.

"It is wrong to get discouraged," she said to herself. "After all, there are warm hearts in the world."

When she entered her humble home, she found Dodger already there. There was an eagerness in his manner, and a light in his eye, that seemed to indicate good news.

"Well, Dodger, what is it?"

"I've been waitin' half an hour to see you, Florence," he said. "I've got some work for you."

"What is it--sewing on a button, or mending a coat?"

"No, I mean workin' for money. You can play on the pianner, can't you?"

"Yes."

"They want a young lady to play the pianner at a dime museum, for nine dollars a week. It's a bully chance. I just told the manager--he's a friend of mine--that I had a young lady friend that was a stunnin' player, and he wants you to come around and see him."

It was a preposterous idea--so Florence thought--that she should consent to play at such a place; but she couldn't

expect Dodger to look at the matter in the same light, so she answered, very gently and pleasantly:

"You are very kind, Dodger, to look out for me, but I shall not need to accept your friend's offer. I have secured a chance to teach uptown."

"You have? What'll you get?"

"I am to be employed three hours daily, at fifty cents an hour."

"Geewhillikens! that's good! You'd have to work as much as twelve hours at the museum for the same pay."

"You see, therefore, that I am provided for--that is, if I suit."

Dodger was a little disappointed. Still, he could not help admitting that it would be better for Florence to teach three hours, than to work ten or twelve. As to her having any objection to appearing at a dime museum, that never occurred to him.

Florence had sent for her trunk, and it was now in her room.

Dodger accompanied an expressman to the house, and luckily saw Jane, who arranged everything for him.

"How's the old gentleman?" asked Dodger. "Florence wanted me to ask."

"He's feeble," said Jane, shaking her head.

"Does he miss Florence?"

"That he do."

"Why don't he send for her, then, to come back?" asked Dodger, bluntly.

"Because Curtis Waring makes him believe she'll come around and ask forgiveness, if he only holds out. I tell you, Dodger, that Curtis is a viper."

"So he is," answered Dodger, who was not quite clear in his mind as to what a viper was. "I'd like to step on his necktie."

"If it wasn't for him, my dear young mistress would be back in the house within twenty-four hours."

"I don't see how the old gentleman can let him turn Florence out of the house."

"He's a snake in the grass, Dodger. It may be wicked, but I just wish something would happen to him. And how is Miss Florence lookin', poor dear?"

"She's lookin' like a daisy."

"Does she worry much?"

"She did at first, but now she's workin' every day, and she looks more cheerful-like."

"Miss Florence workin'! She that was always brought up like a lady!"

"She's teachin' a little girl three hours a day."

"Well, that isn't so bad!" said Jane, relieved. "Teachin' is genteel. I wish I could see her some day. Will you tell her, Dodger, that next Sunday is my day out, and I'll be in Central Park up by the menagerie at three o'clock, if she'll only take the trouble to be up there?"

"I'll tell her, Jane, and I'm sure she'll be there."

A day or two afterward Curtis Waring asked: "Have you heard from my Cousin Florence since she went away?"

"Yes, sir."

"Indeed! Where is she staying?"

"She didn't send me word."

"How, then, did you hear from her?"

"Dodger came with an expressman for her trunk."

Curtis Waring frowned.

"And you let him have it?" he demanded, sternly.

"Of course I did. Why shouldn't I?"

"You should have asked me."

"And what business have you with Miss Florence's trunk, I'd like to know?" said Jane, independently.

"Never mind; you ought to have asked my permission."

"I didn't think you'd want to wear any of Miss Florence's things, Mr. Waring."

"You are silly and impertinent," said Curtis, biting his lips. "Did that boy tell you anything about her?"

"Only that she wasn't worryin' any for you, Mr. Curtis."

Curtis glanced angrily at his cousin's devoted friend, and then, turning on his heel, left the room.

"I'll bring her to terms yet," he muttered. "No girl of seventeen shall defy me!"

Chapter XIII

Tim Bolton's Saloon

Not far from Houston Street, on the west side of the Bowery, is an underground saloon, with whose proprietor we are already acquainted.

It was kept by Tim Bolton, whose peculiar tastes and shady characteristics well fitted him for such a business.

It was early evening, and the gas jets lighted up a characteristic scene.

On the sanded floor were set several tables, around which were seated a motley company, all of them with glasses of beer or whiskey before them.

Tim, with a white apron on, was moving about behind the bar, ministering to the wants of his patrons. There was a scowl upon his face, for he was not fond of work, and he missed Dodger's assistance.

The boy understood the business of mixing drinks as well as he, and often officiated for hours at a time, thus giving his guardian and reputed father a chance to leave the place and meet outside engagements.

A tall, erect gentleman entered the saloon, and walked up to the bar.

"Good-evening, colonel," said Tim.

"Good-evening, sir," said the newcomer, with a stately inclination of the head.

He was really a colonel, having served in the Civil War at the head of a Georgia regiment.

He had all the stately courtesy of a Southern gentleman, though not above the weakness of a frequent indulgence in the strongest fluids dispensed by Tim Bolton.

"What'll you have, colonel?"

"Whiskey straight, sir. It's the only drink fit for a gentleman. Will you join me, Mr. Bolton?"

"Of course, I will," said Tim, as, pouring out a glass for himself, he handed the bottle to the colonel.

"Your health, sir," said the colonel, bowing.

"Same to you, colonel," responded Tim, with a nod.

"Where's the boy?"

Col. Martin had always taken considerable notice of Dodger, being naturally fond of boys, and having once had a son of his own, who was killed in a railroad accident when about Dodger's age.

"Danged if I know!" answered Tim, crossly.

"He hasn't left you, has he?"

"Yes; he's cleared out, the ungrateful young imp! I'd like to lay my hands on the young rascal."

"Was he your son?"

"He was my--stepson," answered Tim, hesitating.

"I see, you married his mother."

"Yes," said Tim, considering the explanation satisfactory, and resolved to adopt it. "I've always treated him as if he was my own flesh and blood, and I've raised him from a young kid. Now he's gone and left me."

"Can you think of any reason for his leaving you?"

"Not one. I always treated him well. He's been a great expense to me, and now he's got old enough to help me he must clear out. He's the most ungrateful cub I ever seen."

"I am sorry he has gone--I used to like to have him serve me."

"And now what's the consequence? Here I am tied down to the bar day and night."

"Can't you get someone in his place?"

"Yes, but I'd likely be robbed; I had a bartender once who robbed me of two or three dollars a day."

"But you trusted the boy?"

"Yes, Dodger wouldn't steal--I can say that much for him."

"There's one thing I noticed about the boy," said the colonel, reflectively. "He wouldn't drink. More than once I have asked him to drink with me, but he would always say, 'Thank you, colonel, but I don't like whiskey.' I never asked him to take anything else, for whiskey's the only drink fit for a gentleman. Do you expect to get the boy back?"

"If I could only get out for a day I'd hunt him up; but I'm tied down here."

"I seed him yesterday, Tim," said a red-nosed man who had just entered

the saloon, in company with a friend of the same general appearance. Both wore silk hats, dented and soiled with stains of dirt, coats long since super-annuated, and wore the general look of barroom loafers.

They seldom had any money, but lay in wait for any liberal stranger, in the hope of securing a free drink.

"Where did you see him, Hooker?" asked Tim Bolton, with sudden interest.

"Selling papers down by the Astor House."

"Think of that, colonel!" said Tim, disgusted.

"Becomin' a common newsboy, when he might be in a genteel employment! Did you speak to him, Hooker?"

"Yes, I asked him if he had left you."

"What did he say?"

"That he had left you for good--that he was going to grow up respectable!"

"Think of that!" said Tim, with renewed disgust. "Did he say where he lived?"

"No."

"Did he ask after me?"

"No, except he said that you were no relation of his. He said he expected you stole him when he was a kid, and he hoped some time to find his relations."

Tim Bolton's face changed color, and he was evidently disturbed. Could the boy have heard anything? he wondered, for his suspicions were very near the truth.

"It's all nonsense!" he said, roughly. "Next time you see him, Hooker, foller him home, and find out where he lives."

"All right, Tim. It ought to be worth something," he insinuated, with a husky cough.

"That's so. What'll you take?"

"Whiskey," answered Hooker, with a look of pleased anticipation.

"You're a gentleman, Tim," he said, as he gulped down the contents of a glass without winking.

Briggs, his dilapidated companion, had been looking on in thirsty envy.

"I'll help Hooker to look for Dodger," he said.

"Very well, Briggs."

"Couldn't you stand a glass for me, too, Tim?" asked Briggs, eagerly.

"No," answered Bolton, irritably. "I've been at enough expense for that young rascal already."

But the colonel noticed the pathetic look of disappointment on the face of Briggs, and he was stirred to compassion.

"Drink with me, sir," he said, turning to the overjoyed Briggs.

"Thank you, colonel. You're a gentleman!"

"Two glasses, Tim."

So the colonel drained a second glass, and Briggs, pouring out with trembling fingers as much as he dared, followed suit.

When the last drop was drunk, he breathed a deep sigh of measureless enjoyment.

"If either of you bring that boy in here," said Tim, "I'll stand a couple of glasses for both."

"We're your men, Tim," said Hooker. "Ain't we, Briggs?"

"That's so, Hooker. Shake!"

And the poor victims of drink shook hands energetically. Long since they had sunk their manhood in the intoxicating cup, and henceforth lived only to gratify their unnatural craving for what would sooner or later bring them to a drunkard's grave.

As they left the saloon, the colonel turned to Tim, and said:

"I like whiskey, sir; but I'll be hanged if I can respect such men as those."

"They're bums, colonel, that's what they are!"

"How do they live?"

"Don't know. They're in here about every day."

"If it's drink that's brought them where they are, I'm half inclined to give it up; but, after all, it isn't necessary to make a beast of yourself. I always drink like a gentleman, sir."

"So you do, colonel."

At that moment a poor woman, in a faded calico dress with a thin shawl over her shoulders, descended the steps that led into the saloon, and walked up to the bar.

"Has my husband been here to-night?" she asked.

Tim Bolton frowned.

"Who's your husband?" he asked, roughly.

"Wilson."

"No, Bill Wilson hasn't been here to-night. Even if he

had you have no business to come after him. I don't want any sniveling women here."

"I couldn't help it, Mr. Bolton," said the woman, putting her apron to her eyes. "If Bill comes in, won't you tell him to come home? The baby's dead, and we haven't a cent in the house!"

Even Tim was moved by this.

"I'll tell him," he said. "Take a drink yourself; you don't look strong. It shan't cost you a cent."

"No," said the woman, "not a drop! It has ruined my happiness, and broken up our home! Not a drop!"

"Here, my good lady," said the colonel, with chivalrous deference, "you have no money. Take this," and he handed the astonished woman a five-dollar bill.

"Heaven bless you, sir!" she exclaimed, fervently.

"Allow me to see you to the street," and the gallant Southern gentleman escorted her up to the sidewalk.

"I'd like to horsewhip that woman's husband. Don't you sell him another drop!" he said, when he returned.

Chapter XIV

The Missing Will

An hour after the depart of the colonel there was an unexpected arrival.

A well-dressed gentleman descended the stairs gingerly, looked about him with fastidious disdain, and walked up to the bar.

Tim Bolton was filling an order, and did not immediately observe him.

When at length he turned around he exclaimed, in some surprise:

"Mr. Waring!"

"Yes, Bolton, I have found my way here."

"I have been expecting you."

"I came to you for some information."

"Well, ask your questions: I don't know whether I can answer them."

"First, where is my Cousin Florence?"

"How should I know? She wasn't likely to place herself under my protection."

"She's with that boy of yours--Dodger, I believe you call him. Where is he?"

"Run away," answered Bolton, briefly.

"Do you mean that you don't know where he is?"

"Yes, I do mean that. I haven't set my eyes on him since that night."

"What do you mean by such negligence? Do you remember who he is?"

"Certainly I do."

"Then why do you let him get of your reach?"

"How could I help it? Here I am tied down to this bar day and night! I'm nearly dead for want of sleep."

"It would be better to close up your place for a week and look after him."

"Couldn't do it. I should lose all my trade. People would say I was closed up."

"And have you done nothing toward his recovery?"

"Yes, I have sent out two men in search of him."

"Have you any idea where he is, or what he is doing?"

"Yes, he has been seen in front of the Astor House, selling papers. I have authorized my agent, if he sees him again, to follow him home, and find out where he lives."

"That is good! Astor House? I may see him myself."

"But why do you want to see him? Do you want to restore him to his rights?"

"Hush!" said Curtis, glancing around him apprehensively. "What we say may be overheard and excite suspicion. One thing may be secured by finding him--the knowledge of Florence's whereabouts."

"What makes you think she and the boy are together?"

"He came for her trunk. I was away from home, or I would not have let it go----"

"It is strange that they two are together, considering their relationship."

"That is what I am afraid they will find out. She may tell him of the mysterious disappearance of her cousin, and he----"

"That reminds me," interrupted Bolton. "He told Hooker--Hooker was the man that saw him in front of the Astor House--that he didn't believe I was his father. He said he thought I must have stolen him when he was a young kid."

"Did he say that?" asked Curtis, in evident alarm.

"Yes, so Hooker says."

"If he has that idea in his head, he may put two and two together, and guess that he is the long-lost cousin of Florence. Tim, the boy must be got rid of."

"If you mean what I think you do, Mr. Waring, I'm not with you. I won't consent to harm the boy."

"You said that before. I don't mean anything that will shock your tender heart, Bolton," said Curtis, with a sneer. "I mean carried to a distance--Europe or Australia, for instance. All I want is to keep him out of New York till my uncle is dead. After that I don't care what becomes of him."

"That's better. I've no objection to that. How is the old gentleman?"

"He grieved so much at first over the girl's loss, that I feared he would insist on her being recalled at once. I

soothed him by telling him that he had only to remain firm, and she would come around, and yield to his wishes."

"Do you think she will?" asked Tim, doubtfully.

"I intend she shall!" said Curtis, significantly. "Bolton, I love the girl all the more for her obstinate refusal to wed me. I have made up my mind to marry her with her consent, or without it."

"I thought it was only the estate you were after?"

"I want the estate and her with it. Mark my words, Bolton, I will have both!"

"You will have the estate, no doubt; Mr. Linden has made his will in your favor, has he not?" and Bolton looked intently in the face of his visitor.

"Hark you, Bolton, there is a mystery I cannot fathom. My uncle made two wills. In the earlier, he left the estate to Florence and myself, if we married; otherwise, to me alone."

"That is satisfactory."

"Yes, but there was another, in which the estate goes to the son, if living. That will has disappeared."

"Is it possible?" asked Bolton, in astonishment. "When was it missed?"

"On the night of the burglary."

"Then you think----"

"That the boy, Dodger, has it. Good Heavens! if he only knew that by this will the estate goes to him!" and Waring wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"You are sure he did not give you the will?" he demanded, eying Bolton sharply.

"I have not seen him since the night of the robbery."

"If he has read the will, it may lead to dangerous suspicions."

"He would give it to your cousin, Florence, would he not?"

"Perhaps so. Bolton, you must get the boy back, and take the will from him, if you can."

"I will do my best; but you must remember that Dodger is no longer a small kid. He is a boy of eighteen, strong and well grown. He wouldn't be easy to manage. Besides, as long as he doesn't know that he has any interest in the will, his holding it won't do any harm. Is the old gentleman likely to live long?"

"I don't know. I sometimes hope---- Pshaw! why should I play the hypocrite when speaking to you? Surely it is no sin to wish him better off, since he can't enjoy life!"

"He might if Florence and his son were restored to him."

"What do you mean, Bolton?" asked Curtis, suspiciously.

"What could I mean? It merely occurred to me," said Bolton, innocently. "You say he is quiet, thinkin' the girl will come around?"

"Yes."

"Suppose time passes, and she doesn't? Won't he try to find her? As she is in the city, that won't be hard."

"I shall represent that she has left the city."

"For any particular point?"

"No, that is not necessary."

"And then?"

"If he worries himself into the grave, so much the better for me."

"There is no halfway about you, Mr. Curtis Waring."

"Why should there be? Listen, Bolton; I have set my all on this cast. I am now thirty-six, and still I am dependent upon my uncle's bounty. I am in debt, and some of my creditors are disposed to trouble me. My uncle is worth--I don't know how much, but I think half a million. What does he get out of it? Food and clothes, but not happiness. If it were mine, all the avenues of enjoyment would be open to me. That estate I must have."

"Suppose you get it, what is there for me?" asked Bolton.

"I will see that you are recompensed if you help me to it."

"Will you put that in writing?"

"Do you take me for a fool? To put it in writing would be to place me in your power! You can trust me."

"Well, perhaps so," said Tim Bolton, slowly.

"At any rate you will have to. Well, good-night. I will see you again. In the meantime try to find the boy."

Tim Bolton followed him with his eyes, as he left the saloon.

"What would he say," said Bolton to himself, "if he knew that the will he so much wishes to find is in my hands, and that I hold him in my power already?"

Chapter XV

The New Governess

"Wish me luck, Dodger!"

"So I do, Florence. Are you goin' to begin teachin' this mornin'?"

"Yes; and I hope to produce a favorable impression. It is very important to me to please Mrs. Leighton and my future pupil."

"I'm sure you'll suit. How nice you look!"

Florence smiled, and looked pleased. She had taken pains with her dress and personal appearance, and, being luckily well provided with handsome dresses, had no difficulty in making herself presentable. As she stepped out of the shabby doorway upon the sidewalk no one supposed her to be a tenant, but she was generally thought

to be a visitor, perhaps the agent of some charitable association.

"Perhaps all will not judge me as favorably as you do, Dodger," said Florence, with a laugh.

"If you have the headache any day, Florence, I'll take your place."

"You would look rather young for a tutor, Dodger, and I am afraid you would not be dignified. Good-morning! I shall be back to dinner."

"I am glad to find you punctual, Miss Linden," said Mrs. Leighton, as Florence was ushered into her presence. "This is your pupil, my daughter, Carrie."

Florence smiled and extended her hand.

"I hope we will like each other," she said.

The little girl eyed her with approval. This beautiful young lady was a pleasant surprise to her, for, never having had a governess, she expected to meet a stiff, elderly lady, of stern aspect. She readily gave her hand to Florence, and looked relieved.

"Carrie," said Mrs. Leighton, "you may show Miss Linden the way to the schoolroom."

"All right, mamma," and the little girl led the way upstairs to a backroom on the third floor.

"So this is to be our schoolroom, is it, Carrie?" said Florence. "It is a very pleasant room."

"Yes; but I should have preferred the front chamber. Mamma thought that I might be looking into the street too much. Here there is only a back yard, and nothing to look at."

"Your mamma seems very judicious," said Florence, smiling. "Are you fond of study?"

"Well, I ain't exactly fond, but I will do my best."

"That is all that can be expected."

"Do you know, Miss Linden, you don't look at all like I expected."

"Am I to be glad or sorry for that?"

"I thought you would be an old maid, stiff and starched, like May Robinson's governess."

"I am not married, Carrie, so perhaps you may regard me as an old maid."

"You'll never be an old maid," said Carrie, confidently. "You are too young and pretty."

"Thank you, Carrie," said Florence, with a little blush. "You say that, I hope, because you are going to like me."

"I like you already," said the little girl, impulsively. "I've got a cousin that will like you, too."

"A young girl?"

"No; of course not. He is a young man. His name is Percy de Brabazon. It is a funny name, isn't it? You see, his father was a Frenchman."

Florence was glad that she already knew from Percy's own mouth of the relationship, as it saved her from showing a degree of surprise that might have betrayed her acquaintance with the young man.

"What makes you think your cousin would like me, Carrie?"

"Because he always likes pretty girls. He is a masher."

"That's slang, Carrie. I am sure your mamma wouldn't approve your using such a word."

"Don't tell her. It just slipped out. But about Percy--he wants very much to be married."

Florence was not surprised to hear this, for she had the best reason for knowing it to be true.

"Is he a handsome young man?" she asked, demure-ly.

"He's funny looking. He's awful good-natured, but he isn't the sort of young man I would like," concluded Carrie, with amusing positiveness.

"I hope you don't let your mind run on such things. You are quite too young."

"Oh, I don't think much about it. But Percy is a dude. He spends a sight for clothes. He always looks as if he had just come out of a bandbox."

"Is he in any business?"

"No; he has an independent fortune, so mamma says. He was in Europe last year."

"I think, Carrie, we must give up talking and attend to business. I should have checked you before, but I thought a little conversation would help us to get acquainted. Now show me your books, and I will assign your lessons."

"Don't give me too long lessons, please, Miss Linden."

"I will take care not to task you beyond your strength. I don't want my pupil to grow sick on my hands."

"I hope you won't be too strict. When May Robinson makes two mistakes her governess makes her learn her lessons over again."

"I will promise not to be too strict. Now let me see your books."

The rest of the forenoon was devoted to study.

Florence was not only an excellent scholar, but she had the art of imparting knowledge, and, what is very important, she was able in a few luminous words to explain difficulties and make clear what seemed to her pupil obscure.

So the time slipped quickly and pleasantly away, and it was noon before either she or her pupil realized it.

"It can't be twelve," said Carrie, surprised.

"Yes, it is. We must defer further study till to-morrow."

"Why, it is a great deal pleasanter than going to school, Miss Linden. I dreaded studying at home, but now I like it."

"I hope you will continue to, Carrie. I can say that the time has passed away pleasantly for me."

As Florence prepared to resume her street dress, Carrie said:

"Oh, I forgot! Mamma asked me to invite you to stay to lunch with me. I take lunch as soon as school is out, at twelve o'clock, so I won't detain you long."

"Thank you, Carrie; I will stay with pleasure."

"I am glad of that, for I don't like to sit down to the table alone. Mamma is never here at this time. She goes out shopping or making calls, so poor I have to sit down to the table alone. It will be ever so much pleasure to have you with me."

Florence was by no means sorry to accept the invitation.

The meals she got at home were by no means luxurious, and the manner of serving them was by no means what she enjoyed.

Mrs. O'Keefe, though a good friend and a kindhearted woman, was not a model housekeeper, and Florence had been made fastidious by her early training. Lunch was, of course, a plain meal, but what was furnished was of the best quality, and the table service was such as might be expected in a luxurious home.

Just as Florence was rising from the table, Mrs. Leighton entered the room in street dress.

"I am glad you remained to lunch, Miss Linden," she said. "You will be company for my little girl, who is very sociable. Carrie, I hope you were a good girl, and gave Miss Linden no trouble."

"Ask Miss Linden, mamma," said Carrie, confidently.

"Indeed, she did very well," said Florence. "I foresee that we shall get along admirably."

"I am glad to hear that. She is apt to be indolent."

"I won't be with Miss Linden, mamma. She makes the studies so interesting."

After Florence left the house, Carrie pronounced an eulogium upon her which led Mrs. Leighton to congratulate herself upon having secured a governess who had produced so favorable an impression on her little girl.

"Was you kept after school, Florence?" asked Dodger, as she entered her humble home. "I am afraid you'll find your dinner cold."

"Never mind, Dodger. I am to take dinner--or lunch, rather--at the house where I am teaching; so hereafter Mrs. O'Keefe need not wait for me."

"And how do you like your place?"

"It is everything that is pleasant. You wished me good luck, Dodger, and your wish has been granted."

"I was lucky, too, Florence. I've made a dollar and a quarter this mornin'."

"Not by selling papers, surely?"

"Not all. A gentleman gave me fifty cents for takin' his valise to the Long Branch boat."

"It seems we are both getting rich," said Florence, smiling.

Chapter XVI

Dodger Becomes Ambitious

"Ah, there, Dodger!"

Dodger, who had been busily and successfully selling evening papers in front of the Astor House, turned quickly as he heard his name called.

His glance rested on two men, dressed in soiled white hats and shabby suits, who were apparently holding each other up, having both been imbibing.

He at once recognized Hooker and Briggs, for he had waited upon them too many times in Tim's saloon not to recognize them.

"Well," he said, cautiously, "what do you want?"

"Tim has sent us for you!" answered the two, in unison.

"What does he want of me?"

"He wants you to come home. He says he can't get along without you."

"He will have to get along without me," said the boy, independently. "Tell him I'm not goin' back!"

"You're wrong, Dodger," said Hooker, shaking his head, solemnly. "Ain't he your father?"

"No, he ain't."

"He says he is," continued Hooker, looking puzzled.

"That don't make it so."

"He ought to know," put in Briggs.

"Yes; he ought to know!" chimed in Hooker.

"No doubt he does, but he can't make me believe he's any relation of mine."

"Just go and argy the point with him," said Hooker, coaxingly.

"It wouldn't do no good."

"Maybe it would. Just go back with us, that's a good boy."

"What makes you so anxious about it?" asked Dodger, suspiciously.

"Well," said Hooker, coughing, "we're Tim's friends, don't you know."

"What's he goin' to give you if I go back with you?" asked the boy, shrewdly.

"A glass of whiskey!" replied Hooker and Briggs in unison.

"Is that all?"

"Maybe he'd make it two."

"I won't go back with you," said Dodger, after a moment's thought; "but I don't want you to lose anything

by me. Here's a dime apiece, and you can go and get a drink somewhere else."

"You're a trump, Dodger," said Hooker, eagerly holding out his hand.

"I always liked you, Dodger," said Briggs, with a similar motion.

"Now, don't let Tim know you've seen me," said the newsboy, warningly.

"We won't."

And the interesting pair ambled off in the direction of the Bowery.

"So Tim sent them fellers after me?" soliloquized Dodger. "I guess I'll have to change my office, or maybe Tim himself will be droppin' down on me some mornin'. It'll be harder to get rid of him than of them chumps."

So it happened that he used to take down his morning papers to the piers on the North River, and take his chance of selling them to passengers from Boston and others ports arriving by the Fall River boats, and others from different points.

The advantage of this was that he often got a chance to serve as guide to strangers visiting the city for the first time, or as porter, to carry their valise or other luggage.

Being a bright, wideawake boy, with a pleasant face and manner, he found his services considerably in demand; and on counting up his money at the end of the week, he found, much to his encouragement, that he had received on an average about a dollar and twenty-five cents per day.

"That's better than sellin' papers alone," thought he. "Besides, Tim isn't likely to come across me here. I wonder I didn't think of settin' up for myself before!"

In the evening he spent an hour, and sometimes more, pursuing his studies, under the direction of Florence. At first his attention was given chiefly to improving his reading and spelling, for Dodger was far from fluent in the first, while his style of spelling many words was strikingly original.

"Ain't I stupid, Florence?" he asked one day, after spelling a word of three syllables with such ingenious incorrectness as to convulse his young teacher with merriment.

"Not at all, Dodger. You are making excellent progress; but sometimes you are so droll that I can't help laughing."

"I don't mind that if you think I am really gettin' on."

"Undoubtedly you are!"

"I make a great many mistakes," said Dodger, dubiously.

"Yes, you do; but you must remember that you have taken lessons only a short time. Don't you think you can read a good deal more easily than you did?"

"Yes; I don't trip up half so often as I did. I'm afraid you'll get tired of teachin' me."

"No fear of that, Dodger. As long as I see that you are improving, I shall feel encouraged to go on."

"I wish I knew as much as your other scholar."

"You will in time if you go on. You mustn't get discouraged."

"I won't!" said Dodger, stoutly. "If a little gal like her can learn, I'd ought to be ashamed if I don't--a big boy of eighteen."

"It isn't the size of the boy that counts, Dodger."

"I know that, but I ain't goin' to give in, and let a little gal get ahead of me!"

"Keep to that determination, Dodger, and you will succeed in time, never fear."

On the whole, Florence enjoyed both her pupils. She had the faculty of teaching, and she became very much interested in both.

As for Dodger, she thought, rough diamond as he was, that she saw in him the making of a manly man, and she felt that it was a privilege to assist in the development of his intellectual nature.

Again, he had picked up a good deal of slang from the nature of his associates, and she set to work to improve his language, and teach him refinement.

It was necessarily a slow process, but she began to find after a time that a gradual change was coming over him.

"I want you to grow up a gentleman, Dodger," she said to him one day.

"I'm too rough for that, Florence. I'm only an ignorant street boy."

"You are not going to be an ignorant street boy all your life. I don't see why you should not grow up a polished gentleman."

"I shall never be like that de Brabazon young man," said he.

"No, Dodger; I don't think you will," said Florence, laughing. "I don't want you to become effeminate nor a dude. I think I would like you less than I do now."

"Do you like me, Florence?" asked Dodger, brightening up.

"To be sure I do. I hope you don't doubt it."

"Why, it don't seem natural-like. You're a fashionable young lady----"

"Not very fashionable, Dodger, just at present."

"Well, a high-toned young lady--one of the tip-tops, and I am a rough Bowery boy."

"You were once, but you are getting over that rapidly. Did you ever hear of Andy Johnson?"

"Who was he?"

"He became President of the United States. Well, at the age of twenty-one he could neither read nor write."

"At twenty-one?" repeated Dodger. "Why, I'm only eighteen, and I do know something of readin' and writin'."

"To be sure! Well, Andy Johnson was taught to read and write by his wife. He kept on improving himself till, in course of time, he became a United States

Senator, Vice-President, and afterward, President. Now, I don't expect you to equal him, but I see no reason why you should not become a well-educated man if you are content to work, and keep on working."

"I will keep on, Florence," said Dodger, earnestly.

"If I ever find my relations I don't want them to be ashamed of me."

It was not the first time he had referred to his uncertain origin.

"Won't Tim Bolton tell you anything about your family?"

"No; I've asked him more'n once. He always says he's my father, and that makes me mad."

"It is strange," said Florence, thoughtfully. "I had a young cousin stolen many years ago."

"Was it the son of the old gentleman you lived with on Madison Avenue?"

"Yes; it was the son of Uncle John. It quite broke him down. After my cousin's loss he felt that he had nothing to live for."

"I wish I was your cousin, Florence," said Dodger, thoughtfully.

"Well, then, I will adopt you as my cousin, or brother, whichever you prefer."

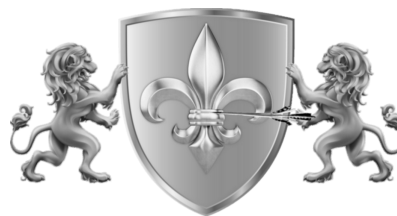
"I would rather be your cousin."

"Then cousin let it be! Now we are bound to each other by strong and near ties."

"But when your uncle takes you back you'll forget all about poor Dodger."

"No, I won't, Dodger. There's my hand on it. Whatever comes, we are friends forever."

"Then I'll try not to disgrace you, Florence. I'll learn as fast as I can, and see if I don't grow up to be a gentleman."



Chapter XVII

A Mysterious Adventure

Several weeks passed without changing in any way the position or employment of Dodger or Florence.

They had settled down to their respective forms of labor, and were able not only to pay their modest expenses, but to save up something for a rainy day.

Florence had but one source of regret.

She enjoyed her work, and did not now lament the luxurious home which she had lost.

But she did feel sore at heart that her uncle made no sign of regret for their separation.

From him she received no message of forgiveness or reconciliation.

"He has forgotten me!" she said to herself, bitterly. "He has cast me utterly out of his heart. I do not care for his money, but I do not like to think that my kind uncle--for he was always kind till the last trouble--has steeled his heart against me forever."

But she learned through a chance meeting with Jane, that this was not so.

"Mr. Linden is getting very nervous and low-spirited," said the girl, "and sits hour after hour in the library looking into the fire, a-fotchin' deep sighs every few minutes. Once I saw him with your photograph--the one you had taken last spring--in his hands, and he looked sad-like when he laid it down."

"My dear uncle! Then he does think of me sometimes?"

"It's my belief he'd send for you if Curtis would let him."

"Surely Curtis cannot exercise any restraint upon him?"

"He has frequent talks with the old gentleman. I don't know what he says, but it's sure to be something wicked. I expect he does all he can to set him against you. Oh, he's a cunning villain, he is, even if he is your cousin, Miss Florence."

"And do you think my uncle is unhappy, Jane?" said Florence, thoughtfully.

"That I do, miss."

"He never was very bright or cheerful, you know."

"But he never was like this. And I do think he's gettin' more and more feeble."

"Do you think I ought to call upon him, and risk his sending me away?"

"It might be worth tryin', Miss Florence."

The result of this conversation was that Florence did make up her mind the very next afternoon to seek her old

home. She had just reached the front steps, and was about to ascend, when the door opened and Curtis appeared.

He started at sight of his cousin.

"Florence!" he said. "Tell me why you came here?"

"I am anxious about my uncle," she said. "Tell me, Curtis, how he is."

"You know he's never in vigorous health," said Curtis, evasively.

"But is he as well as usual?"

"He is about the same as ever. One thing would do more for him than anything else."

"What's that?"

"Your agreement to marry me," and he fixed his eyes upon her face eagerly.

Florence shook her head.

"I should be glad to help my uncle," she said, "but I cannot agree to marry you."

"Why not?" he demanded, roughly.

"Because I do not love you, and never shall," she responded, firmly.

"In other words, you refuse to do the only thing that will restore our uncle to health and happiness?"

"It is too much to ask." Then, fixing her eyes upon him keenly: "Why should uncle insist upon this marriage? Is it not because you have influenced him in the matter?"

"No," answered Curtis, falsely. "He has some secret reason, which he will not disclose to me, for desiring it."

Florence had learned to distrust the words of her wily cousin.

"May I not see him?" she asked. "Perhaps he will tell me."

"No; I cannot permit it."

"You cannot permit it? Are you, then, our uncle's guardian?"

"No, and yes. I do not seek to control him, but I wish to save him from serious agitation. Should he see you, and find that you are still rebellious, the shock might kill him."

"I have reason to doubt your words," said Florence, coldly. "I think you are resolved to keep us apart."

"Listen, and I will tell you a secret; Uncle John has heart disease, so the doctor assures me. Any unwonted agitation might kill him instantly. I am sure you would not like to expose him to such a risk."

He spoke with apparent sincerity, but Florence did not feel certain that his words were truthful.

"Very well," she said. "Then I will give up seeing him."

"It is best, unless you are ready to accede to his wishes--and mine."

She did not answer, but walked away slowly.

"It would never do to have them meet!" muttered Curtis. "The old gentleman would ask her to come back on any terms, and then all my scheming would be upset. That was a happy invention of mine, about heart disease," he continued, with a low laugh. "Though she only half believed it, she will not dare to run the risk of giving him a shock."

It was about this time that the quiet tenor of Dodger's life was interrupted by a startling event.

He still continued to visit the piers, and one afternoon about six o'clock, he stood on the pier awaiting the arrival of the day boat from Albany, with a small supply of evening papers under his arm.

He had sold all but half a dozen when the boat touched the pier. He stood watching the various passengers as they left the boat and turned their steps in different directions, when someone touched him on the shoulder.

Looking up, he saw standing at his side a man of slender figure, with gray hair and whiskers.

"Boy," he said, "I am a stranger in the city. Can I ask your assistance?"

"Yes, sir; certainly," answered Dodger, briskly.

"Do you know where the nearest station of the elevated road is?"

"Yes, sir?"

"I want to go uptown, but I know very little about the city. Will you accompany me as guide? I will pay you well."

"All right, sir," answered Dodger.

It was just the job he was seeking.

"We will have to walk a few blocks, unless you want to take a carriage."

"It isn't necessary. I am strong, in spite of my gray hair."

And indeed he appeared to be.

Dodger noticed that he walked with the elastic step of a young man, while his face certainly showed no trace of wrinkles.

"I live in the West," said the stranger, as they walked along. "I have not been here for ten years."

"Then you have never ridden on the elevated road?" said Dodger.

"N-no," answered the stranger, with curious hesitation.

Yet when they reached the station he went up the staircase and purchased his ticket with the air of a man who was thoroughly accustomed to doing it.

"I suppose you don't want me any longer," said Dodger, preparing to resign the valise he was carrying, and which, by the way, was remarkably light considering the size.

"Yes, I shall need you," said the other hurriedly. "There may be some distance to walk after we get uptown."

"All right, sir."

Dodger was glad that further service was required, for this would of course increase the compensation which he would feel entitled to ask.

They entered one of the cars, and sat down side by side.

The old gentleman drew a paper from his pocket, and began to read, while Dodger, left to his own devices, sat quiet and looked about him.

He was rather surprised that the old gentleman, who, according to his own representation, was riding upon the elevated road for the first time, seemed to feel no curiosity on the subject, but conducted himself in all respects like an experienced traveler.

"He's a queer customer!" thought Dodger. "However, it's all one to me, as long as he pays me well for the job."

They got out at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, and struck down toward the river, Dodger carrying the valise.

"I wonder where we're going?" he asked himself.

At length they reached a wooden house of three stories, standing by itself, and here the stranger stopped.

He rang the bell, and the door was opened by a hump-backed negro, who looked curiously at Dodger.

"Is the room ready, Julius?" asked the old man.

"Yes, sir."

"Boy, take the valise upstairs, and I will follow you."

Up two flights of stairs walked Dodger, followed by the old man and the negro.

The latter opened the door of a back room, and Dodger, obedient to directions, took the valise inside and deposited it on a chair.

He had hardly done so when the door closed behind him, and he heard the slipping of a bolt.

"What does all this mean?" Dodger asked himself in amazement.

Chapter XVIII

In A Trap

"Hold on there! Open that door!" he exclaimed, aloud.

There was no answer.

"I say, let me out!" continued our hero, beginning to kick at the panels.

This time there was an answer.

"Stop that kicking, boy! I will come back in fifteen minutes and explain all."

"Well," thought Dodger, "this is about the strangest thing that ever happened to me. However, I can wait fifteen minutes."

He sat down on a cane chair--there were two in the room--and looked about him.

He was in an ordinary bedroom, furnished in the usual manner. There was nothing at all singular in its appearance.

On a book shelf were a few books, and some old numbers of magazines. There was one window looking into a back yard, but as the room was small it was sufficient to light the apartment.

Dodger looked about in a cursory manner, not feeling any particular interest in his surroundings, for he had but fifteen minutes to wait, but he thought it rather queer that it should be thought necessary to lock him in.

He waited impatiently for the time to pass.

Seventeen minutes had passed when he heard the bolt drawn. Fixing his eyes eagerly on the door he saw it open, and two persons entered.

One was the hump-backed negro, carrying on a waiter a plate of buttered bread, and a cup of tea; the other person was--not the old man, but, to Dodger's great amazement, a person well-remembered, though he had only seen him once--Curtis Waring.

"Set down the waiter on the table, Julius," said Waring.

Dodger looked on in stupefaction. He was getting more and more bewildered.

"Now, you can go!" said Curtis, in a tone of authority.

The negro bowed, and after he had disposed of the waiter, withdrew.

"Do you know me, boy?" asked Curtis, turning now and addressing Dodger.

"Yes; you are Mr. Waring."

"You remember where you last saw me?"

"Yes, sir. At your uncle's house on Madison Avenue."

"Quite right."

"How did you come here? Where is the old man whose valise I brought from the Albany boat?"

Curtis smiled, and drew from his pocket a gray wig and whiskers.

"You understand now, don't you?"

"Yes, sir; I understand that I have been got here by a trick."

"Yes," answered Curtis, coolly. "I have deemed it wise to use a little stratagem. But you must be hungry. Sit down and eat your supper while I am talking to you."

Dodger was hungry, for it was past his usual supper time, and he saw no reason why he should not accept the invitation.

Accordingly, he drew his chair up to the table and began to eat. Curtis seated himself on the other chair.

"I have a few questions to ask you, and that is why I arranged this interview. We are quite by ourselves," he added, significantly.

"Very well, sir; go ahead."

"Where is my Cousin Florence? I am right, I take it, in assuming that you know where she is."

"Yes, sir; I know," answered Dodger, slowly.

"Very well, tell me."

"I don't think she wants you to know."

Curtis frowned.

"It is necessary I should know!" he said, emphatically.

"I will ask her if I may tell you."

"I can't wait for that. You must tell me at once."

"I can't do that."

"You are mistaken; you can do it."

"Then, I won't!" said Dodger, looking his companion full in the face.

Curtis Waring darted a wicked look at him, and seemed ready to attack the boy who was audacious enough to thwart him, but he restrained himself and said:

"Let that pass for the present. I have another question to ask. Where is the document you took from my uncle's desk on the night of the burglary?"

And he emphasized the last word.

Dodger looked surprised.

"I took no paper," he said.

"Do you deny that you opened the desk?" asked Curtis.

"No."

"When I came to examine the contents in the presence of my uncle, it was found that a document--his will--had disappeared, and with it a considerable sum of money."

And he looked sharply at Dodger.

"I don't know anything about it, sir. I took nothing."

"You can hardly make me believe that. Why did you open the desk if you did not propose to take anything?"

"I did intend to take something. I was under orders to do so, for I wouldn't have done it of my own free will; but the moment I got the desk open I heard a cry, and looking around, I saw Miss Florence looking at me."

"And then?"

"I was startled, and ran to her side."

"And then you went back and completed the robbery?"

"No, I didn't. She talked to me so that I felt ashamed of it. I never stole before, and I wouldn't have tried to do it then, if--if some one hadn't told me to."

"I know whom you mean--Tim Bolton."

"Yes, Tim Bolton, since you know."

"What did he tell you to take?"

"The will and the money."

"Exactly. Now we are coming to it. You took them, and gave them to him?"

"No, I didn't. I haven't seen him since that night."

Curtis Waring regarded the boy thoughtfully. His story was straightforward, and it agreed with the story told by Tim himself. But, on the other hand, he denied taking the missing articles, and yet they had disappeared.

Curtis decided that both he and Tim had lied, and that this story had been concocted between them.

Probably Bolton had the will and the money--the latter he did not care for--and this thought made him uneasy, for he knew that Tim Bolton was an unscrupulous man, and quite capable of injuring him, if he saw the way clear to do so.

"My young friend," he said, "your story is not even plausible. The articles are missing, and there was no one but yourself and Florence who were in a position to take them. Do you wish me to think that my Cousin Florence robbed the desk?"

"No, sir; I don't. Florence wouldn't do such a thing," said Dodger, warmly.

"Florence. Is that the way you speak of a young lady?"

"She tells me to call her Florence. I used to call her Miss Florence, but she didn't care for it."

"It seems you two have become very intimate," said Curtis, with a sneer.

"Florence is a good friend to me. I never had so good a friend before."

"All that is very affecting; however, it isn't to the point. Do you know," he continued, in a sterner tone, "that I could have you arrested for entering and breaking open my uncle's desk with burglarious intent?"

"I suppose you could," said Dodger; "but Florence would testify that I took nothing."

"Am I to understand, then, that you refuse to give me any information as to the will and the money?"

"No, sir; I don't refuse. I would tell you if I knew."

Curtis regarded the boy in some perplexity.

He had every appearance of telling the truth.

Dodger had one of those honest, truthful countenances which lend confirmation to any words spoken. If the boy told the truth, what could have become of the will--and the money? As to the former, it might be possible that his uncle had destroyed it, but the disappearance of the money presented an independent difficulty.

"The will is all I care for," he said, at length. "The thief is welcome to the money, though there was a considerable sum."

"I would find the will for you if I could," said Dodger, earnestly.

"You are positive you didn't give it to Bolton?"

"Positive, sir. I haven't seen Tim since that night."

"You may be speaking the truth, or you may not. I will talk with you again to-morrow," and Curtis arose from his chair.

"You don't mean to keep me here?" said Dodger, in alarm.

"I shall be obliged to do so."

"I won't stay!" exclaimed Dodger, in excitement, and he ran to the door, meaning to get out; but Curtis drew a pistol from his pocket and aimed it at the boy.

"Understand me, boy," he said, "I am in earnest, and I am not to be trifled with."

Dodger drew back, and Curtis opened the door and went out, bolting it after him.

Chapter XIX

An Attempt To Escape

While Dodger had no discomfort to complain of, it occurred to him that Florence would be alarmed by his long absence, for now it seemed certain that he would have to remain overnight.

If only he could escape he would take care not to fall into such a trap again.

He went to the window and looked out, but the distance to the ground was so great--for the room was on the third floor--that he did not dare to imperil his life by attempting a descent.

If there had been a rope at hand he would not have felt afraid to make the attempt.

He examined the bed to see if it rested upon cords, but there were slats instead.

As has already been said, there were no houses near by.

That part of the city had not been much settled, and it was as solitary as it is in the outskirts of a country village.

If he could only reveal his position to some person outside, so as to insure interference, he might yet obtain his freedom.

With this thought he tore a blank leaf from one of the books in the room, and hastily penciled the following lines:

"I am kept a prisoner in this house. I was induced to come here by a trick. Please get some one to join you, and come and demand my release."

Some weeks before Dodger could not have written so creditable a note, but he had greatly improved since he had been under the influence and instruction of Florence.

Dodger now posted himself at the window and waited anxiously for someone to pass, so that he might attract his attention and throw down the paper.

He had to wait for fifteen minutes. Then he saw approaching a young man, not far from twenty-one, who looked like a young mechanic, returning from his daily work.

Now was Dodger's opportunity. He put his head out of the window and called out:

"Hello, there!"

The young man looked and saw him at the window.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Catch this paper, and read what there is on it." He threw down the leaf, which, after fluttering in the gentle evening breeze, found its way to the ground and was picked up.

After reading it, the young man looked up and said: "I'll go around to the door and inquire."

He was as good as his word. He went to the outer door and rang the bell.

Julius came to the door.

"What's wanted, boss?" he said.

"You've got a boy locked up in a room."

"Who told you, boss?"

"He threw down a paper to me, telling me he was kept a prisoner."

"What did he say?" asked Julius.

The young man read the note aloud.

"What have to say to that, you black imp?" he demanded, sternly.

The ready wit of Julius served him in this emergency.

"Dat boy is crazy as a loon, boss!" he answered, readily. "We have to keep him shut up for fear he'll kill some of us."

"You don't say!" ejaculated the young mechanic. "He don't look like it."

"No, he don't; dat's a fact, boss. Fact is, dat boy is the artfullest lunnytick you ever seed. He tried to kill his mother last week."

"Is that true?"

"Dat's so, boss. And all de while he looks as innocent as a baby. If I was to let him out he'd kill somebody, sure."

"I never would have believed it," said the young man.

"If you want to take the risk, boss, you might go up and see him. I believe he's got a carvin'-knife about him, but I don't dare to go up and get it away. It would be as much as this niggah's life is worth."

"No," answered the young man, hastily. "I don't want to

see him. I never did like crazy folks. I'm sorry I gave you the trouble to come to the door."

"Oh, no trouble, boss."

"I guess I've fixed dat boy!" chuckled Julius. "Ho, ho! he can't get ahead of old Julius! Crazy as a loon, ho, ho!"

Dodger waited anxiously for the young man to get through his interview. He hoped that he would force his way up to the third floor, draw the bolt, and release him from his imprisonment.

He kept watch at the window, and when the young man reappeared, he looked at him eagerly. "Did you ask them to let me out?" he shouted. The other looked up at him with an odd expression of suspicion and repulsion.

"You're better off where you are," he said, rather impatiently.

"But they have locked me up here."

"And reason enough, too!"

"What makes you say that?"

"Because you're crazy as a loon."

"Did the black man say that?" inquired Dodger, indignantly.

"Yes, he did--said you tried to kill your mother, and had a carving-knife hidden in the room."

"It's a lie--an outrageous lie!" exclaimed Dodger, his eyes flashing.

"Don't go into one of your tantrums," said the man, rather alarmed; "it won't do any good."

"But I want you to understand that I am no more crazy than you are."

"Sho? I know better. Where's your carving-knife?"

"I haven't got any; I never had any. That negro has been telling you lies. Just go to the door again, and insist on seeing me."

"I wouldn't dast to. You'd stab me," said the man, fearfully.

"Listen to me!" said Dodger, getting out of patience. "I'm not crazy. I'm a newsboy and baggage-smasher. An old man got me to bring his valise here, and then locked me up. Won't you go around to the station-house and send a policeman here?"

"I'll see about it," said the young man, who did not believe a word that Dodger had said to him.

"He won't do it!" said Dodger to himself, in a tone of discouragement. "That miserable nigger has made him believe I am a lunatic. I'll have him up, anyway."

Forthwith he began to pound and kick so forcibly, that Julius came upstairs on a run, half inclined to believe that Dodger had really become insane.

"What do you want, boy?" he inquired from outside the door.

"I want you to unbolt the door and let me out."

"I couldn't do it, nohow," said Julius. "It would be as much as my place is worth."

"I will give you a dollar--five dollars--if you will only let me out. The man who brought me here is a bad man, who is trying to cheat his cousin--a young lady--out of a fortune."

"Don't know nothin' 'bout that," said Julius.

"He has no right to keep me here."

"Don't know nothin' 'bout that, either. I'm actin' accordin' to orders."

"Look here," said Dodger, bethinking himself of what had just happened. "Did you tell that young man who called here just now that I was crazy?"

Julius burst into a loud guffaw.

"I expect I did," he laughed. "Said you'd got a long carvin'-knife hid in de room."

"What made you lie so?" demanded Dodger, sternly.

"Couldn't get rid of him no other way. Oh, how scared he looked when I told him you tried to kill your mother."

And the negro burst into another hearty laugh which exasperated Dodger exceedingly.

"How long is Mr. Waring going to keep me here? Did he tell you?" Dodger asked, after a pause.

"No; he didn't say."

"When is he coming here again?"

"Said he'd come to-morrow most likely."

"Will you bring me a light?"

"Couldn't do it. You'd set the house on fire."

It seemed useless to prolong the conversation.

Dodger threw himself on the bed at an early hour, but he did not undress, thinking there might possibly be a chance to escape during the night.

But the morning came and found him still a prisoner, but not in the solitary dwelling.

Chapter XX

A Midnight Ride

Curtis Waring had entrapped Dodger for a double purpose.

It was not merely that he thought it possible the boy had the will, or knew where it was. He had begun to think of the boy's presence in New York as dangerous to his plans.

John Linden might at any time learn that the son, for whose appearance he had grieved so bitterly, was still living in the person of this street boy. Then there would be an end of his hopes of inheriting the estate.

Only a few months more and the danger would be over, for he felt convinced that his uncle's tenure of life would be brief. The one essential thing, then, seemed to be to get Dodger out of the city.

The first step had already been taken; what the next was will soon appear.

Scarcely had Dodger failed in his attempt to obtain outside assistance when an unaccountable drowsiness overcame him, considerably to his surprise.

"I don't know what's come to me," he said to himself. "It can't be more than seven or eight o'clock, and yet I feel so sleepy I can hardly keep my eyes open. I haven't worked any harder than usual today, and I can't understand it."

Dodger had reason to be surprised, for he didn't usually retire till eleven o'clock.

In a city like New York, where many of the streets are tolerably well filled even at midnight, people get in the way of sitting up much later than in the country, and Dodger was no exception to this rule.

Yet here he was ready to drop off to sleep before eight o'clock. To him it was a mystery, for he did not know that the cup of tea which he had drunk at had been drugged by direction of Curtis Waring, with an ulterior purpose, which will soon appear.

"I may as well lie down, as there is nothing else to do," thought Dodger. "There isn't much fun sitting in the dark. If I can sleep, so much the better."

Five minutes had scarcely passed after his head struck the pillow, when our hero was fast asleep.

At eleven o'clock a hack stopped in front of the house, and Curtis Waring descended from it.

"Stay here," he said to the driver. "There will be another passenger. If you are detained I will make it right when I come to pay you."

"All right, sir," said the hackman. "I don't care how long it is if I am paid for my time."

Curtis opened the door with a pass-key, and found Julius dozing in a chair in the hall.

"Wake up, you sleepy-head," he said. "Has anything happened since I left here?"

"Yes, sir; the boy tried to get away."

"Did he? I don't see how he could do that. You kept the door bolted, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir; but he threw a piece of paper out'n de window, sayin' he was kep' a prisoner here. A young man picked it up, and came to de house to ax about it."

Curtis looked alarmed.

"What did you say?" he inquired, apprehensively.

"Told him de boy was crazy as a loon--dat he tried to kill his mother las' week, and had a carvin'-knife hid in his room."

"Good, Julius! I didn't give you credit for such a fertile imagination.

"What's dat, massa?" asked Julius, looking puzzled.

"I didn't know you were such a skillful liar."

"Yah! yah!" laughed Julius, quite comprehending this compliment. "I reckon I can twis' de trufe pretty well, Massa Curtis!"

"You have done well, Julius," said Curtis, approvingly. "Here's a dollar!"

The negro was quite effusive in his gratitude.

"What did the young man say?"

"He looked scared. I tol' him he could go up and see de boy if he wasn't afeared of the carvin'-knife, but he said he guessed he wouldn't--he didn't like crazy folks."

Curtis laughed heartily.

"So it all ended as it should. Did the boy make any more trouble?"

"Yes; he pounded and kicked till I had to go up and see what was the matter. I didn't give him no satisfaction, and I guess he went to bed."

"He ought to be in a deep sleep by this time. I will go up and see. Go up with me, Julius, for I may have to ask you to help me bring him down."

Though Julius was naturally a coward, he felt quite brave when he had company, and he at once went upstairs with Curtis Waring.

Curtis drew the bolt, and, entering the chamber, his glance fell upon Dodger, fast asleep on the bed.

"I am glad the boy did not undress," he said. "It will save me a great deal of trouble. Now, Julius, you can take his feet and I will lift his head, and we will take him downstairs."

"S'pos'n he wakes up, Massa Curtis?"

"He won't wake up. I took care the sleeping potion should be strong enough to produce profound slumber for eighteen hours."

"Seems as if he was dead," said Julius, nervously.

"Tush, you fool! He's no more dead than you or I."

The hackman looked curious when the two men appeared with their sleeping burden, and Curtis felt that some explanation was required.

"The boy has a very painful disease," he said, "and the doctor gave him a sleeping draught. He is going abroad for his health, and, under the circumstances, I think it best not to wake him up. Drive slowly and carefully to Pier No. --, as I don't want the boy aroused if it can be helped."

"All right, sir."

"Julius, you may lock the door and come with me. I shall need your help to get him on board the ship."

"All right, Massa Curtis."

"And, mind you, don't go to sleep in the carriage, you black rascal!" added Curtis, as he saw that the negro found it hard to keep his eyes open.

"All right, massa, I'll keep awake. How am I to get home?"

"I will instruct the hackman to take you home."

"Yah, yah; I'll be ridin' like a gentleman!"

The journey was successfully accomplished, but it took an hour, for, according to directions, the hackman did not force his pace, but drove slowly, till he reached the North River pier indicated.

At the pier was a large, stanch vessel the Columbia--bound for San Francisco, around Cape Horn.

All was dark, but the second officer was pacing the deck.

Curtis Waring hailed him.

"What time do you get off?"

"Early tomorrow morning."

"So the captain told me. I have brought you a passenger."

"The captain told me about him."

"Is his stateroom ready?"

"Yes, sir. You are rather late."

"True; and the boy is asleep, as you will see. He is going to make the voyage for his health, and, as he has been suffering some pain, I thought I would not wake him up. Who will direct me to his stateroom?"

The mate summoned the steward, and Dodger, still unconscious, was brought on board and quietly transferred to the bunk that had been prepared for him.

It was a critical moment for poor Dodger, but he was quite unconscious of it.

"What is the boy's name?" asked the mate.

"Arthur Grant. The captain has it on his list. Is he on board?"

"Yes; but he is asleep."

"I do not need to see him. I have transacted all necessary business with him--and paid the passage money. Julius, bring the valise."

Julius did so.

"This contains the boy's clothing. Take it to the stateroom, Julius."

"All right, Massa Curtis."

"What is your usual time between New York and San Francisco?" asked Curtis, addressing the mate.

"From four to six months. Four months is very short, six months very long. We ought to get there in five months, or perhaps a little sooner, with average weather."

"Very well. I believe there is no more to be said. Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir."

"So he is well out of the way for five months!" soliloquized Curtis. "In five months much may happen. Before that time I hope to be in possession of my uncle's property. Then I can snap my fingers at fate."

Chapter XXI

A Seasick Passenger

The good ship Columbia had got fifty miles under way before Dodger opened his eyes.

He looked about him languidly at first, but this feeling was succeeded by the wildest amazement, as his eyes took in his unusual surroundings.

He had gone to sleep on a bed--he found himself on awakening in a ship's bunk.

He half arose in his birth, but the motion of the vessel and a slight feeling of dizziness compelled him to resume a recumbent position.

"I must be dreaming," thought Dodger. "It's very queer. I am dreaming I am at sea. I suppose that explains it."

He listened and heard the swish of the waters as they beat against the sides of the vessel.

He noted the pitching of the ship, and there was an unsteady feeling in his head, such as those who have gone to sea will readily recall.

Dodger became more and more bewildered.

"If it's a dream, it's the most real dream I ever had," he said to himself.

"This seems like a ship's cabin," he continued, looking about him. "I think if I got up I should be seasick. I wonder if people ever get seasick in dreams?"

There was another pitch, and Dodger instinctively clung to the edge of his berth, to save himself from being thrown out.

"Let me see," he said, trying to collect his scattered recollection. "I went to sleep in a house uptown--a house to which Curtis Waring lured me, and then made me a prisoner. The house was somewhere near One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. Now it seems as if I was on board a ship. How could I get here? I wish somebody would come in that I could ask."

As no one came in, Dodger got out of the berth, and tried to stand on the cabin floor.

But before he knew it he was staggering like one intoxicated, and his head began to feel bad, partly, no doubt, on account of the sleeping potion which he had unconsciously taken.

At this moment the steward entered the cabin. "Hello, young man! Have you got up?" he asked.

"Where am I?" asked Dodger, looking at him with a dazed expression.

"Where are you? You're on the good ship Columbia, to be sure?"

"Are we out to sea?"

"Of course you are."

"How far from land?"

"Well, about fifty miles, more or less, I should judge."

"How long have I been here?"

"It seems to me you have a poor memory. You came on board last evening."

"I suppose Curtis Waring brought me," said Dodger, beginning to get his bearings.

"There was a gentleman came with you--so the mate told me. I don't know his name."

"Where is the ship bound?"

"To San Francisco, around Cape Horn. I supposed you knew that."

"I never heard of the ship Columbia before, and I never had any idea of making a sea voyage."

The steward looked surprised.

"I suppose your guardian arranged about that. Didn't he tell you?"

"I have no guardian."

"Well, you'll have to ask Capt. Barnes about that. I know nothing, except that you are a passenger, and that your fare has been paid."

"My fare paid to San Francisco?" asked Dodger, more and more at sea, both mentally and physically.

"Yes; we don't take any deadheads on the Columbia."

"Can you tell me what time it is?"

"About twelve o'clock. Do you feel hungry?"

"N--not very," returned Dodger, as a ghastly expression came over his face, and he tumbled back into his berth, looking very pale.

The steward smiled.

"I see how it is," he said; "you are getting initiated."

"What's that?" muttered Dodger, feebly.

"You're going to be seasick. You'll hardly be able to appear at the dinner table."

"It makes me sick to think of eating," said Dodger, feebly.

As he sank back into his berth, all thoughts of his unexpected position gave way to an overpowering feeling of seasickness.

He had never been tried in this way before, and he found the sensation far from agreeable.

"If only the vessel would stop pitching," he groaned. "Oh, how happy I should be if I were on dry land."

But the vessel wouldn't stop--even for a minute.

The motion, on the other hand, seemed to increase, as was natural, for they were getting farther and farther from land and were exposed to the more violent winds that swept the open ocean.

There is something about seasickness that swallows up and draws away all minor cares and anxieties, and Dodger was too much affected to consider how or why it was that he so unexpectedly found himself a passenger to California.

"Lie flat on your back," said the steward. "You will feel better if you do."

"How long is it going to last?" groaned Dodger, feeling quite miserable.

"Oh, you'll feel better to-morrow. I'll bring you some porridge presently. You can get that down, and it is better to have something on your stomach."

He was right. The next day Dodger felt considerably better, and ventured to go upon deck. He looked about him in surprise.

There had been a storm, and the waves were white with foam.

As far as the eye could see there was a tumult and an uproar.

The ship was tossed about like a cockle shell. But the sailors went about their work unruffled. It was no new sight for them. Though his head did not feel exactly right, the strong wind entered Dodger's lungs, and he felt exhilarated. His eyes brightened, and he began to share in the excitement of the scene.

Pacing the deck was a stout, bronzed seaman, whose dress made it clear even to the inexperienced eyes of Dodger that he was the captain.

"Good-morning, Master Grant," he said, pleasantly. "Are you getting your sea legs on?"

The name was unfamiliar to Dodger, but he could see that the remark was addressed to him.

"Yes, sir," he answered.

"Ever been to sea before?"

"No, sir."

"You'll get used to it. Bless me, you'll stand it like an old sailor before we get to 'Frisco."

"Is it a long voyage, captain?" asked Dodger.

"Five months, probably. We may get there a little sooner. It depends on the winds and weather."

"Five months," said Dodger to himself, in a tone of dismay.

The captain laughed.

"It'll be a grand experience for a lad like you, Arthur!" said the captain, encouragingly.

Arthur! So his name was Arthur! He had just been called Master Grant, so Arthur Grant was his name on board ship.

Dodger was rather glad to have a name provided, for he had only been known as Dodger heretofore, and this name would excite surprise. He had recently felt the need of a name, and didn't see why this wouldn't answer his purpose as well as any other.

"I must write it down so as not to forget it," he resolved. "It would seem queer if I forgot my own name."

"I shouldn't enjoy it much if I were going to be seasick all the time," he answered.

"Oh, a strong, healthy boy like you will soon be all right. You don't look like an invalid."

"I never was sick in my life."

"But your guardian told me he was sending you on a sea voyage for your health."

"Did Mr. Waring say that?"

"Yes; didn't you know the object of your sea trip?" asked Capt. Barnes, in surprise.

"No."

"There may be some tendency to disease in your system--some hereditary tendency," said the captain, after a pause.

"Were your parents healthy?"

"They--died young," answered Dodger, hesitatingly.

"That accounts for your guardian's anxiety. However, you look strong enough, in all conscience; and if you're not healthy, you will be before the voyage ends."

"I don't know what I am to do for clothes," said Dodger, as a new source of perplexity presented itself. "I can't get along with one shirt and collar for five months."

"You will find plenty of clothes in your valise. Hasn't it been given you?"

"No, sir."

"You may ask the steward for it. You didn't think your guardian would send you on a five-months' voyage without a change of clothing, did you?"

And the captain laughed heartily.

"I don't know Mr. Waring very well," said Dodger, awkwardly.

As he went downstairs to inquire about his valise, this question haunted him:

"Why did Curtis Waring send him on a sea voyage?"

Chapter XXII

The Other Passenger

Dodger sought the steward, and asked for his valise.

"Isn't it in your stateroom?" asked that functionary.

"I haven't seen it."

"I remember now. It was put with the luggage of the other passenger. I will show it to you."

He took Dodger to a part of the ship where freight was stored, and pointed to a sizable valise with a card attached to it on which was inscribed the name: "Arthur Grant."

"This must be yours," he said.

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Dodger, glad to have found out the new name which had been given him, otherwise he would have supposed the valise belonged to some other person.

He took the valise to his stateroom, and, finding a key tied to the handles, he opened it at once.

It proved to contain a very fair supply of underclothing, socks, handkerchiefs, etc., with a tooth brush, a hair brush and comb, and a sponge. Never in his life had Dodger been so well supplied with clothing before. There were four white shirts, two tennis shirts, half a dozen handkerchiefs and the same number of socks, with three changes of underclothing.

"I begin to feel like a gentleman," said Dodger to himself, complacently.

That was not all. At the bottom of the valise was an envelope, sealed, on which was inscribed the name: "Dodger."

"That is for me, at any rate," thought our hero. "I suppose it is from Curtis Waring."

He opened the envelope, and found inclosed twenty-five dollars in bills, with a few lines written on a half-sheet of paper. These Dodger read, with interest and curiosity. They were as follows:

"Dodger:--The money inclosed is for you. When you reach California you will find it of use. I have sent you out there because you will find in a new country a better chance to rise than in the city of New York. I advise you to stay there and grow up with the country. In New York you were under the influence of a bad man, from whom it is best that you should be permanently separated. I know something of the early history of Tim Bolton. He was detected in a crime, and fled to escape the consequences. You are not his son, but his nephew. Your mother was his sister, but quite superior to himself. Your right name is Arthur Grant, and it will be well for you to assume it hereafter. I have entered you in the list of passengers under that name."

"I thought you had taken the will from my uncle's desk, but I am inclined to think you had nothing to do with it. If you know where it is, or whether Bolton has it, I expect you to notify me in return for the money I have expended in your behalf. In that case you can write to me, No. -- Madison Avenue."

Curtis Waring"

Dodger read the letter over twice, and it puzzled him.

"He seems from the letter to take an interest in me," he soliloquized.

"At any rate, he has given me money and clothes, and paid my passage to California. What for, I wonder? I don't believe it is to get me away from the bad influence of Tim. There must be some other reason."

There was another part of the letter with which Dodger did not agree.

Curtis asserted positively that he was the nephew of Tim Bolton, while he was positive that there was no relationship between them.

In that case Curtis must have been an early acquaintance of Tim's. At any rate, he seemed to know about his past life.

Dodger now comprehended his present situation fully. He was a passenger on the ship Columbia, and there was no chance of leaving it. He had ascertained on inquiry that the vessel would not put in anywhere, but would make the long voyage direct. It would be over four months, at any rate, before he could communicate with Florence, and in the meantime, she and Mrs. O'Keefe, whom he recognized as a good friend, would conclude that he was dead.

It was very provoking to think that he could not even telegraph, as that would relieve all anxiety, and he felt sure that Florence was enough his friend to feel anxious about him.

He had just closed up his valise, when a young man of dark complexion and of an attractive, intellectual expression, entered the cabin.

He nodded pleasantly to Dodger, and said:

"I suppose this is Arthur Grant?"

"Yes, sir," answered Dodger, for he had decided to adopt the name.

"We ought to become close friends, for we are, I believe, the only passengers."

"Then you are a passenger, too?" said Dodger, deciding, after a brief scrutiny, that he should like his new acquaintance.

"Yes. My name is Randolph Leslie. I have been, for the last five years, a reporter on leading New York daily

papers, and worked so closely that my health has become somewhat affected. My doctor recommended a sea voyage, and I have arranged for a pretty long one."

"What papers have you worked for?"

"Oh, all the leading ones--_Tribune, World, Herald,_ and _Sun_-- sometimes one, and sometimes

another. Your reason for taking this trip can hardly be the same as mine. You don't look as if your health required you to travel."

"No," answered Dodger, smiling; "but I understand that the gentleman who engaged my passage said I was going to sea for my health."

"If I were as robust as you, I shouldn't give much thought to my health. Do you intend to remain in California?"

"I don't know what I do intend," replied Dodger. "I didn't know I was going to California at all until I woke up in my stateroom."

The young man looked surprised.

"Didn't you know the destination of the vessel when you came on board?" he asked.

"I was brought aboard in my sleep."

"This is curious. It looks to me as if you had a story to tell.

"Of course, I don't want to be curious, but if there is any way in which I can help you, by advice, or in any other way, I am quite ready to do so."

Dodger paused, but only briefly. This young man looked friendly, and might help him to penetrate the mystery which at present baffled him.

At any rate, his experience qualified him to give friendly advice, and of this Dodger felt that he stood in need.

"I ought to tell you, to begin with," he said, "that I am a poor boy, and made my living as best I could, by carrying baggage, selling papers, etc."

"I don't think any the worse of you for that. Did you live at the lodging houses?"

"No; until lately I lived with a man who keeps a saloon on the Bowery, and tended bar for him."

"What was his name? As a reporter I know the Bowery pretty well."

"Tim Bolton."

"Tim Bolton? I know his place well. I think I must have seen you there. Your face looked familiar to me as soon as I set eyes on you."

"Very likely. A good many people came into Tim's. I couldn't pretend to remember them all."

"Was Tim a relative of yours?"

"I don't believe he was. I always thought that he got

hold of me when I was a kid. I don't remember the time when I wasn't with him."

"I suppose you have always lived in New York?"

"No; I lived for several years in Australia. Tim was in the same business there. I came on with him a year or more since."

"Do you think you ever lived in New York before?"

"Yes; Tim has told me that I was born in New York."

"I understand that you have left Tim now?"

"Yes."

"Why, may I ask?"

"Because I didn't like the business he was in. But I liked it better than the one he wanted me to go into."

"What was that?"

"Burglary."

The young reporter started in surprise.

"Well," he said, "this is a new tack for Tim. However, I never looked upon him as a man who would shrink from any violation of the laws, except murder. I don't think he would do that."

"No; Tim isn't quite so bad. He isn't the worst man alive, though he is a rather hard customer. It was his wanting me to enter a house on Madison Avenue and open a desk that led to me going on this trip."

"Tell me about it, if you don't mind."

Thus invited, Dodger told his story to Randolph Leslie, keeping nothing back.

He finished by showing him the letter he had found in the valise.

Chapter XXIII

Through The Golden Gate

"Well, this is certainly a remarkable letter," said the reporter, as he handed it back to Dodger. "I am at a loss to understand the interest which this man appears to feel in you."

"I look upon him as my enemy," said Dodger. "But an enemy doesn't spend so much money upon another as he has."

"Unless he has object in it," amended Leslie, shrewdly. "Do you know of any connection this man has with you?"

"No; I never heard of him until I entered his house," and Dodger flushed as he thought that his entrance into the mansion on Madison Avenue had been as a burglar.

"It seems to me that he knows more about you than you do about him. It also seems to me that he is anxious to get you out of New York, the farther the better."

"But what harm could I do him in New York?" asked Dodger, puzzled.

"That is the question which I cannot answer. You say he was instrumental in getting his Cousin Florence out of the house?"

"Yes; he wanted to marry her."

"And she would not consent?"

"No; I think she hates him."

"How old is she?"

"Seventeen."

"And he?"

"He looks about thirty-five."

"The difference in years isn't great enough to constitute an obstacle, provided she loved him. I am thirty years old."

"I am sure Florence would prefer you to Curtis Waring."

"Don't flatter me. I am vain enough already. The time may come when I may ask your good offices with Miss Linden. What I was about to ask was: Is Miss Linden also entitled to a share in her uncle's estate?"

"She is just as nearly related to him as Mr. Waring."

"Then I can understand his wishing to get rid of her. I don't know why he should want to send you to a distance. I suppose there can't be any relationship?"

"Is it likely that I--a poor street boy--should be related to a rich man like Mr. Linden?"

"It doesn't seem likely, I admit," said Leslie, musingly. "Well, I suppose," he continued, after a pause, "there is no use in speculating about the matter now. The important point is, what are we to do with ourselves during the four or five months we must spend on shipboard?"

"I don't know what I can do," said Dodger. "I can't sell papers, and I can't smash baggage."

"And there appears to be no need of your doing either, as you are provided with board and lodging till we reach shore."

"That seems strange to me, for I've always had to hustle for a living."

"I was about to make a proposal to you. But first let me ask you about your education. I suppose you are not an accomplished scholar?"

"I'm about as ignorant as they make 'em," answered Dodger, drolly. "Tim was afraid to send me to college, for fear I'd get to know too much for my business."

"Tending bar does not require an acquaintance with Latin and Greek. Would you like to know more?"

"I wish I did. Florence was teaching me nights when I was in New York. Now I've got to give up all that."

"Not necessarily. Listen to me, Arthur. Before I came to New York to go into journalism, I taught school for two years; and I believe I may say that I was tolerably successful. Suppose I take you as a scholar?"

"I should like it very much, Mr. Leslie, but I'm afraid I haven't got money enough to pay you."

"That is true. You will need all the money you have when you land in California. Twenty-five dollars won't go far--still you have all the money that is necessary, for I do not intend to charge you anything."

"You are very kind to me, Mr. Leslie, considerin' you don't know me," said Dodger, gratefully.

"On the contrary, I think I know you very well. But about the kindness --my motives are somewhat mixed. I should like to do you a service, but I should also like to find employment for myself that will make the days less monotonous. I have a collection of books in my trunk, enough for our needs, and if you will agree we will commence our studies to-morrow."

"I should like it very much. I'd like to show Florence, when I see her, that I have improved. Till I saw her I didn't care much, but when I talk with her I feel awfully ignorant."

"In four months a great deal can be accomplished. I don't know how quick you are to learn. After we have had one or two lessons I can judge better."

Two days later Mr. Leslie pronounced his opinion, and a favorable one.

"You have not exaggerated your ignorance," he said to Dodger. "You have a great deal to learn, but on the other hand you are quick, have a retentive memory, and are very anxious to learn. I shall make something of you."

"I learn faster with you than with Florence," said Dodger.

"Probably she would succeed better with girls, but I hold that a male teacher is better for boys. How long are you willing to study every day?"

"As long as you think best."

"Then we will say from two to three hours. I think you have talent for arithmetic. I don't expect to make you fit for a bookkeeper, but I hope to make you equal to most office boys by the time we reach San Francisco. What do you intend to do in California?"

"I don't know. I should like to go back to New York, but I shall not have money enough."

"No; twenty-five dollars would go but a little way toward the passage. Evidently Mr. Waring did not intend to have you return, or he would have provided you with more."

"That is just why I should like to go back. I am afraid he will do some harm to Florence."

"And you would like to be on hand to protect her?"

"Yes."

Randolph Leslie smiled.

"You seem to take a great deal of interest in Florence, if I may make as free with her name as you do."

"Yes; I do, Mr. Leslie."

"If you were only a little older I might suspect the nature of that interest."

"I am older than she is."

"In years, yes. But a young lady of seventeen, brought up as she has been, is older by years than a boy of eighteen. I don't think you need apprehend any harm to Miss Linden, except that Mr. Waring may cheat her out of her rightful share of the inheritance. Is her uncle in good health?"

"No, sir; he is a very feeble man."

"Is he an old man?"

"Not so very old. I don't believe he is over sixty."

Really Mr. Linden was but fifty-four, but, being a confirmed invalid, he looked older.

"Should you say that he was likely to live very long?"

"No," answered Dodger. "He looks as if you could knock him over with a feather. Besides, I've heard Florence say that she was afraid her uncle could not live long."

"Probably Curtis Waring is counting upon this. If he can keep Florence and her uncle apart for a few months, Mr. Linden will die, and he will inherit the whole estate. What is this will he speaks of in the letter you showed me?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Whatever the provisions are, it is evident that he thinks it important to get it into his possession. If favorable to him, he will keep it carefully. If unfavorable, I think a man like him would not hesitate to suppress it."

"No doubt you are right, sir. I don't know much about wills," said Dodger.

"No; I suppose not. You never made any, I suppose," remarked the reporter, with a smile.

"I never had nothing to leave," said Dodger.

"Anything would be a better expression. As your tutor I feel it incumbent upon me to correct your grammar."

"I wish you would, Mr. Leslie. What do you mean to do when you get to San Francisco?"

"I shall seek employment on one of the San Francisco daily papers. Six months or a year so spent will restore my health, and enable me to live without drawing upon my moderate savings."

"I expect I shall have to work, too, to get money to take me back to New York."

And now we must ask the reader to imagine four months and one week passed.

There had been favorable weather on the whole, and the voyage was unusually short.

Dodger and the reporter stood on deck, and with eager interest watched the passage through the Golden Gate. A little later and the queen city of the Pacific came in sight, crowning the hill on which a part of the city is built, with the vast Palace Hotel a conspicuous object in the foreground.

Chapter XXIV

Florence In Suspense

We must now return to New York to Dodger's old home.

When he did not return at the usual hour, neither Florence nor Mrs. O'Keefe was particularly disturbed.

It was thought that he had gone on some errand of unusual length, and would return an hour or two late.

Eight o'clock came, the hour at which the boy was accustomed to repair to Florence's room to study, and still he didn't make his appearance.

"Dodger's late this evening, Mrs. O'Keefe," said Florence, going up to the room of her landlady.

"Shure he is. It's likely he's gone to Brooklyn or up to Harlem, wid a bundle. He'll be comin' in soon."

"I hope he will be well paid for the errand, since it keeps him so long."

"I hope so, too, Florence, for he's a good boy, is Dodger. Did I tell you how he served the rapsallion that tried to stale my apples the other day?"

"No; I would like to hear it."

"A big, black-bearded man came along, and asked me for an apple.

"You can have one for two pennies," says I.

"But I haven't got them," says he.

"Then you must go widout it," says I.

"We'll see about that," says he.

"And what do you think?--the fellow picked out one of my biggest apples, and was walkin' away! That made me mad.

"Come back, you thafe of the worruld!" says I.

"Silence, you old hag!" says he.

"Actilly he called me an old hag! I wanted to go after him, but there was two hoodlums hangin' round, and I knew they'd carry off some of my apples, when, just as I was at my wits' end, Dodger came round the corner.

"Dodger," I screamed, 'go after that man! He's taken one of my apples, widout lave or license!'

"Upon that, Dodger, brave as a lion, walked up to the man, and, says he:

"Give back that apple, or pay for it!"

"What's that to you, you impudent young rascal?" says the man, raisin' the apple to his mouth. But he didn't get a chance to bite it, for Dodger, with a flip of his hand, knocked it on the sidewalk, and picked it up.

"Wasn't the man mad just?"

"I'll smash you, boy," he growled.

"'I'm a baggage-smasher myself,' says Dodger, 'and I can smash as well as you.'

"Wid that the man up with his fist and struck at Dodger, but he dodged the blow, and gave him one for himself wid his right. Just then up came a cop.

"'What's all this?' says he.

"'That man tried to run off wid one of my apples,' says I.

"'Come along,' says the cop. 'You're wanted at the station-house.'

"'It's a lie,' says the man. 'I paid the woman for the apple, and that young rascal knocked it out of my hand.'

"'I know the boy,' says the cop, 'and he ain't one of that kind. I'll let you go if you buy five apples from the lady, and pay for 'em.'

"The man made up an ugly face, but he didn't want to be locked up, and so he paid me a dime for five apples."

"Dodger is very brave," said Florence. "Sometimes I think he is too daring. He is liable to get into trouble."

"If he does he'll get himself out of it, never you fear. Dodger can take care of himself."

Nine o'clock came, and Florence became alarmed. She had not been aware how much she had depended upon the company of her faithful friend, humble as his station was.

Again she went into Mrs. O'Keefe's room. The apple-woman had been out to buy some groceries and had just returned.

"I am getting anxious about Dodger," said Florence. "It is nine o'clock."

"And what's nine o'clock for a boy like him? Shure he's used to bein' out at all hours of the night."

"I shall feel relieved when he comes home. What should I do without him?"

"Shure I'd miss him myself; but it isn't the first time he has been out late."

"Perhaps that terrible Tim Bolton has got hold of him," suggested Florence.

"Tim isn't so bad, Florence. He isn't fit company for the likes of you, but there's worse men nor Tim."

"Didn't he send out Dodger to commit a burglary?"

"And if he hadn't you'd never made Dodger's acquaintance."

"That's true; but it doesn't make burglary any more excusable. Don't you really think Tim Bolton has got hold of him?"

"If he has, he won't keep him long, I'll make oath of that. He might keep him over night, but Dodger would come back in the morning."

Florence was somewhat cheered by Mrs. O'Keefe's refusal to believe that Dodger was in any serious trouble, but she could not wholly free herself from uneasiness.

When eleven o'clock came she went to bed very unwillingly, and got very little rest during the night. Morning came, and still Dodger did not show up. As we know, he was fairly started on his long voyage, though he had not yet recovered consciousness.

Florence took a very light breakfast, and at the usual time went to Mrs. Leighton's to meet her pupil. When the study hour was over, she did not remain to lunch, but hurried back, stopping at Mrs. O'Keefe's apple-stand just as that lady was preparing to go home to prepare dinner.

"Have you seen anything of Dodger, Mrs. O'Keefe?" asked Florence, breathlessly.

"No, I haven't, Florence. I've had my eye out watchin' for him, and he hasn't showed up."

"Is there anything we can do?" asked Florence, anxiously.

"Well, we might go around and see Tim--and find out whether he's got hold of him."

"Let us go at once."

"Shure I didn't know you cared so much for the boy," said Mrs. O'Keefe, with a shrewd look at Florence's anxious face.

"Why shouldn't I care for him? He is my only friend."

"Is he now? And what's the matter wid Bridget O'Keefe?" asked the woman.

"Excuse me, Mrs. O'Keefe. I know very well you are my friend, and a kind friend, too. I should not have forgotten you."

"It's all right, Florence. You're flustrated like, and that's why you forget me."

"I have so few friends that I can't spare one," continued Florence.

"That's so. Come along wid me, and we'll see what Tim has to tell us."

A short walk brought the two strangely assorted companions to the entrance of Tim Bolton's saloon. "I'm afraid to go in, Mrs. O'Keefe," said Florence.

"Come along wid me, my dear, I won't let anything harm you. You ain't used to such a place, but I've been here more than once to fill the growler. Be careful as you go down the steps, Florence."

Tim Bolton was standing behind the bar, and as he heard steps he looked carelessly toward the entrance, but when he saw Florence, his indifference vanished. He came from behind the bar, and advanced to meet her.

"Miss Linden," he said.

Florence shrank back and clung to her companion's arm.

"Is there anything I can do for you? I am a rough man, but I'm not so bad as you may think."

"That's what I told her, Tim," said Mrs. O'Keefe. "I told Florence there was worse men than you."

"Thank you, Mrs. O'Keefe. Can I offer you a glass of whiskey?"

The apple-woman was about to accept, but she felt an alarmed tug at her arm, and saw that Florence would be placed in an embarrassing position if she accepted. So, by an exercise of self-denial--for Mrs. O'Keefe was by no means insensible to the attractions of whiskey, though she never drank to excess--she said:

"Thank you kindly, Mr. Bolton. I won't take any just now; but I'll remind you of your offer another day."

"Have it your own way, Mrs. O'Keefe. And now, what can I do for you and Miss Linden?"

"Oh, Mr. Bolton," broke in Florence, unable to bear the suspense longer, "where is Dodger?"

Chapter XXV

Finding The Clew

Tim Bolton looked at Florence in undisguised astonishment.

"Dodger!" he repeated. "How should I know? I supposed that you had lured him away from me."

"He didn't like the business you were in. He preferred to make a living in some other way."

"Then why do you ask me where he is?"

"Because he did not come home last night. Shure he rooms at my house, "put in Mrs. O'Keefe, "and he hasn't showed up since----"

"And you thought I might have got hold of him?" said Bolton, inquiringly.

"Then you are mistaken. I haven't seen the boy for weeks."

Tim Bolton spoke so straightforwardly that there was no chance to doubt his word.

"When he was living with you, Mr. Bolton," continued Florence, "did he ever stay away like this?"

"No," answered Bolton. "Dodger was always very regular about comin' home."

"Then something must have happened to him," said Florence, anxiously.

"He might have got run in," suggested the apple-woman. "Some of them cops is mighty officious."

"Dodger would never do anything to deserve arrest," Florence said, quickly.

"Thru for you, Florence, but some innersent parties are nabbed. I know of one young man who was standin' on a strate corner waitin' for the cars, when a cop came up and arristed him for disorderly conduct."

"But that is shameful!" said Florence, indignantly.

"Thru for you, my dear. We might go round to the police headquarters and inquire if the boy's been run in."

"What do you think, Mr. Bolton?" asked Florence.

Tim Bolton seemed busy thinking. Finally he brought down his hand forcibly on the bar, and said: "I begin to see through it."

Florence did not speak, but she fixed an eager look of inquiry on the face of the saloon-keeper.

"I believe Curtis Waring is at the bottom of this," he said.

"My cousin!" exclaimed Florence, in astonishment.

"Yes, your cousin, Miss Linden."

"But what can he have against poor Dodger! Is it because the boy has taken my part and is a friend to me?"

"He wouldn't like him any better on account of hat; but he has another and a more powerful reason."

"Would you mind telling me what it is? I cannot conceive what it can be."

"At present," answered Bolton, cautiously, "I prefer to say nothing on the subject. I will only say the boy's disappearance interferes with my plans, and I will see if I can't find out what has become of him."

"If you only will, Mr. Bolton, I shall be so grateful. I am afraid I have misjudged you. I thought you were an enemy of Dodger's."

"Then you were mistaken. I have had the boy with me since he was a kid, and though I've been rough with him at times, maybe, I like him, and I may some time have a chance to show him that old Tim Bolton is one of his best friends."

"I will believe it now, Mr. Bolton," said Florence, impulsively, holding out her hand to the burly saloon-keeper.

He was surprised, but it was evident that he was pleased, also, and he took the little hand respectfully in his own ample palm, and pressed it in a friendly manner.

"There's one thing more I want you to believe, Miss Linden," he said, "and that is, that I am your friend, also."

"Thank you, Mr. Bolton. And now let us all work together to find Dodger."

"You can count on me, Miss Linden. If you'll tell me where you live I'll send or bring you any news I may hear."

"I live with Mrs. O'Keefe, my good friend, here."

"I haven't my kyard with me, Tim," said the apple-woman, "but I'll give you my strate and number. You know my place of business?"

"Yes."

"If you come to me there I'll let Florence know whatever you tell me. She is not always at home."

The two went away relieved in mind, for, helpless and bewildered as they were, they felt that Tim Bolton would make a valuable ally.

When they had gone Tim turned to Hooker and Briggs, who were lounging at a table, waiting for some generous customer to invite them to the bar.

"Boys," said Tim, "has either of you seen anything of Dodger lately?"

"No," answered the two in unison.

"Have you heard anything of him?"

"I heard that he was baggage-smashin' down by the steamboat landings," said Hooker.

"Go down there, both of you, and see if you can see or hear anything of him."

"All right, Tim."

And the two left the saloon and took a westerly route toward the North River piers.

Three hours later they returned.

"Have you heard anything?" asked Bolton. "Did you see Dodger?"

"No; we didn't see him."

"But you heard something?"

"Yes; we found a boy, a friend of his, that said the last he saw of Dodger was last evenin'."

"Where did he see him?"

"Near the pier of the Albany boats."

"What was he doin'?"

"Carryin' a valise for a man."

"What kind of a man? How did he look?"

"He had gray hair and gray whiskers."

Tim was puzzled by the description.

If, as he suspected, Curtis were concerned in the abduction, this man could not have been he.

"The man was a passenger by the Albany boat, I suppose?"

"No; that was what looked queer. Before the Albany boat came in the man was lyin' round with his valise, and the boy thought he was goin' off somewhere. But when the boat came in he just mixed in with the passengers, and came up to the entrance of the pier. Two boys asked to carry his valise, but he shook his head till Dodger came round, and he engaged him right off."

Tim Bolton nodded knowingly.

"It was a plan," he said. "The man wanted to get hold of Dodger. What puzzles me is, that you said he was an old man."

"His hair and beard were gray."

"And Curtis has no beard, and his hair is black."

"But the boy said he didn't look like an old man, except the hair. He walked off like a young man."

Tim Bolton's face lighted up with sudden intelligence.

"I'll bet a hat it was Curtis in disguise," he soliloquized.

"That's all we could find out, Mr. Bolton," said Briggs, with another longing look at the bar.

"It is enough! You have earned your whiskey. Walk up, gentlemen!"

Hooker and Briggs needed no second invitation.

"Will either of you take a note for me to Mrs. O'Keefe? For another drink, of course."

"I will, Tim," said Hooker, eagerly.

"No; take me, Mr. Bolton," entreated Briggs.

"You can both go," said Tim, generously. "Wait a minute, and I'll have it ready for you."

He found a half sheet of note paper, and scribbled on it this message:

"Mrs. O'Keefe:--Tell Miss Linden that I have a clew. I am almost surtin her cozen has got away with Dodger. He won't hurt him, but he will get him out of the city. Wen I hear more I will right.

T. Bolton"

Chapter XXVI

Bolton Makes A Discovery

"I see it all," Bolton said to himself, thoughtfully. "Curtis Waring is afraid of the boy--and of me. He's circumvented me neatly, and the game is his--so far my little plan is dished. I must find out for certain whether he's had anything to do with gettin' Dodger out of the way, and then, Tim Bolton, you must set your wits to work to spoil his little game."

Bolton succeeded in securing the services of a young man who had experience at tending bar, and about eight o'clock, after donning his best attire, he hailed a Fourth Avenue surface car and got aboard.

Getting out at the proper street, he made his way to Madison Avenue, and ascended the steps of John Linden's residence.

The door was opened by Jane, who eyed the visitor with no friendly glance.

"What do you want?" she asked, in a hostile tone.

"Is Mr. Waring at home?"

"I don't know."

"Is Miss Florence at home?"

"Do you know her?" she asked.

"Yes; I am a friend of hers."

Jane evidently thought that Florence must have made some queer friends.

"Have you seen her lately?" she asked eagerly.

"I saw her to-day."

"Is she well?"

"Yes; she is well, but she is in trouble."

"Is she---- Does she need any money?"

"No; it isn't that. The boy Dodger has disappeared, and she is afraid something has happened to him."

"Oh, I am so sorry! He was a good friend of Miss Florence."

"I see you know him. I am trying to help him and her."

"But you asked for Mr. Waring?" said Jane, suspiciously.

"So I did. Shall I tell you why?"

"I wish you would."

"I think he has something to do with gettin' Dodger out of the way, and I'm goin' to try to find out."

"He won't tell you."

"You don't understand. I shall make him think I am on his side. Was he at home last night?"

"He went away at dinner time, and he didn't come home till after twelve. I ought to know, for he forgot his latchkey, and I had to get up and let him in. I won't do it again. I'll let him stay out first."

"I see; he was with Dodger, no doubt. Did you say he was in?"

"No, sir; but he will be in directly. Won't you step into the library?"

"Shall I meet the old gentleman there?" asked Bolton, in a tone of hesitation.

"No. He goes up to his chamber directly after dinner."

"How is he?"

"I think he's failing."

"I hope there is no immediate danger," said Bolton, anxiously.

"No; but he's worrying about Miss Florence. It's my belief that if she were at home, he'd live a good while."

"Doesn't he ask for her?"

"Mr. Curtis tells him she'll come round soon if he'll only be firm. I don't see, for my part, why Mr. Linden wants her to marry such a disagreeable man. There's plenty better husbands she could get. Come in, sir, and I'll tell him as soon as he comes in. Shall you see Miss Florence soon?"

"I think so."

"Then tell her not to give up. Things will come right some time."

"I'll tell her."

Bolton was ushered into the library, where, amid the fashionable furniture he looked quite out of place. He did not feel so, however, for he drew a cigar out of his pocket and, lighting it nonchalantly, leaned back in a luxurious armchair and began to smoke.

"Curtis Waring is well fixed--that's a fact!" he soliloquized. "I suppose he is the master here, for the old man isn't likely to interfere. Still he will like it better when his uncle is out of the way."

He had to wait but fifteen minutes in solitude, for at the end of that time Curtis Waring appeared.

He paused on the threshold, and frowned when he saw who it was that awaited him.

"Jane told me that a gentleman was waiting to see me," he said.

"Well, she was right."

"And you, I suppose, are the gentleman?" said Curtis, in a sneering tone.

"Yes; I am the gentleman," remarked Bolton, coolly.

"I am not in the habit of receiving visits from gentlemen of your class. However, I suppose you have an object in calling."

"It shall go hard with me if I don't pay you for your sneers someday," thought Bolton; but he remained outwardly unruffled.

"Well," he answered, "I can't say that I have any particular business to see you about. I saw your cousin recently."

"Florence?" asked Curtis, eagerly.

"Yes."

"What did she say? Did you speak with her?"

"Yes. She doesn't seem any more willin' to marry you."

Curtis Waring frowned.

"She is a foolish girl," he said. "She doesn't know her own mind."

"She looks to me like a gal that knows her own mind particularly well."

"Pshaw! what can you know about it?"

"Then you really expect to marry her some time, Mr. Waring?"

"Certainly I do."

"And to inherit your uncle's fortune?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"I was thinkin' of the boy."

"The boy is dead----"

"What!" exclaimed Bolton, jumping to his feet in irresistible excitement.

"Don't be a fool. Wait till I finish my sentence. He is dead so far as his prospects are concerned. Who is there that can identify him with the lost child of John Linden?"

"I can."

"Yes; if any one would believe you. However, it is for your interest to keep silent."

"That is just what I want to know. I suppose you can make it for my interest."

"Yes, and will--after I get the property. I don't believe in counting my chickens before they are hatched."

"Of course you know that the boy has left me?" said Bolton.

"Yes," answered Curtis, indifferently. "He is with my cousin, I believe."

"Yes; and through her I can learn where he is, and get hold of him if I desire."

A cynical smile played over the face of Curtis Waring.

"Do you propose to get him back?" he asked, shrugging his shoulder

"I am right," thought Bolton, shrewdly. "From his manner it is easy to see that Curtis is quite at ease as regards Dodger. He knows where he is!"

"You asked me what business I came about, Mr. Waring," he said, after a pause.

"Yes."

"Of course I am devoted to your interests, but is it quite fair to make me wait till you come into your fortune before allowing me anything?"

"I think so."

"You don't seem to consider that I can bring the boy here and make him known to your uncle as the son he lost so long ago?"

"You are quite sure you can bring the boy here?" asked Curtis.

"Why not? I have only to go to Florence and ask her to send the boy to me."

"You are quite at liberty to do so if you like, Tim Bolton," said Curtis, with a mocking smile. "I am glad, at any rate, that you have shown me what is in your mind. You are very sharp, but you are not quite so sharp as I am."

"I don't understand you."

"Then I will be more explicit. It's out of your power to make use of the boy against me, because----"

"Well?"

"Because he is not in the city."

"Where is he, then?"

"Where you are not likely to find him."

"If you have killed him----" Bolton began, but Curtis interrupted him.

"The boy is safe--I will tell you that much," he said; "but for reasons which you can guess, I think it better that he should be out of New York. When the proper time comes, and all is safe, he may come back, but not in time to help you in your cunning plans, Mr. Tim Bolton."

"Then, I suppose," said Bolton, assuming an air of mortification and discomfiture, "it is no use for me to remain here any longer."

"You are quite right. I wish you a pleasant journey home. Give my love to Florence when you see her."

"That man is a fiend!" soliloquized Bolton, as he walked back, leisurely, to his place of business. "Let me get hold of Dodger and I will foil him yet!"

Chapter XXVII

Dodger Strikes Luck

When Dodger landed in San Francisco, in spite of the fact that he had made the journey against his will, he felt a natural exhilaration and pleasure in the new and striking circumstances and scenes in which he found himself placed.

It was in the year 1877, and the city was by no means what it is now. Yet it probably contained not far from two hundred thousand people, lively, earnest, enterprising. All seemed busy and hopeful, and Dodger caught the contagion.

As he walked with the reporter to a modest hotel, where the rates were a dollar and a half a day, not far from Montgomery Street, Randolph Leslie asked:

"How do you like San Francisco thus far, Arthur?"

It will be remembered that Dodger, feeling that the name by which he had hitherto been known was hardly likely to recommend him, adopted the one given him by Curtis Waring.

"I think I shall like it ever so much," answered Dodger. "Everybody seems to be wide awake."

"Do you think you will like it better than New York?"

"I think a poor boy will have more of a chance of making a living here. In New York I was too well known. If I got a place anywhere some one would recognize me as Tim Bolton's boy--accustomed to tend bar--or some gentleman would remember that he had bought papers of me. Here nobody knows me, and I can start fair."

"There is a great deal in what you say," returned Leslie. "What do you think of trying to do?"

"First of all I will write a letter to Florence, and tell her I am all right. How long does it take a letter to go from here to New York?"

"About seven days."

"And it took us over four months! That seems wonderful."

"Yes; there is a great difference between coming by sea around Cape Horn and speeding across the country on an express train."

"If I could only know how Florence is getting along," Dodger said, anxiously. "I suppose she thinks I am dead."

"You forget the letter you gave to the vessel we spoke off the coast of Brazil."

"Yes; but do you think it went straight?"

"The chances are in favor of it. However, your idea is a good one. Write, by all means, and then we will discuss future plans."

"What are your plans, Mr. Leslie?"

"I shall try to secure a reporter's berth on one of the daily papers-- the *_Call_* or *_Chronicle_*. I will wait a few days, however, as I have a few hundred dollars by me, and can afford to take a little time to look around."

"I wish I were as well provided; but I have less than twenty-five dollars."

"Don't worry about that, Arthur," said Randolph, laying his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder. "I shall not allow you to want."

"Thank you, Mr. Leslie," said Dodger, gratefully. "It's something new to me to have a friend like you. But I don't want to be any expense to you. I am large enough and strong enough to earn my own living."

"True; and I feel sure you will have a chance in this enterprising city."

They bought copies of the day's papers, and Dodger looked eagerly over the advertising columns.

At length he saw an advertisement that read as follows:

WANTED – *A young man of 18 or 20 to assist in the office of a local express.*
Inquire at No. ---- St."

"Do you think I would answer for such a place?" he asked.

"I don't see why not. At any rate, 'nothing venture, nothing gain.' You may as well go around and inquire. And, by the way, as your suit is rather shabby, let me lend you one of mine. We are of nearly the same size."

"Thank you, Mr. Leslie."

"Fine feathers make fine birds, you know, and a neat dress always increases the chances of an applicant for employment, though, when it is carried too far, it is apt to excite suspicion. I remember a friend of mine advertised for a bookkeeper. Among the applicants was a young man wearing a sixty-dollar suit, a ruffled shirt, a handsome gold watch and a diamond pin. He was a man of taste, and

he was strongly impressed with the young man's elegant appearance. So, largely upon the strength of these, he engaged him, and in less than six months discovered that he had been swindled to the extent of eight hundred dollars by his aesthetic bookkeeper."

"Then I will leave my diamond pin at home," said Dodger, smiling. "Suppose they ask me for recommendations?"

"I will go with you and indorse you. I happen to know one or two prominent gentlemen in San Francisco-- among them the president of a bank--and I presume my indorsement will be sufficient."

Dodger went back to the hotel, put on a suit of Mr. Leslie's, got his boots blacked, and then, in company with the young reporter, went to the express office.

"I am afraid some one will have been engaged already," said the reporter; "but if not, your chances will be good."

They entered a good-sized office on a prominent street, and Dodger inquired for Mr. Tucker.

A small man of about forty, keen-eyed and alert, eyed him attentively.

"I am Mr. Tucker," he said.

"I saw your advertisement for an assistant, Mr. Tucker," said Dodger, modestly; "have you filled the place?"

"Let me see," said Tucker, reflectively, "you are the ninth young man who has applied--but the place is still open."

"Then I am afraid you won't want me, as you have rejected so many."

"I don't know. How long have you been in the city?"

"I only just arrived."

"Where from?"

"From New York."

"Have you any idea of going to the mines when you get money enough?"

"I think I would prefer to remain in the city."

"Good! How is your education?"

"I have never been to college," answered Dodger, with a smile.

"Good! I don't care for your college men. I am a practical man myself."

"I am a poor scholar, but Mr. Leslie tells me I write a fair hand."

"Let me see a specimen of your writing."

Now Dodger had taken special pains on the voyage to improve his penmanship, with excellent results.

So it happened that the specimen which he furnished had the good fortune to please Mr. Tucker.

"Good!" he said. "You will, a part of the time, be taking orders. Your handwriting is plain and will do. Never mind

about Latin and Greek. You won't need it. Chinese would be more serviceable to you here. When can you go to work?"

"Tomorrow morning. Today, if necessary," answered Dodger, promptly.

Mr. Tucker seemed pleased with his answer.

"Tomorrow morning let it be, then! Hours are from eight in the morning till six at night."

"Very well, sir."

"Your wages will be fifteen dollars a week. How will that suit you?"

Dodger wanted to indulge in a loud whoop of exultation, for fifteen dollars was beyond his wildest hopes; but he was too politic to express his delight. So he contented himself with saying:

"I shall be quite satisfied with that."

"Oh, by the way, I suppose I ought to have some reference," said Mr. Tucker, "though as a general thing I judge a good deal by outward appearance."

"I can refer you to my friend, Mr. Leslie, here."

"And who will indorse him?" asked the expressman, shrewdly.

Leslie smiled.

"I see, Mr. Tucker, you are a thorough man of business. I can refer you to Mr. ----, president of the ---- Bank in this city."

"That is sufficient, sir. I am sure you would not refer me to him unless you felt satisfied that he would speak favorably of you. I won't, therefore, take the trouble to inquire. Where are you staying?"

"At the Pacific Hotel; but we shall take a private apartment within a day or two."

As they passed out of the office, Randolph Leslie said:

"You've done splendidly, Arthur."

"Haven't I? I feel like a millionaire."

"As you are to go to work to-morrow, we may as well take up a room at once. It will be cheaper."

In a short time they had engaged a neat suite of rooms, two in number, not far from the Palace Hotel, at twenty dollars per month.

The next day Leslie procured a position on the San Francisco Chronicle at twenty-five dollars per week.



Chapter XXVIII

Florence Receives A Letter

The discovery, through Tim Bolton, that Curtis Waring had a hand in the disappearance of Dodger, partially relieved the anxiety of Florence--but only partially.

He might be detained in captivity, but even that was far better than an accident to life or limb.

She knew that he would try to get word to her at the earliest opportunity, in order to relieve her fears.

But week after week passed, and no tidings came.

At length, at the end of ten weeks, a note came to her, written on a rough sheet of paper, the envelope marked by a foreign stamp. It ran thus:

Dear Florence:--

I am sure you have worried over my disappearance. Perhaps you thought I was dead, but I was never better in my life. I am on the ship Columbia, bound for San Francisco, around Cape Horn; and just now, as one of the officers tells me, we are off the coast of Brazil.

There is a ship coming north, and we are going to hail her and give her letters to carry home, so I hope these few lines will reach you all right. I suppose I am in for it, and must keep on to San Francisco. But I haven't told you yet how I came here.

It was through a trick of your cousin, Curtis Waring. I haven't time to tell you about it; but I was drugged and brought aboard in my sleep; when I woke up I was forty miles at sea.

Don't worry about me, for I have a good friend on board, Mr. Randolph Leslie, who has been a reporter on one of the New York daily papers. He advises me to get something to do in San Francisco, and work till I have earned money enough to get home. He says I can do better there, where I am not known, and can get higher pay. He is giving me lessons every day, and he says I am learning fast.

The ship is almost here, and I must stop. Take good care of yourself, and remember me to Mrs. O'Keefe, and I will write you again as soon as I get to San Francisco.

Dodger.

P. S.--Don't let on to Curtis that you have heard from me, or he might try to play me some trick in San Francisco.

Florence's face was radiant when she had read the letter.

Dodger was alive, well, and in good spirits. The letter arrived during the afternoon, and she put on her street dress at once and went over to the apple-stand and read the letter to Mrs. O'Keefe.

"Well, well!" ejaculated the apple-woman. "So it's that ould thafe of the worruld, Curtis Waring, that has got hold of poor Dodger, just as Tim told us. It seems mighty quare to me that he should want to stale poor Dodger. If it was you, now, I could understand it."

"It seems strange to me, Mrs. O'Keefe," said Florence, thoughtfully. "I thought it might be because Dodger was my friend, but that doesn't seem to be sufficient explanation. Don't you think we ought to show this letter to Mr. Bolton?"

"I was going to suggest that same. If you'll give it to me, Florence, I'll get Mattie to tend my stand, and slip round wid it to Tim's right off."

"I will go with you, Mrs. O'Keefe."

Mattie, who was playing around the corner, was summoned.

"Now, Mattie, just mind the stand, and don't be runnin' away, or themboys will get away wid my whole mornin's profits. Do you hear?"

"Yes, mum."

"And don't you be eatin' all the while you are here. Here's one apple you can have," and the apple-woman carefully picked out one that she considered unsalable.

"That's specked, Mrs. O'Keefe," objected Mattie.

"And what if it is? Can't you bite out the specks? The rest of the apple is good. You're gettin' mighty particular."

Mattie bit a piece out of the sound part of the apple, and, when Mrs. O'Keefe was at a safe distance, gave the rest to a lame bootblack, and picked out one of the best apples for her own eating.

"Bridget O'Keefe is awful mane wid her apples!" soliloquized Mattie, "but I'm too smart for her. Tryin' to pass off one of her old specked apples on me! If I don't take three good one I'm a sinner."

Arrived at the front of the saloon, Mrs. O'Keefe penetrated the interior, and met Tim near the door.

"Have you come in for some whiskey, old lady?" asked Tim, in a jesting tone.

"I'll take that by and by. Florence is outside, and we've got some news for you."

"Won't she come in?"

"No; she don't like to be seen in a place like this. She's got a letter from Dodger."

"You don't mean it!" ejaculated Tim, with sudden interest. "Where is he?"

"Come out and see."

"Good afternoon, Miss Linden," said Tim, gallantly. "So you've news from Dodger?"

"Yes; here is the letter."

Bolton read it through attentively.

"Curtis is smart," he said, as he handed it back. "He couldn't have thought of a better plan for getting rid of the boy. It will take several months for him to reach 'Frisco, and after that he can't get back, for he won't have any money."

"Dodger says he will try to save money enough to pay his way back."

"It will take him a good while."

"It doesn't take long to come back by cars, does it?"

"No; but it costs a great deal of money. Why, it may take Dodger a year to earn enough to pay his way back on the railroad."

"A year!" exclaimed Florence, in genuine dismay—"a year, in addition to the time it takes to go out there! Where will we all be at the end of that time?"

"Not in jail, I hope," answered Bolton, jocularly. "I am afraid your uncle will no longer be in the land of the living."

A shadow came over Florence's face.

"Poor Uncle John!" she said, sadly. "It is terrible to think he may die thinking hardly of me."

"Leavin' his whole fortune to Curtis," continued Tim.

"That is the least thing that troubles me," said Florence.

"A woman's a queer thing," said Tim, shrugging his shoulders. "Here's a fortune of maybe half a million, and half of it rightfully yours, and you don't give it a thought."

"Not compared with the loss of my uncle's affections."

"Money is a great deal more practical than affection."

"Perhaps so, from your standpoint, Mr. Bolton," said Florence, with dignity.

"No offense, miss. When you've lived as long as I, you'll look at things different. Well, I'm glad to hear from the lad. If Curtis had done him any harm, I'd have got even with him if it sent me to jail."

A quiet, determined look replaced Tim Bolton's usual expression of easy good humor. He could not have said anything that would have ingratiated him more with Florence.

"Thank you, Mr. Bolton," she said, earnestly. "I shall always count upon your help. I believe you are a true friend of Dodger----"

"And of yours, too, miss----"

"I believe it," she said, with a smile that quite captivated Tim.

"If it would be any satisfaction to you, Miss Florence," he continued, "I'll give Curtis Waring a lickin'. He

deserves it for persecutin' you and gettin' you turned out of your uncle's house."

"Thank you, Mr. Bolton; it wouldn't be any satisfaction to me to see Curtis injured in any way."

"You're too good a Christian, you are, Miss Florence."

"I wish I deserved your praise, but I can hardly lay claim to it. Now, Mr. Bolton, tell me what can I do to help Dodger?"

"I don't see that you can do anything now, as it will be most three months before he reaches 'Frisco. You might write to him toward the time he gets there."

"I will."

"Direct to the post office. I think he'll have sense enough to ask for letters."

"I wish I could send him some money. I am afraid he will land penniless."

"If he lands in good health you can trust him for makin' a livin'. A New York boy, brought up as he was, isn't goin' to starve where there are papers to sell and errands to run. Why, he'll light on his feet in 'Frisco, take my word for it."

Florence felt a good deal encouraged by Tim's words of assurance, and she went home with her heart perceptibly lightened.

But she was soon to have trials of her own, which for the time being would make her forgetful of Dodger.

Chapter XXIX

Mrs. Leighton's Party

"Miss Linden," said Mrs. Leighton, one day in the fourth month of Dodger's absence, "Carrie has perhaps told you that I give a party next Thursday evening."

"She told me," answered the governess.

"I expected Prof. Bouvier to furnish dancing music--in fact, I had engaged him--but I have just received a note stating that he is unwell, and I am left unprovided. It is very inconsiderate on his part," added the lady, in a tone of annoyance.

Florence did not reply. She took rather a different view of the professor's letter, and did not care to offend Mrs. Leighton.

"Under the circumstances," continued the lady, "it has occurred to me that, as you are really quite a nice performer, you might fill his place. I shall be willing to allow you a dollar for the evening. What do you say?"

Florence felt embarrassed. She shrank from appearing in society in her present separation from her family, yet could think of no good excuse. Noticing her hesitation, Mrs. Leighton added, patronizingly:

"On second thought, I will pay you a dollar and a half"--Prof. Bouvier was to have charged ten dollars--"and you will be kind enough to come in your best attire. You seem to be well provided with dresses."

"Yes, madam, there will be no difficulty on that score."

"Nor on any other, I hope. As governess in my family, I think I have a right to command your services."

"I will come," said Florence, meekly. She felt that it would not do to refuse after this.

As she entered the handsomely decorated rooms on the night of the party, she looked around her nervously, fearing to see some one whom she had known in earlier days. She noticed one only--Percy de Brabazon, whose face lighted up when he saw her, for he had been expecting to see her.

She managed to convey a caution by a quiet movement, as it would not be wise for Mrs. Leighton to know of their previous acquaintance. But Percy was determined to get an opportunity to speak to her.

"Who is that young lady, Aunt Mary?" he asked. "The one standing near the piano."

"That is Carrie's governess," answered Mrs. Leighton, carelessly.

"She seems quite a ladylike person."

"Yes. I understand she has seen better days. She is to play for us in the absence of Prof. Bouvier."

"Will you introduce me, aunt?"

"Why?" asked Mrs. Leighton, with a searching look.

"I should like to inquire about Carrie's progress in her studies," said the cunning Percy.

"Oh, certainly," answered the aunt, quite deceived by his words.

"Miss Linden," she said, "let me introduce my nephew, Mr. de Brabazon. He wishes to inquire about Carrie's progress in her studies."

And the lady sailed off to another part of the room.

"I can assure you, Mr. de Brabazon," said Florence, "that my young charge is making excellent progress."

"I can easily believe it, under your instruction," said Percy.

"I am very glad you take such an interest in your cousin," added Florence, with a smile. "It does you great credit."

"It's only an excuse, you know, to get a chance to talk with you, Miss Linden. May I say Miss Florence?"

"No," answered Florence, decidedly. "It won't do. You must be very formal."

"Then tell me how you like teaching."

"Very well, indeed."

"It must be an awful bore, I think."

"I don't think so. Carrie is a warm-hearted, affectionate girl. Besides, she is very bright and gives me very little trouble."

"Don't you think you could take another pupil, Miss Linden?"

"A young girl?"

"No, a young man. In fact, myself."

"What could I teach you, Mr. de Brabazon?"

"Lots of things. I am not very sound in--in spelling and grammar."

"What a pity!" answered Florence, with mock seriousness. "I am afraid your aunt would hardly consent to have a boy of your size in the schoolroom."

"Then perhaps you could give me some private lessons in the afternoon?"

"That would not be possible."

Just then Mrs. Leighton came up.

"Well," she said, "what does Miss Linden say of Carrie?"

"She has quite satisfied my mind about her," answered Percy, with excusable duplicity. "I think her methods are excellent. I was telling her that I might be able to procure her another pupil."

"I have no objection, as long as it does not interfere with Carrie's hours. Miss Linden, there is a call for music. Will you go to the piano and play a Strauss waltz?"

Florence inclined her head obediently.

"Let me escort you to the piano, Miss Linden," said Percy.

"Thank you," answered Florence, in a formal tone.

For an hour Florence was engaged in playing waltzes, gallops and lancers music. Then a lady who was proud of her daughter's proficiency volunteered her services to relieve Florence.

"Now you can dance yourself," said Percy, in a low tone. "Will you give me a waltz?"

"Not at once. Wait till the second dance."

Percy de Brabazon was prompt in presenting himself as soon as permitted, and he led Florence out for a dance.

Both were excellent dancers, and attracted general attention.

Florence really enjoyed dancing, and forgot for a time that she was only a guest on sufferance, as she moved with rhythmic grace about the handsome rooms.

Percy was disposed to prolong the dance, but Florence was cautious.

"I think I will rest now, Mr. de Brabazon," she said.

"You will favor me again later in the evening?" he pleaded.

"I hardly think it will be wise."

But when, half an hour later, he asked her again, Florence could not find it in her heart to say no. It would have been wise if she had done so. A pair of jealous eyes was fixed upon her. Miss Emily Carter had for a considerable time tried to fascinate Mr. de Brabazon, whose wealth made him a very desirable match, and she viewed his decided penchant for Florence with alarm and indignation.

"To be thrown in the shade by a governess is really too humiliating!" she murmured to herself in vexation. "If it were a girl in my own station I should not care so much," and she eyed Florence with marked hostility.

"Mamma," she said, "do you see how Mr. de Brabazon is carrying on with Mrs. Leighton's governess? Really, I think it very discreditable."

Mrs. Carter looked through her gold eye-glasses at the couple.

"Is the girl really a governess?" she added. "She is very well dressed."

"I don't know where she got her dress, but she is really a governess."

"She seems very bold."

"So she does."

Poor Florence! She was far from deserving their unkindly remarks.

"I suppose she is trying to ensnare young de Brabazon," said Emily, spitefully. "People of her class are very artful. Don't you think it would be well to call Mrs. Leighton's attention? Percy de Brabazon is her nephew, you know."

"True. The suggestion is a good one, Emily."

Mrs. Carter was quite as desirous as her daughter of bringing about an alliance with Percy, and she readily agreed to second her plans.

She looked about for Mrs. Leighton, and took a seat at her side.

"Your nephew seems quite attentive to your governess," she commenced.

"Indeed! In what way?"

"He has danced with her three or four times, I believe. It looks rather marked."

"So it does," said Mrs. Leighton. "He is quite inconsiderate."

"Oh, well, it is of no great consequence. She is quite stylish for a governess, and doubtless your nephew is taken with her."

"That will not suit my views at all," said Mrs. Leighton, coldly. "I shall speak to her to-morrow."

"Pray don't. It really is a matter of small consequence—quite natural, in fact."

"Leave the matter with me. You have done quite right in mentioning it."

At twelve o'clock the next day, when Florence had just completed her lessons with Carrie, Mrs. Leighton entered the room.

"Please remain a moment, Miss Linden," she said. "I have a few words to say to you."

Mrs. Leighton's tone was cold and unfriendly, and Florence felt that something unpleasant was coming.

Chapter XXX

Florence Is Followed Home

"I am listening, madam," said Florence, inclining her head.

"I wish to speak to you about last evening, Miss Linden."

"I hope my playing was satisfactory, Mrs. Leighton. I did my best."

"I have no fault to find with your music. It came up to my expectations."

"I am glad of that, madam."

"I referred, rather, to your behavior, Miss Linden."

"I don't understand you, Mrs. Leighton," Florence responded, in unaffected surprise. "Please explain."

"You danced several times with my nephew, Mr. Percy de Brabazon."

"Twice, madam."

"I understood it was oftener. However, that is immaterial. You hardly seemed conscious of your position."

"What was my position, Mrs. Leighton?" asked Florence, quietly, looking her employer in the face. "Well--ahem!" answered Mrs. Leighton, a little ill at ease, "you were a hired musician."

"Well?"

"And you acted as if you were an invited guest."

"I am sorry you did not give me instructions as to my conduct," said the governess, coldly. "I should not have danced if I had been aware that it was prohibited."

"I am sorry, Miss Linden, that you persist in misunderstanding me. Mr. de Brabazon, being in a different social position from yourself, it looked hardly proper that he should have devoted himself to you more than to any other lady."

"Did he? I was not aware of it. Don't you think, under the circumstances, that he is the one whom you should take to task? I didn't invite his attentions."

"You seemed glad to receive them."

"I was. He is undoubtedly a gentleman."

"Certainly he is. He is my nephew."

"It was not my part to instruct him as to what was proper, surely."

"You are very plausible. Miss Linden, I think it right to tell you that your conduct was commented upon by one of my lady guests as unbecoming. However, I will remember, in extenuation, that you are unaccustomed to society, and doubtless erred ignorantly."

Florence bowed, but forbore to make any remark.

"Do you wish to speak further to me, Mrs. Leighton?"

"No, I think not."

"Then I will bid you good-morning."

When the governess had left the house, Mrs. Leighton asked herself whether in her encounter with her governess the victory rested with her, and she was forced to acknowledge that it was at least a matter of doubt.

"Miss Linden is a faithful teacher, but she does not appear to appreciate the difference that exists between her and my guests. I think, however, that upon reflection, she will see that I am right in my stricture upon her conduct."

Florence left the house indignant and mortified. It was something new to her to be regarded as a social inferior, and she felt sure that there were many in Mrs. Leighton's position who would have seen no harm in her behavior on the previous evening.

Four days afterward, when Florence entered the Madison Avenue car to ride downtown, she had scarcely reached her seat when an eager voice addressed her:

"Miss Linden, how fortunate I am in meeting you!"

Florence looked up and saw Mr. de Brabazon sitting nearly opposite her.

Though she felt an esteem for him, she was sorry to see him, for, with Mrs. Leighton's rebuke fresh in her mind, it could only be a source of embarrassment, and, if discovered, subject her in all probability to a fresh reprimand.

"You are kind to say so, Mr. de Brabazon."

"Not at all. I hoped I might meet you again soon. What a pleasant time we had at the party."

"I thought so at the time, but the next day I changed my mind."

"Why, may I ask?"

"Because your aunt, Mrs. Leighton, took me to task for dancing with you twice."

"Was she so absurd?" ejaculated Percy.

"It is not necessarily absurd. She said our social positions were so different that it was unbecoming for me to receive attention from you."

"Rubbish!" exclaimed Percy, warmly.

"I am afraid I ought not to listen to such strictures upon the words of my employer."

"I wish you didn't have to teach."

"I can't join you in that wish. I enjoy my work."

"But you ought to be relieved from the necessity."

"We must accept things as we find them," said Florence, gravely.

"There is a way out of it," said Percy, quickly. "You understand me, do you not?"

"I think I do, Mr. de Brabazon, and I am grateful to you, but I am afraid it can never be."

Percy remained silent.

"How far are you going?" asked Florence, uneasily, for she did not care to have her companion learn where she lived.

"I intend to get out at Fourteenth Street."

"Then I must bid you good-afternoon, for we are already at Fifteenth Street."

"If I can be of any service to you, I will ride farther."

"Thank you," said Florence, hastily, "but it is quite unnecessary."

"Then, good morning!"

And Percy descended from the car.

In another part of the car sat a young lady, who listened with sensations far from pleasant to the conversation that had taken place between Florence and Mr. de Brabazon.

It was Emily Carter, whose jealousy had been excited on the evening of the party. She dropped her veil, fearing to be recognized by Mr. de Brabazon, with whom she was well acquainted. She, too, had intended getting off at Fourteenth Street, but decided to remain longer in the car.

"I will find out where that girl lives," she resolved. "Her conduct with Percy de Brabazon is positively disgraceful. She is evidently doing her best to captivate him. I feel that it is due to Mrs. Leighton, who would be shocked at the thought of her nephew's making a low alliance, to find out all I can, and put her on her guard."

She kept her seat, still keeping her veil down, for it was possible that Florence might recognize her; and the car moved steadily onward till it turned into the Bowery.

"Where on earth is she leading me?" Miss Carter asked herself. "I have never been in this neighborhood before. However, it won't do to give up, when I am, perhaps, on the verge of some important discoveries."

Still the car sped on. Not far from Grand Street, Florence left the car, followed, though she was unconscious of it, by her aristocratic fellow-passenger.

Florence stopped a moment to speak to Mrs. O'Keefe at her apple-stand.

"So you're through wid your work, Florence. Are you goin' home?"

"Yes, Mrs. O'Keefe."

"Then I'll go wid you, for I've got a nasty headache, and I'll lie down for an hour."

They crossed the street, not noticing the veiled young lady, who followed within ear shot, and listened to their conversation. At length they reached the tenement house--Florence's humble home—and went in.

"I've learned more than I bargained for," said Emily Carter, in malicious exultation. "I am well repaid for coming to this horrid part of the city. I wonder if Mr. de Brabazon knows where his charmer lives? I will see that Mrs. Leighton knows, at any rate."

Chapter XXXI

Florence Is Discharged

Mrs. Leighton sat in her boudoir with a stern face and tightly compressed lips. Miss Carter had called the previous afternoon and informed her of the astounding discoveries she had made respecting the governess.

She rang the bell.

"Janet," she said, "when the governess comes you may bring her up here to me."

"Yes, ma'am."

"She's going to catch it--I wonder what for?" thought Janet, as she noted the grim visage of her employer.

So when Florence entered the house she was told that Mrs. Leighton wished to see her at once.

"I wonder what's the matter now?" she asked herself. "Has she heard of my meeting her nephew in the car?"

When she entered the room she saw at once that something was wrong.

"You wished to see me, Mrs. Leighton?" she said.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Leighton, grimly. "Will you be seated?"

Florence sat down a few feet from her employer and waited for an explanation.

She certainly was not prepared for Mrs. Leighton's first words:

"Miss Linden, where do you live?"

Florence started, and her face flushed.

"I live in the lower part of the city," she answered, with hesitation.

"That is not sufficiently definite."

"I live at No. 27 -- Street."

"I think that is east of the Bowery."

"You are right, madam."

"You lodge with an apple-woman, do you not?"

"I do," answered Florence, calmly.

"In a tenement house?"

"Yes, madam."

"And you actually come from such a squalid home to instruct my daughter!" exclaimed Mrs. Leighton, indignantly. "It is a wonder you have not brought some terrible disease into the house."

"There has been no case of disease in the humble dwelling in which I make my home. I should be as sorry to expose your daughter to any danger of that kind as you would be to have me."

"It is a merciful dispensation of Providence, for which I ought to be truly thankful. But the idea of receiving in my house an inmate of a tenement house! I am truly shocked. Is this apple-woman your mother?"

"I assure you that she is not," answered Florence, with a smile which she could not repress.

"Or your aunt?"

"She is in no way related to me. She is an humble friend."

"Miss Linden, your tastes must be low to select such a home and such a friend."

"The state of my purse had something to do with the selection, and the kindness shown me by Mrs. O'Keefe, when I needed a friend, will explain my location further."

"That is not all. You met in the Madison Avenue car yesterday my nephew, Mr. Percy de Brabazon."

"It is coming," thought Florence. "Who could have seen us?" Then aloud:

"Yes, madam."

"Was it by appointment?"

"Do you mean to insult me, Mrs. Leighton?" demanded Florence, rising and looking at the lady with flashing eyes.

"I never insult anybody," replied Mrs. Leighton. "Pray, resume your seat."

Florence did so.

"Then I may assume that it was accidental. You talked together with the freedom of old friends?"

"You are correctly informed."

"You seem to make acquaintances very readily, Miss Linden. It seems singular, to say the least, that after meeting my nephew for a single evening, you should become such intimate friends."

"You will be surprised, Mrs. Leighton, when I say that Mr. de Brabazon and I are old friends. We have met frequently."

"Where, in Heaven's name?" ejaculated Mrs. Leighton.

"At my residence."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the scandalized lady. "Does my nephew Percy visit at the house of this apple-woman?"

"No, madam. He does not know where I live."

"Then you will explain your previous statement?" said Mrs. Leighton, haughtily.

"I am at present suffering reversed circumstances. It is but a short time since I was very differently situated."

"I won't inquire into your change of circumstances. I feel compelled to perform an unpleasant duty."

Florence did not feel called upon to make any reply, but waited for Mrs. Leighton to finish speaking.

"I shall be obliged to dispense with your services as my daughter's governess. It is quite out of the question for me to employ a person who lives in a tenement-house."

Florence bowed acquiescence, but she felt very sad. She had become attached to her young charge, and it cost her a pang to part from her.

Besides, how was she to supply the income of which this would deprive her?

"I bow to your decision, madam," she said, with proud humility.

"You will find here the sum that I owe you, with payment for an extra week in lieu of notice."

"Thank you. May I bid Carrie good-by, Mrs. Leighton?"

"It is better not to do so, I think. The more quietly we dissolve our unfortunate connection the better!"

Florence's heart swelled, and the tears came to her eyes, but she could not press her request.

She was destined, however, to obtain the privilege which Mrs. Leighton denied her. Carrie, who had become impatient, came downstairs and burst into the room.

"What keeps you so long, Miss Linden?" she said. "Is mamma keeping you?"

Florence was silent, leaving the explanations to Mrs. Leighton.

"Miss Linden has resigned her position as your governess, Carrie."

"Miss Linden going away! I won't have her go! What makes you go, Miss

Linden?"

"Your mamma thinks it best," answered Florence, with moistened eyes.

"Well, I don't!" exclaimed Carrie, stamping her foot, angrily. "I won't have any other governess but you."

"Carrie, you are behaving very unbecomingly," said her mother.

"Will you tell me, mamma, why you are sending Miss Linden away?"

"I will tell you some other time."

"But I want to know now."

"I am very much displeased with you, Carrie."

"And I am very much displeased with you, mamma."

I do not pretend to defend Carrie, whose conduct was hardly respectful enough to her mother; but with all her

faults she had a warm heart, while her mother had always been cold and selfish.

"I am getting tired of this," said Mrs. Leighton. "Miss Linden, as you are here to-day, you may give Carrie the usual lessons. As I shall be out when you get through, I bid you good-by now."

"Good-by, Mrs. Leighton."

Carrie and Florence went to the schoolroom for the last time.

Florence gave her young pupil a partial explanation of the cause which had led to her discharge.

"What do I care if you live in a poor house, Miss Linden?" said Carrie, impetuously. "I will make mamma take you back!"

Florence smiled; but she knew that there would be no return for her.

When she reached her humble home she had a severe headache and lay down. Mrs. O'Keefe came in later to see her.

"And what's the matter with you, Florence?" she asked.

"I have a bad headache, Mrs. O'Keefe."

"You work too hard, Florence, wid your teacher. That is what gives you the headache."

"Then I shan't have it again, for I have got through with my teaching."

"What's that you say?"

"I am discharged."

"And what's it all about?"

Florence explained matters. Mrs. O'Keefe became indignant.

"She's a mean trollop, that Mrs. Leighton!" she exclaimed, "and I'd like to tell her so to her face. Where does she live?"

"It will do no good to interfere, my good friend. She is not willing to receive a governess from a tenement house."

"Shure you used to live in as grand a house as herself."

"But I don't now."

"Don't mind it too much, mavoureen. You'll soon be gettin' another scholar. Go to sleep now, and you'll sleep the headache away."

Florence finally succeeded in following the advice of her humble friend.

She resolved to leave till the morrow the cares of the morrow.

She had twelve dollars, and before that was spent she hoped to be in a position to earn some more.



Chapter XXXII

An Exciting Adventure

Dodger soon became accustomed to his duties at Tucker's express office, in his new San Francisco home. He found Mr. Tucker an exacting, but not an unreasonable, man. He watched his new assistant closely for the first few days, and was quietly taking his measure.

At the end of the first week he paid the salary agreed upon—fifteen dollars.

"You have been with me a week, Arthur," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"And I have been making up my mind about you."

"Yes, sir," said Dodger, looking up inquiringly. "I hope you are satisfied with me?"

"Yes, I think I may say that I am. You don't seem to be afraid of work."

"I have always been accustomed to work."

"That is well. I was once induced to take the son of a rich man in the place you now occupy. He had never done a stroke of work, having always been at school. He didn't take kindly to work, and seemed afraid that he would be called upon to do more than he had bargained for. One evening I was particularly busy, and asked him to remain an hour overtime.

"It will be very inconvenient, Mr. Tucker," said the young man, 'as I have an engagement with a friend.'

"He left me to do all the extra work, and--I suppose you know what happened the next Saturday evening?"

"I can guess," returned Dodger, with a smile.

"I told him that I thought the duties were too heavy for his constitution, and he had better seek an easier place. Let me see—I kept you an hour and a half overtime last Wednesday."

"Yes, sir."

"You made no objection, but worked on just as if you liked it."

"Yes, sir; I am always willing to stay when you need me."

"Good! I shan't forget it."

Dodger felt proud of his success, and put away the fifteen dollars with a feeling of satisfaction. He had never saved half that sum in the same time before.

"Curtis Waring did me a favor when he sent me out here," he reflected; "but as he didn't mean it, I have no occasion to feel grateful."

Dodger found that he could live for eight dollars a week, and he began to lay by seven dollars a week with the view of securing funds sufficient to take him back to New York.

He was in no hurry to leave San Francisco, but he felt that Florence might need a friend. But he found that he was making progress slowly.

At that time the price of a first-class ticket to New York was one hundred and twenty-eight dollars, besides the expense of sleeping berths, amounting then, as now, to twenty-two dollars extra. So it looked as if Dodger would be compelled to wait at least six months before he should be in a position to set out on the return journey.

About this time Dodger received a letter from Florence, in which she spoke of her discharge by Mrs. Leighton.

"I shall try to obtain another position as teacher," she said, concealing her anxiety. "I am sure, in a large city, I can find something to do."

But Dodger knew better than she the difficulties that beset the path of an applicant for work, and he could not help feeling anxious for Florence.

"If I were only in New York," he said to himself, "I would see that Florence didn't suffer. I will write her to let me know if she is in need, and I will send her some money."

About this time he met with an adventure which deserves to be noted.

It was about seven o'clock one evening that he found himself in Mission Street.

At a street corner his attention was drawn to a woman poorly dressed, who held by the hand a child of three.

Her clothing was shabby, and her attitude was one of despondency. It was clear that she was ill and in trouble.

Dodger possessed quick sympathies, and his own experience made him quick to understand and feel for the troubles of others.

Though the woman made no appeal, he felt instinctively that she needed help.

"I beg your pardon," he said, with as much deference as if he were addressing one favored by fortune, "but you seem to be in need of help?"

"God knows, I am!" said the woman, sadly.

"Perhaps I can be of service to you. Will you tell me how?"

"Neither I nor my child has tasted food since yesterday."

"Well, that can be easily remedied," said Dodger, cheerfully. "There is a restaurant close by. I was about to eat supper. Will you come in with me?"

"I am ashamed to impose upon the kindness of a stranger," murmured the woman.

"Don't mention it. I shall be very glad of company," said Dodger, heartily.

"But you are a poor boy. You may be ill able to afford the expense."

"I am not a millionaire," said Dodger, "and I don't see

any immediate prospect of my building a palace on Nob Hill"--where live some of San Francisco's wealthiest citizens--"but I am very well supplied with money."

"Then I will accept your kind invitation."

It was a small restaurant, but neat in its appointments, and, as in most San Francisco restaurants, the prices were remarkably moderate.

At an expense of twenty-five cents each, the three obtained a satisfactory meal.

The woman and child both seemed to enjoy it, and Dodger was glad to see that the former became more cheerful as time went on.

There was something in the child's face that looked familiar to Dodger. It was a resemblance to someone that he had seen, but he could not for the life of him decide who it was.

"How can I ever thank you for your kindness?" said the lady, as she arose from the table. "You don't know what it is to be famished----"

"Don't I?" asked Dodger. "I have been hungry more than once, without money enough to buy a meal."

"You don't look it," she said.

"No, for now I have a good place and am earning a good salary."

"Are you a native of San Francisco?"

"No, madam. I can't tell you where I was born, for I know little or nothing of my family. I have only been here a short time. I came from New York."

"So did I," said the woman, with a sigh. "I wish I were back there again."

"How came you to be here? Don't answer if you prefer not to," Dodger added, hastily.

"I have no objection. My husband deserted me, and left me to shift for myself and support my child."

"How have you done it?"

"By taking in sewing. But that is a hard way of earning money. There are too many poor women who are ready to work for starvation wages, and so we all suffer."

"I know that," answered Dodger. "Do you live near here?"

The woman mentioned a street near by.

"I have one poor back room on the third floor," she explained; "but I should be glad if I were sure to stay there."

"Is there any danger of your being ejected?"

"I am owing for two weeks' rent, and this is the middle of the third week. Unless I can pay up at the end of this week I shall be forced to go out into the streets with my poor child."

"How much rent do you pay?"

"A dollar a week."

"Then three dollars will relieve you for the present?"

"Yes; but it might as well be three hundred," said the woman, bitterly.

"Not quite; I can supply you with three dollars, but three hundred would be rather beyond my means."

"You are too kind, too generous! I ought not to accept such a liberal gift."

"Mamma, I am tired. Take me up in your arms," said the child.

"Poor child! He has been on his feet all day," sighed the mother.

She tried to lift the child, but her own strength had been undermined by privation, and she was clearly unable to do so.

"Let me take him!" said Dodger. "Here, little one, jump up!"

He raised the child easily, and despite the mother's protest, carried him in his arms.

"I will see you home, madam," he said.

"I fear the child will be too heavy for you."

"I hope not. Why, I could carry a child twice as heavy."

They reached the room at last--a poor one, but a welcome repose from the streets.

"Don't you ever expect to see your husband again?" asked Dodger. "Can't you compel him to support you?"

"I don't know where he is," answered the woman, despondently.

"If you will tell me his name, I may come across him some day."

"His name," said the woman, "is Curtis Waring."

Dodger stared at her, overwhelmed with surprise.

Chapter XXXIII

An Important Discovery

"Curtis Waring!" ejaculated Dodger, his face showing intense surprise. "Is that the name of your husband?"

"Yes. Is it possible that you know him?" asked the woman, struck by Dodger's tone.

"I know a man by that name. I will describe him, and you can tell me whether it is he. He is rather tall, dark hair, sallow complexion, black eyes, and a long, thin nose."

"It is like him in every particular. Oh, tell me where he is to be found?"

"He lives in New York. He is the nephew of a rich man, and is expecting to inherit his wealth. Through his

influence a cousin of his, a young lady, has been driven from home."

"Was he afraid she would deprive him of the estate?"

"That was partly the reason. But it was partly to revenge himself on her because she would not agree to marry him."

"But how could he marry her," exclaimed the unfortunate woman, "when he is already married to me?"

"Neither she nor any one of his family or friends knew that he was already married. I don't think it would trouble him much."

"But it must be stopped!" she exclaimed, wildly. "He is my husband. I shall not give him up to any one else."

"So far as Florence is concerned--she is the cousin--she has no wish to deprive you of him. But is it possible that you are attached to a man who has treated you so meanly?" asked Dodger, in surprise.

"There was a time when he treated me well, when he appeared to love me," was the murmured reply. "I cannot forget that he is the father of my child."

Dodger did not understand the nature of women or the mysteries of the female heart, and he evidently thought this poor woman very foolish to cling with such pertinacity to a man like Curtis Waring.

"Do you mind telling me how you came to marry him?" he asked.

"It was over four years ago that I met him in this city," was the reply. "I am a San Francisco girl. I had never been out of California. I was considered pretty then," she added, with a remnant of pride, "faded as I am to-day."

Looking closely in her face, Dodger was ready to believe this.

Grief and privation had changed her appearance, but it had not altogether effaced the bloom and beauty of youth.

"At any rate, he seemed to think so. He was living at the Palace Hotel, and I made his acquaintance at a small social gathering at the house of my uncle. I am an orphan, and was perhaps the more ready to marry on that account."

"Did Mr. Waring represent himself as wealthy?"

"He said he had expectations from a wealthy relative, but did not mention where he lived."

"He told the truth, then."

"We married, securing apartments on Kearney Street. We lived together till my child was born, and for three months afterward. Then Mr. Waring claimed to be called away from San Francisco on business. He said he might be absent six weeks. He left me a hundred dollars, and urged me to be careful of it, as he was short of money, and needed considerable for the expenses of the journey. He left me, and I have never seen or heard from him since."

"Did he tell you where he was going, Mrs. Waring?"

"No; he said he would be obliged to visit several places—among others, Colorado, where he claimed to have some mining property. He told me that he hoped to bring back considerable money."

"Do you think he meant to stay away altogether?"

"I don't know what to think. Well, I lived on patiently, for I had perfect confidence in my husband. I made the money last me ten weeks instead of six, but then I found myself penniless."

"Did you receive any letters in that time?"

"No, and it was that that worried me. When at last the money gave out, I began to pawn my things--more than once I was tempted to pawn my wedding-ring, but I could not bring my mind to do that. I do not like to think ill of my husband, and was forced, as the only alternative, to conclude that he had met with some accident, perhaps had died. I have not felt certain that this was not so till you told me this evening that you know him."

"I can hardly say that I know him well, yet I know him a good deal better than I wish I did. But for him I would not now be in San Francisco."

"How is that? Please explain."

Dodger told her briefly the story of his abduction.

"But what motive could he have in getting you out of New York? I cannot understand."

"I don't understand myself, except that I am the friend of Florence."

"His cousin?"

"Yes."

"But why should she be compelled to leave her uncle's home?"

"Because Curtis Waring made him set his heart upon the match. She had her choice to marry Curtis or to leave the house, and forfeit all chance of the estate. She chose to leave the house."

"She ought to know that he has no right to marry," said the poor woman, who, not understanding the dislike of Florence for the man whom she herself loved, feared that she might yet be induced to marry him.

"She ought to know, and her uncle ought to know," said Dodger. "Mrs. Waring, I can't see my way clear yet. If I were in New York I would know just what to do. Will you agree to stand by me, and help me?"

"Yes, I will," answered the woman, earnestly.

"I will see you again to-morrow evening. Here is some money to help you along for the present. Good-night."

Dodger, as he walked away, pondered over the remarkable discovery he had made.

It was likely to prove of the utmost importance to Florence.

Her uncle's displeasure was wholly based upon her refusal to marry Curtis Waring, but if it should be proved

to him that Curtis was already a married man, there would seem no bar to reconciliation.

Moreover--and that was particularly satisfactory--it would bring Curtis himself into disfavor.

Florence would be reinstated in her rightful place in her uncle's family, and once more be recognized as heiress to at least a portion of his large fortune.

This last consideration might not weigh so much with Florence, but Dodger was more practical, and he wished to restore her to the social position which she had lost through the knavery of her cousin.

But in San Francisco--at a distance of over three thousand miles--Dodger felt at a loss how to act.

Even if Mr. Linden was informed that his nephew had a wife living in San Francisco, the statement would no doubt be denied by Curtis, who would brand the woman as an impudent adventuress.

"The absent are always in the wrong," says a French proverb.

At all events, they are very much at a disadvantage, and therefore it seemed imperatively necessary, not only that Dodger, but that Curtis Waring's wife should go to New York to confront the unprincipled man whose schemes had brought sorrow to so many.

It was easy to decide what plan was best, but how to carry it out presented a difficulty which seemed insurmountable.

The expenses of a journey to New York for Dodger, Mrs. Waring and her child would not be very far from five hundred dollars, and where to obtain this money was a problem.

Randolph Leslie probably had that sum, but Dodger could not in conscience ask him to lend it, being unable to furnish adequate security, or to insure repayment.

"If I could only find a nugget," thought Dodger, knitting his brows, "everything would be easy." But nuggets are rare enough in the gold fields, and still rarer in city streets.

He who trusts wholly to luck trusts to a will-o'-the-wisp, and is about as sure of success as one who owns a castle in Spain.

The time might come when Dodger, by his own efforts, could accumulate the needed sum, but it would require a year at least, and in that time Mr. Linden would probably be dead.

Absorbed and disturbed by these reflections, Dodger walked slowly through the darkened streets till he heard a stifled cry, and looking up, beheld a sight that startled him.

On the sidewalk lay the prostrate figure of a man. Over him, bludgeon in hand, bent a ruffian, whose purpose was only too clearly evident.

Chapter XXXIV

Just In Time

Dodger, who was a strong, stout boy, gathered himself up and dashed against the ruffian with such impetuosity that he fell over his intended victim, and his bludgeon fell from his hand.

It was the work of an instant to lift it, and raise it in a menacing position.

The discomfited villain broke into a volley of oaths, and proceeded to pick himself up.

He was a brutal-looking fellow, but was no larger than Dodger, who was as tall as the majority of men.

"Give me that stick," he exclaimed, furiously.

"Come and take it," returned Dodger, undaunted.

The fellow took him at his word, and made a rush at our hero, but a vigorous blow from the bludgeon made him cautious about repeating the attack.

"Curse you!" he cried, between his teeth. "I'd like to chew you up."

"I have no doubt you would," answered Dodger; "but I don't think you will. Were you going to rob this man?"

"None of your business!"

"I shall make it my business. You'd better go, or you may be locked up."

"Give me that stick, then."

"You'll have to do without it."

He made another rush, and Dodger struck him such a blow on his arm that he winced with pain.

"Now I shall summon the police, and you can do as you please about going."

Dodger struck the stick sharply on the sidewalk three times, and the ruffian, apprehensive of arrest, ran around the corner just in time to rush into the arms of a policeman.

"What has this man been doing?" asked the city guardian, turning to Dodger.

"He was about to rob this man."

"Is the man hurt?"

"Where am I?" asked the prostrate man, in a bewildered tone.

"I will take care of him, if you will take charge of that fellow."

"Can you get up, sir?" asked Dodger, bending over the fallen man.

The latter answered by struggling to his feet and looking about him in a confused way.

"Where am I?" he asked. "What has happened?"

"You were attacked by a ruffian. I found you on the sidewalk, with him bending over you with this club in his hand."

"He must have followed me. I was imprudent enough to show a well-filled pocketbook in a saloon where I stopped to take a drink. No doubt he planned to relieve me of it."

"You have had a narrow escape, sir."

"I have no doubt of it. I presume the fellow was ready to take my life, if he found it necessary."

"I will leave you now, sir, if you think you can manage."

"No, stay with me. I feel rather upset."

"Where are you staying, sir?"

"At the Palace Hotel. Of course you know where that is?"

"Certainly. Will you take my arm?"

"Thank you."

Little was said till they found themselves in the sumptuous hotel, which hardly has an equal in America.

"Come to my room, young man; I want to speak to you."

It was still early in the evening, and Dodger's time was his own.

He had no hesitation, therefore, in accepting the stranger's invitation.

On the third floor the stranger produced a key and opened the door of a large, handsomely-furnished room.

"If you have a match, please light the gas."

Dodger proceeded to do so, and now, for the first time, obtained a good view of the man he had rescued. He was a man of about the average height, probably not far from fifty, dressed in a neat business suit, and looked like a substantial merchant.

"Please be seated."

Dodger sat down in an easy-chair conveniently near him.

"Young man," said the stranger, impressively, "you have done me a great favor."

Dodger felt that this was true, and did not disclaim it.

"I am very glad I came up just as I did," he said.

"How large a sum of money do you think I had about me?" asked his companion.

"Five hundred dollars?"

"Five hundred dollars! Why, that would be a mere trifle."

"It wouldn't be a trifle to me, sir," said Dodger.

"Are you poor?" asked the man, earnestly.

"I have a good situation that pays me fifteen dollars a week, so I ought not to consider myself poor."

"Suppose you had a considerable sum of money given you, what would you do with it?"

"If I had five hundred dollars, I should be able to defeat the schemes of a villain, and restore a young lady to her rights."

"That seems interesting. Tell me the circumstances."

Dodger told the story as briefly as he could. He was encouraged to find that the stranger listened to him with attention.

"Do you know," he said, reflectively, "you have done for me what I once did for another--a rich man? The case was very similar. I was a poor boy at the time. Do you know what he gave me?"

"What was it, sir?"

"A dollar! What do you think of that for generosity?"

"Well, sir, it wasn't exactly liberal. Did you accept it?"

"No. I told him that I didn't wish to inconvenience him. But I asked you how much money you supposed I had. I will tell you. In a wallet I have eleven thousand dollars in bank notes and securities."

"That is a fortune," said Dodger, dazzled at the mention of such a sum.

"If I had lost it, I have plenty more, but the most serious peril was to my life. Through your opportune assistance I have escaped without loss. I fully appreciate the magnitude of the service you have done me. As an evidence of it, please accept these bills."

He drew from the roll two bills and handed them to Dodger.

The boy, glancing at them mechanically, started in amazement. Each bill was for five hundred dollars.

"You have given me a thousand dollars!" he gasped.

"I am aware of it. I consider my life worth that, at least. James Swinton never fails to pay his debts."

"But, sir, a thousand dollars----"

"It's no more than you deserve. When I tell my wife, on my return to Chicago, about this affair, she will blame me for not giving you more."

"You seem to belong to a liberal family, sir."

"I detest meanness, and would rather err on the side of liberality. Now, if agreeable to you, I will order a bottle of champagne, and solace ourselves for this little incident."

"Thank you, Mr. Swinton, but I have made up my mind not to drink anything stronger than water. I have tended bar in New York, and what I have seen has given me a dislike for liquor of any kind."

"You are a sensible young man. You are right, and I won't urge you. There is my card, and if you ever come to Chicago, call upon me."

"I will, sir."

When Dodger left the Palace Hotel he felt that he was a favorite of fortune.

It is not always that the money we need is so quickly supplied.

He resolved to return to New York as soon as he could manage it, and take with him the wife and child of Curtis Waring.

This would cost him about five hundred dollars, and he would have the same amount left.

Mr. Tucker was reluctant to part with Dodger.

"You are the best assistant I ever had," he said. "I will pay you twenty dollars a week, if that will induce you to stay."

"I would stay if it were not very important for me to return to New York, Mr. Tucker. I do not expect to get a place in New York as good."

"If you come back to San Francisco at any time, I will make a place for you."

"Thank you, sir."

Mrs. Waring was overjoyed when Dodger called upon her and offered to take her back to New York.

"I shall see Curtis again," she said. "How can I ever thank you?"

But Dodger, though unwilling to disturb her dreams of happiness, thought it exceedingly doubtful if her husband would be equally glad to see her.

Chapter XXXV

The Darkest Day

When Florence left the employ of Mrs. Leighton she had a few dollars as a reserve fund. As this would not last long, she at once made an effort to obtain employment.

She desired another position as governess, and made application in answer to an advertisement.

Her ladylike manner evidently impressed the lady to whom she applied.

"I suppose you have taught before?" she said.

"Yes, madam."

"In whose family?"

"I taught the daughter of Mrs. Leighton, of West -- Street."

"I have heard of the lady. Of course you are at liberty to refer to her?"

"Yes, madam," but there was a hesitation in her tone that excited suspicion.

"Very well; I will call upon her and make inquiries. If you will call tomorrow morning, I can give you a decisive answer."

Florence fervently hoped that this might prove favorable; but was apprehensive, and with good reason, it appeared.

When she presented herself the next day, Mrs. Cole said:

"I am afraid, Miss Linden, you will not suit me."

"May I ask why?" Florence inquired, schooling herself to calmness.

"I called on Mrs. Leighton," was the answer. "She speaks well of you as a teacher, but--she told me some things which make it seem inexpedient to engage you."

"What did she say of me?"

"That, perhaps, you had better not inquire."

"I prefer to know the worst."

"She said you encouraged the attentions of her nephew, forgetting the difference in social position, and also that your connections were not of a sort to recommend you. I admit, Miss Linden, that you are very ladylike in appearance, but, I can hardly be expected to admit into my house, in the important position of governess to my child, the daughter or niece of an apple-woman."

"Did Mrs. Leighton say that I was related to an apple-woman?"

"Yes, Miss Linden. I own I was surprised."

"It is not true, Mrs. Cole."

"You live in the house of such a person, do you not?"

"Yes, she is an humble friend of mine, and has been kind to me."

"You cannot be very fastidious. However, that is your own affair. I am sorry to disappoint you, Miss Linden, but it will be quite impossible for me to employ you."

"Then I will bid you good-morning, Mrs. Cole," said Florence, sore at heart.

"Good-morning. You will, I think, understand my position. If you applied for a position in one of the public schools, I don't think that your residence would be an objection."

Florence left the house, sad and despondent. She saw that Mrs. Leighton, by her unfriendly representations, would prevent her from getting any opportunity to teach. She must seek some more humble employment.

"Well, Florence, did you get a place?" asked Mrs. O'Keefe, as she passed that lady's stand.

"No, Mrs. O'Keefe," answered Florence, wearily.

"And why not? Did the woman think you didn't know enough?"

"She objected to me because I was not living in a fashionable quarter --at least that was one of her objections."

"I'm sure you've got a nate, clane home, and it looks as nate as wax all the time."

"It isn't exactly stylish," said Florence, with a faint smile.

"You are, at any rate. What does the woman want, I'd like to know?"

"She doesn't want me. It seems Mrs. Leighton did not speak very highly of me."

"The trollop! I'd like to give her a box on the ear, drat her impudence!" said the irate apple-woman. "And what will you be doin' now?"

"Do you think I can get some sewing to do, Mrs. O'Keefe?"

"Yes, Miss Florence--I'll get you some vests to make; but it's hard work and poor pay."

"I must take what I can get," sighed Florence. "I cannot choose."

"If you'd only tend an apple-stand, Miss Florence! There's Mrs. Brady wants to sell out on account of the rheumatics, and I've got a trifle in the savings bank--enough to buy it. You'd make a dollar a day, easy."

"It isn't to be thought of, Mrs. O'Keefe. If you will kindly see about getting me some sewing, I will see how I can get along."

The result was that Mrs. O'Keefe brought Florence in the course of the day half a dozen vests, for which she was to be paid the munificent sum of twenty-five cents each.

Florence had very little idea of what she was undertaking.

She was an expert needlewoman, and proved adequate to the work, but with her utmost industry she could only make one vest in a day, and that would barely pay her rent.

True, she had some money laid aside on which she could draw, but that would soon be expended, and then what was to become of her?

"Shure, I won't let you starve, Florence," said the warm-hearted apple-woman.

"But, Mrs. O'Keefe, I can't consent to live on you."

"And why not? I'm well and strong, and I'm makin' more money than I nade."

"I couldn't think of it, though I thank you for your kindness."

"Shure, you might write a letter to your uncle, Florence."

"He would expect me, in that case, to consent to a marriage with Curtis. You wouldn't advise me to do that?"

"No; he's a mane blackguard, and I'd say it to his face."

Weeks rolled by, and Florence began to show the effects of hard work and confinement.

She grew pale and thin, and her face was habitually sad.

She had husbanded her savings as a governess as closely as she could, but in spite of all her economy it dwindled till she had none left.

Henceforth, she must depend on twenty-five cents a day, and this seemed well-nigh impossible.

In this emergency the pawnbroker occurred to her.

She had a variety of nice dresses, and she had also a handsome ring, given her by her uncle on her last birthday.

This she felt sure must have cost fifty dollars.

It was a trial to part with it, but there seemed to be no alternative.

"If my uncle has withdrawn his affection from me," she said to herself, "why should I scruple to pawn the ring? It is the symbol of a love that no longer exists."

So she entered the pawnbroker's--the first that attracted her attention--and held out the ring.

"How much will you lend me on this?" she asked, half frightened at finding herself in such a place.

The pawnbroker examined it carefully. His practiced eye at once detected its value, but it was not professional to admit this.

"Rings is a drug in the market, young lady," he said. "I've got more than I know what to do with. I'll give you four--four dollars."

"Four dollars!" repeated Florence, in dismay. "Why, it must have cost fifty. It was bought in Tiffany's."

"You are mistaken, my dear. Did you buy it yourself there?"

"No, my uncle gave it to me."

"He may have said he paid fifty dollars for it," said the pawnbroker, wagging his head, "but we know better."

"But what will you give?" asked Florence, desperately.

"I'll give you five dollars, and not a penny more," said the broker, surveying her distressed face, shrewdly. "You can take it or not."

What could Florence do?

She must have money, and feared that no other pawnbroker would give her more.

"Make out the ticket, then," she said, wearily, with a sigh.

This was done, and she left the place, half timid, half ashamed, and wholly discouraged.

But the darkest hour is sometimes nearest the dawn. A great overwhelming surprise awaited her. She had scarcely left the shop when a glad voice cried:

"I have found you at last, Florence!"

She looked up and saw--Dodger.

But not the old Dodger. She saw a nicely dressed young gentleman, larger than the friend she had parted with six months before, with a brighter, more intelligent, and manly look.

"Dodger!" she faltered.

"Yes, it is Dodger."

"Where did you come from?"

"From San Francisco. But what have you been doing there?"

And Dodger pointed in the direction of the pawnbroker's shop.

"I pawned my ring."

"Then I shall get it back at once. How much did you get on it?"

"Five dollars."

"Give me the ticket, and go in with me."

The pawnbroker was very reluctant to part with the ring, which he made sure would not be reclaimed; but there was no help for it.

As they emerged into the street, Dodger said: "I've come back to restore you to your rights, and give Curtis Waring the most disagreeable surprise he ever had. Come home, and I'll tell you all about it. I've struck luck, Florence, and you're going to share it."

Chapter XXXVI

Mrs. O'Keefe In A New Role

No time was lost in seeing Bolton and arranging a plan of campaign.

Curtis Waring, nearing the accomplishment of his plans, was far from anticipating impending disaster.

His uncle's health had become so poor, and his strength had been so far undermined, that it was thought desirable to employ a sick nurse. An advertisement was inserted in a morning paper, which luckily attracted the attention of Bolton.

"You must go, Mrs. O'Keefe," he said to the apple-woman. "It is important that we have some one in the house--some friend of Florence and the boy--to watch what is going on."

"Bridget O'Keefe is no fool. Leave her to manage."

The result was that among a large number of applicants Mrs. O'Keefe was selected by Curtis as Mr. Linden's nurse, as she expressed herself willing to work for four dollars a week, while the lowest outside demand was seven.

We will now enter the house, in which the last scenes of our story are to take place.

Mr. Linden, weak and emaciated, was sitting in an easy-chair in his library.

"How do you feel this morning, uncle?" asked Curtis, entering the room.

"I am very weak, Curtis. I don't think I shall ever be any better."

"I have engaged a nurse, uncle, as you desired, and I expect her this morning."

"That is well, Curtis. I do not wish to confine you to my bedside."

"The nurse is below," said Jane, the servant, entering.

"Send her up."

Mrs. O'Keefe entered in the sober attire of a nurse. She dropped a curtsy.

"Are you the nurse I engaged?" said Curtis.

"Yes, sir."

"Your name, please."

"Mrs. Barnes, sir."

"Have you experience as a nurse?"

"Plenty, sir."

"Uncle, this is Mrs. Barnes, your new nurse. I hope you will find her satisfactory."

"She looks like a good woman," said Mr. Linden, feebly. "I think she will suit me."

"Indade, sir, I'll try."

"Uncle," said Curtis, "I have to go downtown. I have some business to attend to. I leave you in the care of Mrs. Barnes."

"Shure, I'll take care of him, sir."

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Linden?" asked the new nurse, in a tone of sympathy.

"Can you minister to a mind diseased?"

"I'll take the best care of you, Mr. Linden, but it isn't as if you had a wife or daughter."

"Ah, that is a sore thought! I have no wife or daughter; but I have a niece."

"And where is she, sir?"

"I don't know. I drove her from me by my unkindness. I repent bitterly, but it's now too late."

"And why don't you send for her to come home?"

"I would gladly do so, but I don't know where she is. Curtis has tried to find her, but in vain. He says she is in Chicago."

"And what should take her to Chicago?"

"He says she is there as a governess in a family."

"By the brow of St. Patrick!" thought Mrs. O'Keefe, "if that Curtis isn't a natural-born liar. I'm sure she'd come back if you'd send for her, sir," said she, aloud.

"Do you think so?" asked Linden, eagerly.

"I'm sure of it."

"But I don't know where to send."

"I know of a party that would be sure to find her."

"Who is it?"

"It's a young man. They call him Dodger. If any one can find Miss Florence, he can."

"You know my niece's name?"

"I have heard it somewhere. From Mr. Waring, I think."

"And you think this young man would agree to go to Chicago and find her?"

"Yes, sir, I make bold to say he will."

"Tell him to go at once. He will need money. In yonder desk you will find a picture of my niece and a roll of bills. Give them to him and send him at once."

"Yes, sir, I will. But if you'll take my advice, you won't say anything to Mr. Curtis. He might think it foolish."

"True! If your friend succeeds, we'll give Curtis a surprise."

"And a mighty disagreeable one, I'll be bound," soliloquized Mrs. O'Keefe.

"I think, Mrs. Barnes, I will retire to my chamber, if you will assist me."

She assisted Mr. Linden to his room, and then returned to the library.

"Mrs. Barnes, there's a young man inquiring for you," said Jane, entering.

"Send him in, Jane."

The visitor was Dodger, neatly dressed.

"How are things going, Mrs. O'Keefe?" he asked.

"Splendid, Dodger. Here's some money for you."

"What for?"

"You're to go to Chicago and bring back Florence."

"But she isn't there."

"Nivir mind. You're to pretend to go."

"But that won't take money."

"Give it to Florence, then. It's hers by rights. Won't we give Curtis a surprise? Where's his wife?"

"I have found a comfortable boarding house for her. When had we better carry out this programme? She's very anxious to see her husband."

"The more fool she. Kape her at home and out of his sight, or there's no knowin' what he'll do. And, Dodger, dear, kape an eye on the apple-stand. I mistrust Mrs. Burke that's runnin' it."

"I will. Does the old gentleman seem to be very sick?"

"He's wake as a rat. Curtis would kill him soon if we didn't interfere. But we'll soon circumvent him, the snake in the grass! Miss Florence will soon come to her own, and Curtis Waring will be out in the cold."

"The most I have against him is that he tried to marry Florence when he had a wife already."

"He's as bad as they make 'em, Dodger. It won't be my fault if Mr. Linden's eyes are not opened to his wickedness."



Chapter XXXVII

The Diplomacy Of Mrs. O'Keefe

Mrs. O'Keefe was a warm-hearted woman, and the sad, drawn face of Mr. Linden appealed to her pity.

"Why should I let the poor man suffer when I can relieve him?" she asked herself.

So the next morning, after Curtis had, according to his custom, gone downtown, being in the invalid's sick chamber, she began to act in a

mysterious manner. She tiptoed to the door, closed it and approached Mr. Linden's bedside with the air of one about to unfold a strange story.

"Whist now," she said, with her finger on her lips.

"What is the matter?" asked the invalid, rather alarmed.

"Can you bear a surprise, sir?"

"Have you any bad news for me?"

"No; it's good news, but you must promise not to tell Curtis."

"Is it about Florence? Your messenger can hardly have reached Chicago."

"He isn't going there, sir."

"But you promised that he should," said Mr. Linden, disturbed.

"I'll tell you why, sir. Florence is not in Chicago."

"I--I don't understand. You said she was there."

"Begging your pardon, sir, it was Curtis that said so, though he knew she was in New York."

"But what motive could he have had for thus misrepresenting matters?"

"He doesn't want you to take her back."

"I can't believe you, Mrs. Barnes. He loves her, and wants to marry her."

"He couldn't marry her if she consented to take him."

"Why not? Mrs. Barnes, you confuse me."

"I won't deceive you as he has done. There's rason in plinty. He's married already."

"Is this true?" demanded Mr. Linden, in excitement.

"It's true enough; more by token, to-morrow, whin he's out, his wife will come here and tell you so herself."

"But who are you who seem to know so much about my family?"

"I'm a friend of the pore girl you've driven from the house, because she would not marry a rascally spalpeen that's been schemin' to get your property into his hands."

"You're a friend of Florence? Where is she?"

"She's in my house, and has been there ever since she left her home."

"Is she--well?"

"As well as she can be whin she's been workin' her fingers to the bone wid sewin' to keep from starvin'."

"My God! what have I done?"

"You've let Curtis Waring wind you around his little finger--that's what you've done, Mr. Linden."

"How soon can I see Florence?"

"How soon can you bear it?"

"The sooner the better."

"Then it'll be to-morrow, I'm thinkin', that is if you won't tell Curtis."

"No, no; I promise."

"I'll manage everything, sir. Don't worry now."

Mr. Linden's face lost its anxious look--so that when, later in the day, Curtis looked into the room he was surprised.

"My uncle looks better," he said.

"Yes, sir," answered the nurse. "I've soothed him like."

"Indeed! You seem to be a very accomplished nurse."

"Faith, that I am, sir, though it isn't I that should say it."

"May I ask how you soothed him?" inquired Curtis, anxiously.

"I told him that Miss Florence would soon be home."

"I do not think it right to hold out hopes that may prove ill-founded."

"I know what I am about, Mr. Curtis."

"I dare say you understand your business, Mrs. Barnes, but if my uncle should be disappointed, I am afraid the consequences will be lamentable."

"Do you think he'll live long, sir?"

Curtis shrugged his shoulders.

"It is very hard to tell. My uncle is a very feeble man."

"And if he dies, I suppose the property goes to you?"

"I suppose so."

"But where does Florence come in?"

"It seems to me, Mrs. Barnes, that you take a good deal of interest in our family affairs," said Curtis, suspiciously.

"That's true, sir. Why shouldn't I take an interest in a nice gentleman like you?"

Curtis smiled.

"I am doing my best to find Florence. Then our marriage will take place, and it matters little to whom the property is left."

"But I thought Miss Florence didn't care to marry you?"

"It is only because she thinks cousins ought not to marry. It's a foolish fancy, and she'll get over it."

"Thru for you, sir. My first husband was my cousin, and we always agreed, barrin' an occasional fight----"

"I don't think Florence and I will ever fight, Mrs. Barnes."

"What surprises me, Mr. Curtis, is that a nice-lookin' gentleman like you hasn't been married before."

Curtis eyed her keenly, but her face told him nothing.

"I never saw one I wanted to marry till my cousin grew up," he said.

"I belave in marryin', meself. I was first married at sivinteen."

"How long ago was that, Mrs. Barnes?"

"It's long ago, Mr. Curtis. I'm an old woman now. I was thirty-five last birthday."

Curtis came near laughing outright, for he suspected--what was true-- that the nurse would never see her fiftieth birthday again.

"Then you are just my age," he said.

"If I make him laugh he won't suspect nothing," soliloquized the wily nurse. "That's a pretty big lie, even for me."

"Shure I look older, Mr. Curtis," she said, aloud. "What wid the worry of losin' two fond husbands, I look much older than you."

"Oh, your are very well preserved, Mrs. Barnes."

Curtis went into his uncle's chamber.

"How are you feeling, uncle?" he asked.

"I think I am better," answered Mr. Linden, coldly, for he had not forgotten Mrs. Barnes' revelations.

"That is right. Only make an effort, and you will soon be strong again."

"I think I may. I may live ten years to annoy you."

"I fervently hope so," said Curtis, but there was a false ring in his voice that his uncle detected. "How do you like the new nurse?"

"She is helping me wonderfully. You made a good selection."

"I will see that she is soon discharged," Curtis inwardly resolved. "If her being here is to prolong my uncle's life, and keep me still waiting for the estate, I must clear the house of her."

"You must not allow her to buoy you up with unfounded hopes. She has been telling you that Florence will soon return."

"Yes; she seems convinced of it."

"Of course she knows nothing of it. She may return, but I doubt whether she is in Chicago now. I think the family she was with has gone to Europe."

"Where did you hear that, Curtis?" asked Mr. Linden, with unwonted sharpness.

"I have sources of information which at present I do not care to impart. Rest assured that I am doing all I can to get her back."

"You still want to marry her, Curtis?"

"I do, most certainly."

"I shall not insist upon it. I should not have done so before."

"Have you changed your mind, uncle?"

"Yes; I have made a mistake, and I have decided to correct it."

"What has come over him?" Curtis asked himself. "Some influence hostile to me has been brought to bear. It must be that nurse. I will quietly dismiss her tomorrow, paying her a week's wages, in lieu of warning. She's evidently a meddler."

Chapter XXXVIII

The Closing Scene

The next day Tim Bolton, dressed in a jaunty style, walked up the steps of the Linden mansion.

"Is Mr. Waring at home?" he asked.

"No, sir; he has gone downtown."

"I'll step in and wait for him. Please show me to the library."

Jane, who had been taken into confidence by the nurse, showed him at once into the room mentioned.

Half an hour later Curtis entered.

"How long have you been here, Bolton?"

"But a short time. You sent for me?"

"I did."

"On business?"

"Well, yes."

"Is there anything new?"

"Yes, my uncle is failing fast."

"Is he likely to die soon?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if he died within a week."

"I suspect Curtis means to help him! Well, what has that to do with me?" he asked. "You will step into the property, of course?"

"There is a little difficulty in the way which I can overcome with your help."

"What is it?"

"I can't get him to give up the foolish notion that the boy he lost is still alive."

"It happens to be true."

"Yes; but he must not know it. Before he dies I want him to make a new will, revoking all others, leaving all the property to me."

"Will he do it?"

"I don't know. As long as he thinks the boy is living, I don't believe he will. You see what a drawback that is."

"I see. What can I do to improve the situation?"

"I want you to sign a paper confessing that you abducted the boy----"

"At your instigation?"

"That must not be mentioned. You will go on to say that a year or two later--the time is not material--he died of typhoid fever. You can say that you did not dare to reveal this before, but do so now, impelled by remorse."

"Have you got it written out? I can't remember all them words."

"Yes; here it is."

"All right," said Bolton, taking the paper and tucking it into an inside pocket. "I'll copy it out in my own handwriting. How much are you going to give me for doing this?"

"A thousand dollars."

"Cash?"

"I can't do that. I have met with losses at the gaming table, and I don't dare ask money from my uncle at this time. He thinks I am thoroughly steady."

"At how much do you value the estate?"

"At four hundred thousand dollars. I wormed it out of my uncle's lawyer the other day."

"And you expect me to help you to that amount for only a thousand dollars?"

"A thousand dollars is a good deal of money."

"And so is four hundred thousand. After all, your uncle may not die."

"He is sure to."

"You seem very confident."

"And with good reason. Leave that to me. I promise you, on my honor, to pay you two thousand dollars when I get the estate."

"But what is going to happen to poor Dodger, the rightful heir?"

"Well, let it be three hundred dollars a year, then."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't mind telling you, as it can do no harm. He is in California."

"Whew! That was smart. How did you get him there?"

"I drugged him, and had him sent on board a ship bound for San Francisco, around Cape Horn. The fact is, I was getting a little suspicious of you, and I wanted to put you beyond the reach of temptation."

"You are a clever rascal, Curtis. After all, suppose the prize should slip through your fingers?"

"It won't. I have taken every precaution."

"When do you want this document?"

"Bring it back to me this afternoon, copied and signed. That is all you have to do; I will attend to the rest."

While this conversation was going on there were unseen listeners.

Behind a portiere Mrs. Barnes, the nurse, and John Linden heard everyword that was said.

"And what do you think now, sir?" whispered Mrs. O'Keefe (to give her real name).

"It is terrible. I would not have believed Curtis capable of such a crime. But is it really true, Mrs. Barnes? Is my lost boy alive?"

"To be sure he is."

"Have you seen him?"

"I know him as well as I know you, sir, and better, too."

"Is he--tell me, is he a good boy? Curtis told me that he might be a criminal."

"He might, but he isn't. He's as dacent and honest a boy as iver trod shoe leather. You'll be proud of him, sir."

"But he's in California."

"He was; but he's got back. You shall see him to-day, and Florence, too. Hark! I hear the door bell. They're here now. I think you had better go in and confront Curtis."

"I feel weak, Mrs. Barnes. Let me lean on you."

"You can do that, and welcome, sir."

The nurse pushed aside the portiere, and the two entered the library-- Mrs. Barnes rotund and smiling, Mr. Linden gaunt and spectral looking, like one risen from the grave.

Curtis eyed the pair with a startled look.

"Mrs. Barnes," he said, angrily, "what do you mean by taking my uncle from his bed and bringing him down here? It is as much as his life is worth. You seem unfit for your duties as nurse. You will leave the house tomorrow, and I will engage a substitute."

"I shall lave whin I git ready, Mr. Curtis Waring," said the nurse, her arms akimbo. "Maybe somebody else will lave the house. Me and Mr. Linden have been behind the curtain for twenty minutes, and he has heard every word you said."

Curtis turned livid, and his heart sank.

"It's true, Curtis," said John Linden's hollow voice. "I have heard all. It was you who abducted my boy, and have made my life a lonely one all these years. Oh, man! man! how could you have the heart to do it?"

Curtis stared at him with parched lips, unable to speak.

"Not content with this, you drove from the house my dear niece, Florence. You made me act cruelly toward her. I fear she will not forgive me."

But just then the door opened, and Florence, rushing into the room, sank at her uncle's feet.

"Oh, uncle," she said, "will you take me back?"

"Yes, Florence, never again to leave me. And who is this?" he asked, fixing his eyes on Dodger, who stood shyly in the doorway.

"I'll tell you, sir," said Tim Bolton. "That is your own son, whom I stole away from you when he was a kid, being hired to do it by Curtis Waring."

"It's a lie," said Curtis, hoarsely.

"Come to me, my boy," said Mr. Linden, with a glad light in his eyes.

"At last Heaven has heard my prayers," he ejaculated. "We will never be separated. I was ready to die, but now I hope to live for many years. I feel that I have a new lease of life."

With a baffled growl Curtis Waring darted a furious look at the three.

"That boy is an impostor," he said. "They are deceiving you."

"He is my son. I see his mother's look in his face. As for you, Curtis

Waring, my eyes are open at last to your villainy. You deserve nothing at my hands; but I will make some provision for you."

There was another surprise.

Curtis Waring's deserted wife, brought from California by Dodger, entered the room, leading by the hand a young child.

"Oh, Curtis," she said, reproachfully. "How could you leave me? I have come to you, my husband, with our little child."

"Begone! woman!" said Curtis, furiously. "I will never receive or recognize you!"

"Oh, sir!" she said, turning to Mr. Linden, "what shall I do?"

"Curtis Waring," said Mr. Linden, sternly, "unless you receive this woman and treat her properly, you shall receive nothing from me."

"And if I do?"

"You will receive an income of two thousand dollars a year, payable quarterly. Mrs. Waring, you will remain here with your child till your husband provides another home for you."

Curtis slunk out of the room, but he was too wise to refuse his uncle's offer.

He and his wife are living in Chicago, and he treats her fairly well, fearing that, otherwise, he will lose his income.

Mr. Linden looks ten years younger than he did at the opening of the story.

Florence and Dodger--now known as Harvey Linden--live with him.

Dodger, under a competent private tutor, is making up the deficiencies in his education.

It is early yet to speak of marriage, but it is possible that Florence may marry a cousin, after all.

Tim Bolton has turned over a new leaf, given up his saloon, and is carrying on a country hotel within fifty miles of New York.

He has five thousand dollars in the bank, presented by Dodger, with his father's sanction, and is considered quite a reputable citizen.

As for Mrs. O'Keefe, she still keeps the apple-stand, being unwilling to give it up; but she, too, has a handsome sum in the bank, and calls often upon her two children, as she calls them.

In the midst of their prosperity Florence and Dodger will never forget the time when they were adrift in New York.

The End

Tony the Tramp

by Horatio Alger

Originally Published in 1909

Tony the Tramp is a novel about a young orphan named Tony who overcomes poverty and hardship in New York City through hard work and determination. Despite facing challenges, Tony learns valuable lessons and with help from a mentor, he secures an education and a job that leads to a better future. The story highlights the themes of hope, perseverance, and the ability to shape one's own destiny through effort and resolve. Horatio Alger's message of self-reliance and belief in oneself is a central theme, inspiring readers to strive for success regardless of their circumstances.

TONY THE TRAMP
or *RIGHT IS MIGHT*
by HORATIO ALGER,

CHAPTER I
TWO TRAMPS

A man and a boy were ascending a steep street in a country town in eastern New York. The man was tall and dark-complexioned, with a sinister look which of itself excited distrust. He wore a slouch hat, which, coming down over his forehead, nearly concealed from view his low, receding brow. A pair of black, piercing eyes looked out from beneath the brim. The first impression produced upon those who met him was that he was of gypsy blood, and the impression was a correct one.

Where he was born no one seemed to know; perhaps he did not himself know, for all his life he had been a wanderer, but English was the tongue which he spoke, and, apart from the gypsy dialect, he knew no other.

His companion was a boy of fourteen. Between the two there was not the slightest resemblance. Though browned by exposure to the sun and the wind, it was easy to see that the boy was originally of light complexion. His hair was chestnut and his eyes blue.

His features were regular and strikingly handsome, though owing to the vagrant life he was compelled to lead, he was not able to pay that attention to cleanliness which he might have done if he had had a settled home.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon, and the boy looked weary. He seemed scarcely able to drag one foot after the other. His companion turned upon him roughly.

"What are you dawdling that way for, Tony?" he demanded. "You creep like a boy of three."

"I can't help it, Rudolph," said the boy wearily; "I'm tired."

"What business have you to be tired?"

"I've walked far to-day."

"You've walked no further than I. I don't dawdle like you."

"You're a man. You're stronger than I am, Rudolph."

"And you're a milksop," said the man contemptuously.

"I'm nothing of the sort," said the boy, with a flash of spirit. "I'm not made of cast iron, and that's why I can't stand walking all day long. Besides, I have had no dinner."

"That isn't my fault, is it?"

"I didn't say it was, but it makes me weak for all that."

"Well," said Rudolph, "perhaps you're right. I feel like eating something myself. We'll go to some house and ask for supper."

Tony looked dissatisfied.

"I wish we were not obliged to beg our meals," he said; "I don't like it."

"Oh, you're getting proud, are you?" sneered Rudolph. "If you've got money to pay for your supper we won't beg, as you call it."

"Why can't we do as other people do?" asked Tony.

"What's that?"

"Live somewhere, and not go tramping round the country all the time. It would be a good deal pleasanter."

"Not for me. I'm a vagrant by nature. I can't be cooped up in one place. I should die of stagnation. I come of a roving stock. My mother and father before me were rovers, and I follow in their steps."

The man spoke with animation, his eye flashing as he gazed about him, and unconsciously quickened his pace.

"Then I'm not like you," said Tony decidedly. "I don't want to be a tramp. Were my father and mother rovers like yours?"

"Of course they were," answered Rudolph, but not without hesitation.

"Ain't I your uncle?"

"I don't know. Are you?" returned Tony searchingly.

"Haven't I told you so a hundred times?" demanded Rudolph impatiently.

"Yes," said the boy slowly, "but there's no likeness between us."

"You're dark and I am light."

"That proves nothing," said the elder tramp hastily. "Brothers are often as unlike. Perhaps you don't want to look upon me as a relation?"

The boy was silent.

"Are you getting ashamed of me?" demanded Rudolph, in a harsh tone.

"I am ashamed of myself," said Tony bitterly. "I'm nothing but a tramp, begging my bread from door to door, sleeping in barns, outhouses, in the fields, anywhere I can. I'm as ignorant as a boy of eight. I can just read and that's all."

"You know as much as I do."

"That don't satisfy me. When I grow up I don't want to be——"

Tony hesitated.

"You don't want to be like me. Is that it?" asked Rudolph angrily.

"No, I don't want to be like you," answered Tony boldly. "I want to have a home, and a business, and to live like other people."

"Humph!" muttered Rudolph, fixing his eyes thoughtfully upon his young companion. "This is something new. You never talked like that before."

"But I've felt like that plenty of times. I'm tired of being a tramp."

"Then you're a fool. There's no life so free and independent. You can go where you please, with no one to order you here nor there, the scene changing always, instead of being obliged to look always upon the same people and the same fields."

"What's the good of it all? I'm tired of it. I've got no home, and never had any."

"You've got no spirit. You're only fit for a farmboy or an apprentice."

"I wish I was either one."

"Sit down here if you are tired," said the man abruptly, throwing himself down under a wide-spreading tree by the roadside.

Tony stretched himself out at a little distance, and uttered a sigh of relief as he found himself permitted to rest.

"Have you been thinking of this long?" asked Rudolph.

"Of what?"

"Of not liking to be a tramp?"

"Yes."

"You have not spoken of it before."

"I've been thinking of it more lately."

"How did that come?"

"I'll tell you," said Tony. "Don't you remember last week when we passed by a schoolhouse? It was recess, and the boys were out at play. While you were away a few minutes, one of the boys sat down by me and talked. He told me what he was studying, and what he was going to do when he got older, and then he asked me about myself."

"What did you tell him?"

"What did I tell him?" said Tony bitterly. "I told him that I was a tramp, and that when I got older I should be a tramp still."

"Well," said Rudolph sharply, "what then?"

"The boy told me I ought to get some regular work to do, and grow into a respectable member of society. He said that his father would help me, he thought, and...."

"So you want to leave me, do you?" demanded Rudolph fiercely. "Is that what you're coming to, my chicken?"

"It isn't that so much as the life you make me lead. I want to leave that, Rudolph."

"Well, you can't do it," said the man shortly.

"Why not?"

"I say so, and that's enough."

Tony was silent for a moment. He was not greatly disappointed, for he expected a refusal. He changed the subject.

"Rudolph," he said, "there's something else I want to ask you about."

"Well?"

"Who am I?"

"Who are you? A young fool," muttered the tramp, but he appeared a little uneasy at the question.

"I want to know something about my father and mother."

"Your mother was my sister. She died soon after you were born."

"And my father?"

"He was put in jail for theft, and was shot in trying to make his escape. Does that satisfy you?"

"No, it doesn't, and what's more, I don't believe it," said Tony boldly.

"Look here," said Rudolph sternly. "I've had enough of your insolence. Do you see this strap?"

He produced a long leather strap, which he drew through his fingers menacingly.

"Yes, I see it."

"You'll feel it if you ain't careful. Now get up. It's time to be moving."

CHAPTER II

AT THE FARMHOUSE

"Where are we going to stop to-night?" asked Tony ten minutes later.

"There," answered Rudolph, pointing out a farmhouse a little to the left.

"Suppose they won't let us."

"They will admit us into the barn at least, if we play our cards right. Listen to what I say. You are to be my son."

"But I am not your son."

"Be silent!" said the other tramp, "and don't you dare to contradict me. You have been sick, and are too weak to go further."

"That is a lie, Rudolph."

"That doesn't matter. If they believe it, they won't turn us away. Perhaps they will let you sleep in the house."

"Away from you?"

"Yes."

Tony was puzzled. It seemed as if Rudolph wanted him to be more comfortably provided for than himself, but the boy knew him too well not to suspect that there was some concealed motive for this apparent kindness.

"Well, what are you thinking about?" demanded Rudolph, suspiciously, as he observed the boy's earnest gaze.

"Why do you want me to sleep in the house?" he asked.

"I will tell you. When all the family are asleep, I want you to steal downstairs, open the back door, and let me in."

"What for?" asked the boy, startled.

"Never you mind. Do as I tell you."

"But I don't want to do it. You never asked me to do that before."

"Didn't I? Well, I had no occasion. I ask you now."

"What are you going to do? Are you going to harm anyone?"

"No. I'll tell you what I'm going to do, but mind you, if you breathe a word to any being, I'll cut your tongue out."

Tony looked troubled, but not frightened.

"Go on," he said.

Rudolph continued in a rapid tone.

"I want money to carry out a plan of importance. This farm belongs to a farmer who is rich, and who keeps a part of his money in the house."

"How do you know that?"

"A friend of mine stopped there last week, and found out. He put me on the scent. The old man keeps from two to three hundred dollars in his desk. I must have that money."

"I don't want to help you in this, Rudolph," said Tony. "I won't betray you, but you mustn't compel me to be a thief."

"I can't get along without you, and help me you must."

"Suppose we fail?"

"Then we must take to our legs. If we're caught we're both in the same box. I don't ask you to take any risks that I don't run myself."

Tony was about to remonstrate further, but it was too late. They had already reached the farmhouse, and caught sight of the owner standing under a tree in the front yard.

"Remember!" hissed the older tramp. "Follow my lead, or I'll beat you till you are half dead. Good-evening, sir."

This last was said in an humble tone to the farmer, who advanced to the gate.

"Good-evening," said the farmer, ingenuously.

He was a man of sixty, roughly dressed to suit his work, with grizzled hair, a form somewhat bowed, and a face seamed with wrinkles. He had been a hard worker, and showed abundant traces of it in his appearance.

"We are very tired and hungry, my boy and I," whined Rudolph. "We've traveled many miles since morning. Would you kindly give us some supper and a night's lodging?"

"My wife'll give you something to eat," said the old man. "Thank Heaven! we've got enough for ourselves and

a bit for the poor besides. But I don't know about lodging. I don't like to take in strangers that I know nothing about."

"I don't blame you, sir," said Rudolph, in a tone of affected humility. "There's many rogues going round the country, I've heard, but I'm a poor, hard-working man."

"Then why are you not at work?"

"Times are hard, and I can get nothing to do. I am in search of work. I can do almost anything. I'm a carpenter by trade."

Rudolph knew no more of the carpenter's trade than the man in the moon, but that would do as well as any other.

"Where are you from?"

"From Buffalo," he answered, with slight hesitation.

"Is business dull there?"

"Nothing doing."

"Well, my friend, you haven't come to the right place. There's nothing but farming done here."

"I don't know anything about that," said Rudolph, hastily, for he had no disposition to be set to work in the fields.

"I don't need any extra hands," said the farmer.

"I am glad of that," thought the tramp.

"Go round to the back door, and I will speak to my wife about supper," said the old man.

"Come, Tony," said Rudolph, motioning to take the boy's hand, but Tony did not see fit to notice the movement, and walked in silence by his side.

A motherly looking old woman made her appearance at the back door.

"Come in," she said. "Come right in, and sit down to the table. Abner, make room for the poor man and his son."

Abner was a stalwart youth of eighteen, hard-handed and muscular. He was the only permanent "hired man" employed on the farm. In haying time there were others transiently employed.

A farmer's table is plentiful, though homely. The two tramps made an abundant meal, both doing justice to the homely fare. The farmer's wife looked on with hospitable satisfaction. She could not bear to have anybody hungry under her roof.

"You'll excuse our appetite, ma'am," said Rudolph, "but we've had nothing to eat since breakfast."

"Eat as much as you like," said she. "We never stint anybody here. Is that your son?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Tony bent his eyes upon his plate, and frowned slightly. He wanted to deny it, but did not dare.

"He don't look a bit like you," said the woman. "He's light, and you're very dark."

"His mother was light," said Rudolph. "He takes after her."

"How old is he?"

"Tony, tell the lady how old you are."

"Fourteen."

"He is well grown at his age."

"Yes; he will make a good-sized man. He's been sick."

"Has he? What has been the matter?"

"I don't know. Poor folks like us can't call in a doctor."

"He don't look sick," said the farmer's wife thoughtfully.

"He's delicate, though he don't look it. It's sleeping out in the open air, I expect."

"Do you have to sleep out in the open air?"

"Yes; we can't afford to pay for lodgings, and people won't take us into their houses. I don't mind myself—I'm tough—but Tony can't stand it as well as I can."

While this conversation was going on, Tony fixed his eyes upon his plate. He was angry that such falsehoods should be told about him, but if he should utter a word of objection he knew that there would be an explosion of wrath on the part of his guardian, and he remained silent.

The farmer's wife was a simple-minded, kind-hearted woman, and though Tony did not look at all delicate, she never thought of questioning the statement of Rudolph. Indeed she was already revolving in her mind inviting the boy to sleep in the house. She was rather prejudiced in favor of Rudolph by his show of parental solicitude.

When supper was over, having in the meantime consulted her husband, she said to Rudolph:

"My husband says you may sleep in the barn, if you don't smoke. We can find a bed for your son with Abner. You won't mind taking him into your room?"

"He can come," said Abner good-naturedly.

So it was arranged. At half-past eight, for they retired at that early hour in the farmhouse, Rudolph left the fireside, and sought the barn.

As he left the room he looked suspiciously at Tony, and shook his head warningly.



CHAPTER III

RUDOLPH'S DISAPPOINTMENT

Abner slept in a large room in the attic. It had been roughly partitioned off, and was not even plastered. The beams were plainly visible.

Upon nails which had been driven into them hung Abner's limited wardrobe. There were two cot beds in the room, as a part of the year the farmer employed more than one hired man.

"You can sleep there, youngster," said Abner, pointing to one of the beds. "This is my bed."

"Thank you," said Tony politely.

"I s'pose you've traveled round considerable," said Abner, with curiosity.

"Yes, a good deal."

"Do you like it?"

"No; I'm tired of it."

"How do you make your livin'?"

"As we can. We often go hungry."

"Why don't your father settle down somewhere?"

Tony thought of disclaiming the relationship implied, but he reflected that Rudolph would be angry, and merely answered:

"He prefers to travel round."

"Was you ever in New York?" asked Abner.

"Do you mean the city of New York? Yes."

"I'd like to see it," said Abner, regarding Tony with new respect.

"I've heard a sight about it. It's powerful big, isn't it?"

"It's very large."

"There's as many as a thousand houses, isn't there?"

"There's a hundred thousand, I should think," answered Tony.

"Sho! you don't say so!" exclaimed Abner, awestruck. "I'd like to go there."

"Didn't you ever visit the city?"

"No; I never traveled any. I never was more'n fifteen miles from home. Dad wouldn't let me. When I'm a man, I'm bound to see the world."

"Ain't you a man now?" inquired Tony, surveying his herculean proportions with astonishment.

"No; I'm only eighteen."

"You're as big as a man."

"Yes, I'm pooty big," said Abner, with a complacent grin. "I can do a man's work."

"I should think you might. I thought you were more than four years older than me. I'm fourteen."

"I guess I weigh twice as much as you."

"I'm not small for my age," said Tony jealously.

"Maybe not. I'm a regular bouncer. That's what dad says. Why, I'm half as big again as he is."

"Does he ever lick you?" asked Tony, smiling.

"I'd like to see him try it," said Abner, bursting into a roar of laughter. "He'd have to get upon a milkin' stool. Does your dad lick you?"

"No," answered Tony shortly.

"He looks as if he might sometimes. He's kinder fractious-looking."

Tony did not care to say much on the subject of Rudolph. He felt that it was his policy to be silent. If he said anything he might say too much, and if it got to Rudolph's ears, the man's vindictive temper would make it dangerous for him.

"We get along pretty well," he said guardedly. "Do you get up early?"

"Four o'clock. You won't have to, though."

"What time do you get breakfast?"

"Half-past five, after I've milked and done the chores. You must be up by that time, or you won't get anything to eat."

"That's pretty early," thought Tony. "I don't see the use of getting up so early."

"I guess I'll go to sleep," said Abner. "I'm tuckered out."

"Good-night," said Tony.

"Good-night."

The young giant turned over, closed his eyes, and in five minutes was asleep.

Tony did not compose himself to sleep so readily, partly because Abner began to snore in a boisterous manner, partly because he felt disturbed by the thought of the treachery which Rudolph required at his hands.

Tony was only a tramp, but he had an instinct of honor in him. In the farmhouse he had been kindly treated and hospitably entertained. He felt that it would be very mean to steal down in the dead of night and open the door to his companion in order that he might rob the unsuspecting farmer of his money. On the other hand, if he did not do this he knew that he would be severely beaten by Rudolph.

"Why am I tied to this man?" he thought. "What chance is there of my ever being anything but a tramp while I stay with him?"

He had thought this before now, but the circumstances in which he now found himself placed made the feeling stronger. He had been often humiliated by being forced to

beg from door to door, by the thought that he was a vagrant, and the companion of a vagrant, but he had not been urged to actual crime until now. He knew enough to be aware that he ran the risk of arrest and imprisonment if he obeyed Rudolph.

On the other hand, if he refused he was sure of a beating.

What should he do?

It was certainly a difficult question to decide, and Tony debated it in his own mind for some time. Finally he came to a determination.

Rudolph might beat him, but he would not be guilty of this treachery.

He felt better after he had come to this resolve, and, the burden being now off his mind, he composed himself to sleep.

He did not know how long he slept, but he had a troubled dream. He thought that in compliance with his companion's order he rose and opened the door to him. While Rudolph was opening the farmer's desk, he thought that heavy steps were heard and Abner and the farmer entered the room, provided with a lantern. He thought that Rudolph and himself were overpowered and bound. Just as he reached this part he awoke, and was reassured by hearing Abner's heavy breathing.

"I'm glad it's a dream," he thought, breathing a sigh of relief.

At this instant his attention was called by a noise upon the panes of the only window in the room.

He listened, and detected the cause.

Some one was throwing gravel stones against it.

"It's Rudolph," he thought instantly. "He's trying to call my attention."

He thought of pretending to be asleep, and taking no notice of the signal. But he feared Abner would awake, and ascertain the meaning of it. He decided to go to the window, show himself, and stop the noise if he could.

He rose from his bed, and presented himself at the window. Looking down, he saw the dark figure of Rudolph leaning against the well curb, with his eyes fixed on the window.

"Oh, you're there at last!" growled Rudolph. "I thought I'd never wake you up. Is the man asleep?"

"Yes," said Tony.

"Then come down and let me in."

"I would rather not," said Tony, uneasily.

"What's the fool afraid of?" answered Rudolph, in a low, menacing tone.

"The man might wake up."

"No danger. Such animals always sleep heavily. There's no danger, I tell you."

"I don't want to do it," said Tony. "It would be mean. They've treated me well, and I don't want to help rob them."

"Curse the young idiot!" exclaimed Rudolph, in low tones of concentrated passion. "Do you mean to disobey me?"

"I can't do as you wish, Rudolph. Ask me anything else."

"I wish I could get at him!" muttered Rudolph, between his teeth. "He never dared to disobey me before. Once more! Will you open the door to me?" demanded Rudolph.

Tony bethought himself of an expedient. He might pretend that Abner was waking up.

"Hush!" he said, in feigned alarm. "The man is waking up. Get out of sight quick."

He disappeared from the window, and Rudolph, supposing there was really danger of detection, hurriedly stole away to the barn, where he had been permitted to lodge.

He came out half an hour later, and again made the old signal, but this time Tony did not show himself. He had made up his mind not to comply with the elder tramp's demands, and it would do no good to argue the point.

"I wish I knew whether he was asleep, or only pretending, the young rascal," muttered Rudolph. "I must manage to have him stay here another night. That money must and shall be mine, and he shall help to get it for me."

CHAPTER IV *SETTING A TRAP*

At half-past five Tony got up. He would have liked to remain in bed two hours longer, but there was no chance for late resting at the farmhouse. Rudolph, too, was awakened by Abner, and the two tramps took their seats at the breakfast table with the rest of the family.

Rudolph furtively scowled at Tony. To him he attributed the failure of his plans the night before, and he was furious against him—the more so that he did not dare to say anything in presence of the farmer's family.

"Where are you going today?" asked the farmer, addressing Rudolph.

"I am going to walk to Crampton. I may get employment there."

"It is twelve miles away. That is a good walk."

"I don't mind for myself. I mind it for my son," said Rudolph hypocritically.

"He can stay here till you come back," said the farmer's wife hospitably.

"If you're willing to have him, I'll leave him for one more night," said Rudolph. "It'll do him good to rest."

"He can stay as well as not," said the farmer. "When are you coming back?"

"Perhaps to-night. But I think not till to-morrow."

"Don't trouble yourself about your son. He will be safe here."

"You are very kind," said the elder tramp. "Tony, thank them good people for their kindness to you."

"I do thank them," said Tony, glancing uneasily at the other.

When breakfast was over, Rudolph took his hat and said: "I'll get started early. I have a long walk before me."

Tony sat still, hoping that he would not be called upon to join him.

But he was destined to be disappointed.

"Come and walk a piece with me, Tony," said Rudolph. "You needn't walk far."

Reluctantly Tony got his hat and set out with him.

As long as they were in sight and hearing, Rudolph spoke to him gently, but when they were far enough for him to throw off the mask safely he turned furiously upon the boy.

"Now, you young rascal," he said roughly, "tell me why you did not obey me last night."

"It wasn't safe," said Tony. "We should both have been caught."

"Why should we? Wasn't the man asleep?"

"He stirred in his sleep. If I had moved about much, or opened the door, it would have waked him up."

"You are a coward," sneered Rudolph. "When I was of your age I wouldn't have given up a job so easily. Such men sleep sound. No matter if they do move about, they won't wake up. If you had had a little more courage we should have succeeded last night in capturing the money."

"I wish you'd give it up, Rudolph," said Tony earnestly.

"You don't know what you're talking about," said the tramp harshly. "You're a milksop. The world owes us a living, and we must call for it."

"I'd rather work than steal."

"There's no work to be had, and we must have money. More depends on it than you think. But we've got one more night to work in."

"What do you mean to do?" asked Tony uneasily.

"Thanks to my management, you will sleep in the same room to-night."

Look round the house during the day; see if the key's in the desk. If you can get hold of the money, all the better. In that case, come and hide it in that hollow tree, and we can secure it after the hue and cry is over. Do you hear?"

"Yes."

"But if there is no chance of that, look out for me at midnight. I will throw gravel against your window as a signal. When you hear it, steal downstairs, with your shoes in your hands, and open the door to me. I will attend to the rest. And mind," he added sternly, "I shall take no excuses."

"Suppose I am caught going downstairs?"

"Say you are taken sick. It will be easy enough to make an excuse."

"Are you going to Crampton?" asked Tony.

"Of course not. Do you think I am such a fool as to take a long walk like that?"

"You said you were going."

"Only to put them off the scent. I shall hide in yonder wood till night. Then I will find my way back to the farmhouse."

"Do you want me to go any further with you?"

"No; you can go back now if you want to. Don't forget my directions."

"I will remember them," said Tony quietly.

The two parted company, and Tony walked slowly back to the farm. He was troubled and perplexed. He was in a dilemma, and how to get out of it he did not know.

It was not the first time that he thought over his relations to Rudolph.

As far back as he could remember he had been under the care of this man. Sometimes the latter had been away for months, leaving him in the charge of a woman whose appearance indicated that she also was of gypsy descent. He had experienced hunger, cold, neglect, but had lived through them all, tolerably contented. Now, however, he saw that Rudolph intended to make a criminal of him, and he was disposed to rebel. That his guardian was himself a thief, he had reason to know.

He suspected that some of his periodical absences were spent inside prison walls. Would he be content to follow his example?

Tony answered unhesitatingly, "No." Whatever the consequences might be, he would make a stand there. He had reason to fear violence, but that was better than arrest and imprisonment. If matters came to the worst, he would run away.

When he had come to a decision he felt better. He returned to the farm, and found Abner just leaving the yard with a hoe in his hand.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To the cornfield."

"May I go with you?"

"If you want to."

So Tony went out to the field with the stalwart "hired man," and kept him company through the forenoon.

"That's easy work," said Tony, after a while.

"Do you think you can do it?"

"Let me try."

Tony succeeded tolerably well, but he could not get over the ground so fast as Abner.

"Why don't you hire out on a farm?" asked Abner, as he took back the hoe.

"I would if I could," answered Tony.

"Why can't you? Won't your father let you?"

"He wants me to go round with him," answered Tony.

"Wouldn't he take me instead of you?" asked Abner, grinning. "I'd like to travel round and see the world. You could stay here and do the farm work."

"If he and the farmer agree to the change, I will," answered Tony, with a smile.

At noon they went back to the farmhouse to dinner. Tony stared with astonishment at the quantity of food Abner made away with. He concluded that farm work was favorable to the appetite.

The afternoon passed rapidly away, and night came. Again Tony went up to the attic to share Abner's room. He got nervous as the night wore on. He knew what was expected of him, and he shrank from Rudolph's anger. He tried to go to sleep, but could not.

At last the expected signal came. There was a rattling of gravel stones upon the window.

"Shall I lie here and take no notice?" thought Tony.

In this case Rudolph would continue to fling gravel stones, and Abner might wake up. He decided to go to the window and announce his determination.

When Rudolph saw him appear at the window, he called out:

"Come down quick, and open the door."

"I would rather not," answered Tony.

"You must!" exclaimed Rudolph, with a terrible oath. "If you dare to refuse I'll flay you alive."

"I can't do it," said Tony, pale, but resolute. "You have no right to ask it of me."

Just then Tony was startled by a voice from the bed:

"Is that your father? What does he want?"

"I would rather not tell," said Tony.

"You must!" said Abner sternly.

"He wants me to open the door and let him into the house," Tony confessed reluctantly.

"What for?"

"He wants to get your master's money."

"Ho, ho!" said Abner. "Well, we'll go down and let him in."

"What!" exclaimed Tony, in surprise.

"Call from the window that you will be down directly."

"I don't want to get him into trouble."

"You must, or I shall think you are a thief, too."

Thus constrained, Tony called out that he would come down at once.

"I thought you'd think better of it," muttered Rudolph. "Hurry down, and waste no time."

Five minutes later Abner and Tony crept downstairs, the former armed with a tough oak stick.

CHAPTER V

IN A TRAP

Unsuspecting of danger, Rudolph took a position on the doorstep. He was incensed with Tony for having given him so much unnecessary trouble, and he was resolved to give the boy a lesson.

It was quite dark in the shadow of the house, and when the door opened, Rudolph, supposing, of course, it was Tony who had opened it, seized the person, whom he saw but dimly, by the arm, exclaiming, venomously, as he tried to shake him:

"I'll teach you to keep me waiting, you young rascal!"

He was not long in finding out his mistake.

Abner was considerably larger and more muscular than the tramp, and he returned the compliment by shaking off Rudolph's grasp and seizing him in his own viselike grip.

"You'll teach me, will you, you villain!" retorted Abner. "I'll teach you to come here like a thief!"

"Let go!" exclaimed the tramp, as he felt himself shaken roughly.

"Not till I've given you a good drubbing," returned Abner, and he began to use his cudgel with effect on the back and shoulders of the tramp. "You've come to the wrong house, you have."

Rudolph ground his teeth with ineffectual rage. He lamented that he had not a knife or pistol with him, but he had made so sure of easy entrance into the house, and no resistance, that he had not prepared himself. As to brute force, he was no match for Abner.

"The boy betrayed me!" he shrieked. "I'll have his life!"

"Not much," said Abner. "You'll be lucky to get away with your own. It isn't the boy. I was awake and heard you ask him to let you in. Now take yourself off."

As he said this he gave a powerful push, and Rudolph reeled a moment and sank upon the ground, striking his head with violence.

"He won't try it again," said Abner, as he shut the door and bolted it. "I guess he's got enough for once."

Tony stood by, ashamed and mortified. He was afraid Abner would class him with the tramp who had just been ignominiously expelled from the house. He was afraid he, too, would be thrust out of doors, in which case he would be exposed to brutal treatment from Rudolph. But he did not need to fear this. Abner had seen and heard enough to feel convinced that Tony was all right in the matter, and he did not mean to make the innocent suffer for the guilty.

"Now let us go to bed, Tony," he said, in a friendly manner. "You don't want to go with him, do you?"

"No," said Tony. "I never want to see him again."

"I shouldn't think you would. He's a rascal and a thief."

"I hope you don't think I wanted to rob the house," said Tony.

"No; I don't believe you're a bit like him. What makes you go with him?"

"I won't any more."

"He isn't your father?"

"No; I don't know who my father is."

"That's strange," said Abner, who had seen but little of the world.

Everyone that he knew had a father, and knew who that father was. He could not realize that anyone could have an experience like Tony's.

"I wish I did know my father," said Tony, thoughtfully. "I'm alone in the world now."

"What do you mean to do?"

"I'll go off by myself to-morrow, away from Rudolph. I never want to see him again."

"Have you got any money?"

They had now got back into the chamber, and were taking off their clothes.

"I've got five cents," answered Tony.

"Is that all?"

"Yes, but I don't mind. I'll get along somehow."

Tony had always got along somehow. He had never—at least not for long at a time—known what it was to have a settled home or a permanent shelter.

Whether the world owed him a living or not, he had always got one, such as it was, and though he had often been cold and hungry, here he was at fourteen, well and strong, and with plenty of pluck and courage to carry with him into the life struggle that was opening

before him. Abner's training had been different, and he wondered at the coolness with which Tony

contemplated the future. But he was too sleepy to wonder long at anything, and, with a yawn, he lapsed into slumber.

Tony did not go to sleep immediately. He had need to be thoughtful. He had made up his mind to be his own master henceforth, but Rudolph he knew would have a word to say on that point. In getting away the next morning he must manage to give the tramp a wide berth. It would be better for him to go to some distant place, where, free from interference, he could make his own living.

There was another thought that came to him. Somewhere in the world he might come across a father or mother, or more distant relative—one of whom he would not be ashamed, as he was of the companion who tried to draw him into crime. This was the last thought in his mind, as he sank into a sound sleep from which he did not awaken till he was called for breakfast.

To say that Rudolph was angry when he recovered from the temporary insensibility occasioned by his fall would be a very mild expression.

He had not only been thwarted in his designs, but suffered violence and humiliation in the presence of the boy of whom he regarded himself as the guardian. He thirsted for revenge, if not on Abner, then on Tony, whom it would be safer to maltreat and abuse.

Anger is unreasonable, and poor Tony would have fared badly if he had fallen into Rudolph's clutches just then. It made no difference that Abner had exonerated Tony from any share in the unpleasant surprise he had met. He determined to give him a severe beating, nevertheless.

There is an old proverb: "You must catch your hare before you cook it." This did not occur to the tramp. He never supposed Tony would have the hardihood or courage to give him the slip.

The remainder of the night spent by Tony in sleeping was less pleasantly spent by Rudolph in the barn.

He meant to be up early, as he knew he was liable to arrest on account of his last night's attempt, and lie in wait for Tony, who, he supposed, would wait for breakfast.

He was right there. Tony did remain for breakfast. The farmer—Mr. Coleman—had already been informed of Rudolph's attempted burglary, and he did Tony the justice to exonerate him from any share in it.

"What are you going to do, my boy?" he asked, at the breakfast table.

"I am going to set up for myself," answered Tony, cheerfully.

"That's right. Have nothing more to do with that man. He can only do you harm. Have you got any money?"

"I've got five cents."

"That isn't enough to buy a farm."

"Not a very large one," said Tony, smiling.

Abner nearly choked with laughter. This was a joke which he could appreciate.

"I don't think I'll go to farming," continued Tony.

"You can stay here a week or two," said the farmer, hospitably, "till you get time to look around."

"Thank you," said Tony. "You are very kind, but I don't think it will be safe. Rudolph will be on the watch for me."

"The man you came with?"

"Yes."

"Guess he won't touch you while I'm round," said Abner.

"I don't think he'll want to tackle you again," said Tony.

"Didn't I lay him out, though?" said Abner, with a grin. "He thought it was you, ho! ho!"

"He didn't think so long," said Tony. "I haven't got such an arm as you."

Abner was pleased with this compliment to his prowess, and wouldn't have minded another tussle with the tramp.

"Where do you think that chap you call Rudolph is?" he asked.

"He's searching for me, I expect," said Tony. "If I'm not careful he'll get hold of me."

Just then a neighbor's boy, named Joe, came to the house on an errand.

He was almost Tony's size. He waited about, not seeming in any hurry to be gone.

"Abner," said the farmer, "if you've got nothing else to do, you may load up the wagon with hay and carry it to Castleton. We shall have more than we want."

"All right," said Abner.

"May I go, too? May I ride on the hay?" asked Joe eagerly.

"Will your father let you?" asked the farmer.

"Oh, yes; he won't mind."

"Then you may go," was the reply. "Do you want to go, too, Tony?"

Tony was about to say yes, when an idea seized him.

"If the other boy goes, Rudolph will think it is I, and he will follow the wagon. That will give me a chance of getting off in another direction."

"So it will," said Abner. "What a headpiece you've got," he added admiringly. "I wouldn't have thought of that."

Abner's headpiece was nothing to boast of. He had strength of body, but to equalize matters his mind was not equally endowed.

The plan was disclosed to Joe, who willingly agreed to enter into it.

This was the more feasible because he was of about Tony's size, and wore a hat just like his.

The hay was loaded, and the wagon started off with Abner walking alongside. Joe was perched on top, nearly buried in the hay, but with his hat rising from the mass. This was about all that could be seen of him.

CHAPTER VI
ABNER'S RUSE

Abner and Joe had gone about half a mile when from the bushes by the roadside Rudolph emerged. He had seen the hat, and he felt sure that Tony was trying to escape him in that way.

"Well," said Abner, with a grin, as he recognized his midnight foe, "how do you feel this morning?"

"None the better for you, curse you!" returned the tramp roughly.

Abner laughed.

"That's what I thought," he said, cracking his whip.

Rudolph would like to have punished him then and there for his humiliation of the night before, but Abner looked too powerful as he strode along manfully with vigorous steps. Besides, he had a heavy whip in his hand, which the tramp suspected would be used unhesitatingly if there were occasion. The prospect was not inviting.

But, at any rate, Rudolph could demand that Tony be remitted to his custody.

"Where's my boy?" asked the tramp, keeping at a safe distance.

"Didn't know you had a boy," said Abner.

"I mean that villain Tony. Isn't that he on that load of hay?"

"Kind o' looks like him," answered Abner, grin-ning.

Rudolph looked up, and caught sight of the hat.

"Come down here, Tony," he said sternly.

Joe, who had been instructed what to do, answered not a word.

"Come down here, if you know what's best for you," continued the tramp.

"Guess he's hard of hearing," laughed Abner.

"Stop your wagon," said Rudolph furiously, "I want to get hold of him."

"Couldn't do it," said Abner coolly. "I'm in a hurry."

"Will you give me the boy or not?" demanded the tramp hoarsely.

"He can get off and go along with you if he wants to," said Abner. "Do you want to get down, Tony?"

"No!" answered the supposed Tony.

"You see, squire, he prefers to ride," said Abner. "Can't blame him much. I'd do it in his place."

"Where are you going?" demanded the tramp, who hadn't discovered that the voice was not that of Tony.

"I'm going to Castleton," answered Abner.

"Are you going to leave the hay there?"

"Yes, that's what I calc'late to do."

"How far is it?"

"Six miles."

"I'll walk along, too."

"Better not, squire, you'll get tired."

"I'll risk that."

Rudolph's plan was manifest. When the hay was unloaded, of course Tony would have to get down. Then he would get hold of him.

"You can do just as you've a mind to," said Abner. "You'll be company to Tony and me, but you needn't put yourself out on our account, hey, Tony?"

There was a smothered laugh on top of the hay, which the tramp heard.

His eyes snapped viciously, and he privately determined to give Tony a settlement in full for all his offenses just as soon as he got hold of him.

So they jogged on, mile after mile. Abner walked on one side, swinging his whip, and occasionally cracking it. The tramp walked on the otherside of the road, and the boy rode along luxuriously imbedded in his fragrant couch of hay. Abner from time to time kept up the tramp's illusion by calling out, "Tony, you must take keer, or you'll fall off."

"I'll catch him if he does," said Rudolph grimly.

"So you will," chuckled Abner. "You'd like to, wouldn't you?"

"Certainly. He is my son," said Rudolph.

"Do you hear that, Tony? He says you're his son," said Abner, grinning again.

There was another laugh from the boy on the load of hay.

"You won't find anything to laugh at when I get hold of you," muttered Rudolph.

So they journeyed into Castleton.

From time to time Abner, as he thought how neatly the tramp had been sold, burst into a loud laugh, which was echoed from the hay wagon.

Rudolph was not only angry, but puzzled.

"Does the boy hope to escape me?" he asked himself. "If so, he will find himself badly mistaken. He will find that I am not to be trifled with."

"Say, squire, what makes you look so glum?" asked Abner. "Maybe it'sm because I didn't let you in when you called so late last night. We don't receive visitors after midnight."

Rudolph scowled, but said nothing.

"How long has the boy been with you?" asked Abner, further.

"Since he was born," answered the tramp. "Ain't I his father?"

"I don't know. If it's a conundrum, I give it up."

"Well, I am, and no one has a right to keep him from me," said the tramp, in a surly manner.

"I wouldn't keep him from you for a minute," said Abner innocently.

"You are doing it now."

"No, I ain't."

"I can't get at him on that hay."

"He can come down if he wants to. I don't stop him. You can come down if you want to, Tony," he said, looking up to where the boy's hat was visible.

Tony did not answer, and Abner continued:

"You see he don't want to come. He'd rather ride. You know he's been sick," said Abner, with a grin, "and he's too delicate to walk. He ain't tough, like you and me."

"He'll need to be tough," muttered the tramp, as he thought of the flogging he intended to give Tony.

"What did you say?"

"Never mind."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Abner. "You can say what you want to. This is a free country, only you can't do what you've a mind to."

Rudolph wished that he had a double stock of strength. It was very provoking to be laughed at and derided by Abner, without being able to revenge himself. A pistol or a knife would make him even with the countryman, but Rudolph was too much of a coward to commit such serious crimes where there was so much danger of detection and punishment.

At last they entered Castleton.

The hay was to be delivered to a speculator, who collected large quantities of it, and forwarded it over the railroad to a large city.

It had to be weighed, and Abner drove at once to the hay scales.

"Now," thought Rudolph, with exultation, "the boy must come down, and I shall get hold of him."

"I guess you'd better slide down," said Abner. "I can't sell you for hay, Tony."

There was a movement, and then the boy slid down, Abner catching him as he descended.

Rudolph's face changed ominously when he saw that it wasn't Tony who made his appearance.

"What does this mean?" he demanded furiously.

"What's the matter?"

"This isn't Tony."

"Come to look at him, it isn't," said Abner, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Didn't you say it was Tony?" asked the tramp, exasperated.

"I guess I was mistaken, squire," said Abner, grinning.

"Where is he, then?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. It seems he didn't come. Guess he must have given us the slip."

The tramp, unable to control his rage, burst into a volley of execrations.

"Hope you feel better, squire," said Abner, when he got through.

"I'd like to see you hanged," retorted Rudolph bitterly.

"Thank you," said Abner, "I'll invite you when it comes off."

The tramp strode off, vowing dire vengeance against both Abner and Tony.

CHAPTER VII

A STRANGE HOTEL

From the upper window in the farmhouse, which was situated on elevated ground, Tony saw his old guardian follow Abner. Thus the way was opened for his escape.

"Won't you stay longer with us?" asked the farmer.

"Thank you," answered Tony, "but I wouldn't dare to. Rudolph may be back for me, and I want to get away before he has a chance."

"Are you going to walk?" asked the farmer's wife.

"Yes," said Tony. "I've only got five cents in my pocket, and I can't ride far on that."

"I'm afraid you will be tired," she said.

"Oh, I'm used to tramping," returned Tony lightly.

"Can't you put up some dinner for him, wife?" suggested the farmer. "It'll make him hungry walking."

"To be sure, I will," she replied, and a large supply of eatables were put in a paper, sufficient to last Tony twenty-four hours at least.

The farmer deliberated whether he should not offer our hero half a dollar, but he was close, so far as money was concerned, and he decided in the negative.

So Tony set out, taking a course directly opposite to that pursued by Abner. In this way he thought he should best avoid the chance of meeting Rudolph.

About five o'clock he felt that it was about time to look about for a night's rest. A hotel was, of course, out of the question, and he looked about for a farmhouse. The nearest dwelling was a small one, of four rooms, setting back from the road, down a lane.

"Perhaps I can get in there," thought Tony.

An old man, with a patriarchal beard, whose neglected and squalid dress seemed to indicate poverty, was sitting on the doorstep.

"Good-evening," said Tony.

"Who are you?" demanded the old man suspiciously.

"I am a poor traveler," said Tony.

"A tramp," said the old man, in the same tone.

"Yes, I suppose so," said Tony.

"Well, I've got nothing for you."

"I don't want anything except the chance to sleep."

"Don't you want any supper?"

"No; I've got my supper here," returned our hero.

"What have you got there?" asked the old man.

"Some bread and butter, and cold meat."

"It looks good," said the other, with what Tony thought to be a longing look.

"I'll share it with you, if you'll let me sleep here to-night," said Tony.

The old man was a miser, as Tony suspected. He was able to live comfortably, but he deprived himself of the necessities of life in order to hoard away money. His face revealed that to Tony. He had nearly starved himself, but he had not overcome his natural appetites, and the sight of Tony's supper gave him a craving for it.

"I don't know," he said doubtfully. "If I let you sleep here, you might get up in the night and rob me."

"You don't look as if you had anything worth stealing."

"You're quite right," said old Ben Hayden. "I've only saved a little money—a very little—to pay my funeral expenses. You wouldn't take that."

"Oh, no," said Tony. "I wouldn't take it if you'd give it to me."

"You wouldn't? Why not?"

"Because you need it yourself. If you were a rich man it would be different."

"So it would," said old Hayden. "You're a good boy—an excellent boy. I'll trust you. You can stay."

"Then let us eat supper," said Tony.

He sat down on the doorstep and gave the old man half of his supply of food. He was interested to see the avidity with which he ate it.

"Is it good?" he asked.

"I haven't eaten anything so good for a long time. I couldn't afford to buy food."

"I am sorry for you."

"You haven't got any left for breakfast."

"Oh, somebody will give me breakfast," said Tony.

"Do you travel round all the time?"

"Yes; but I hope to get a chance to go to work soon. I'd rather live in one place."

"You might live with me, if I were not so poor."

"Thank you," answered Tony politely, but it did not appear that it was such a home as he would choose.

"Do you live alone?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I didn't know but you might be married."

"I was married but my wife died long ago."

"Why don't you marry again?" inquired Tony.

"I couldn't afford it," answered Hayden, frightened at the suggestion.

"Women have terrible appetites."

"Have they?" returned Tony, amused.

"And I can't get enough for myself to eat."

"Have you always lived here?"

"No; I lived in England when I was a young man."

"What made you leave it?"

"Why do you ask me that?" demanded old Ben.

"Oh, if it's a secret, don't tell me," said Tony.

"Who said it was a secret?" said the old man irritably.

"Nobody that I know of."

"Then why do you ask me such questions?"

"Don't answer anything you don't want to," said our hero. "I only asked for the sake of saying something."

"I don't mind telling," said old Ben, more calmly. "It was because I was so poor. I thought I could do better in America."

"Do you own this place?"

"Yes, but it's a very poor place. It isn't worth much."

"I shouldn't think it was," said Tony.

"You're a good lad. You see how poor I am."

"Of course I do, and I'm sorry for you. I would help you only I am very poor myself."

"Have you got any money?" asked Ben, with interest.

"I've got five cents," answered Tony, laughing. "I hope you've got more than that."

"A little more—a very little more," said Ben.

The old miser began to consider whether he couldn't charge Tony five cents for his lodging, but sighed at the recollection that Tony had already paid for it in advance by giving him a supper.

At eight o'clock the miser suggested going to bed.

"I haven't any lights," he said; "candles cost so much. Besides, a body's better off in bed."

"I'm willing to go to bed," said Tony. "I've walked a good deal to-day, and I'm tired."

They went into the house. There was a heap of rags in the corner of the room when they entered.

"That's my bed," said old Ben; "it's all I have."

"I can sleep on the floor," said Tony.

He took off his jacket, rolled it up for a pillow, and stretched himself out on the bare floor. He had often slept so before.

CHAPTER VIII

TONY HIRES OUT

Tony was not slow in going to sleep. Neither his hard bed nor his strange bedchamber troubled him.

Generally he slept all night without awakening, but to-night, for some unknown reason, he awoke about two o'clock. It was unusually light for that hour, and so he was enabled to see what at first startled him.

The old man had raised a plank forming a part of the flooring, and had lifted from beneath it a canvas bag full of gold pieces. He was taking them out and counting them, apparently quite unconscious of Tony's presence.

Tony raised himself on his elbow, and looked at him. It occurred to him that for a man so suspicious it was strange that he should expose his hoard before a stranger. Something, however, in the old man's look led him to think that he was in a sleep-walking fit.

"Ninety-five, ninety-six, ninety-seven," Tony heard him count; "that makes nine hundred and seventy dollars, all gold, good, beautiful gold. Nobody knows the old man is so rich. There's another bag, too. There are one hundred pieces in that. Three more and this will be full, too. Nobody must know, nobody must know."

He put back the pieces, replaced the bag in its hiding place, and then, putting back the plank, lay down once more on his heap of rags.

"How uneasy he would be," thought Tony, "if he knew I had seen his treasures. But I wouldn't rob him for the world, although the money would do me good, and he makes no use of it except to look at it."

Tony slept till six when he was awakened by a piteous groaning.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Who's there?" demanded Ben, terrified.

"It's only I. Don't you remember you let me sleep here last night?"

"Oh, yes. I remember now. I'm sick; very sick."

"How do you feel?"

"I'm aching and trembling all over. Do you think I'm going to die?" he asked, with a startled look.

"Oh, no, I guess not," said Tony reassuringly.

"I never felt so before," groaned Ben. "I'm an old man. Don't you really think I shall die?"

Tony knew nothing of medicines or of diseases, but he had the sense to understand that the old man would be more likely to recover if his terror could be allayed, and he said lightly:

"Oh, it's only a trifle. You've taken cold, very likely. A cup of hot tea would be good for you."

"I haven't any tea," groaned Ben. "It costs a great deal, and I'm very poor. I can't afford to buy it."

Tony smiled, remembering the hoard of gold.

"I guess you've got some money," said Tony. "You'd better let me go to the store, and buy some tea and a fresh roll for you."

"How much will it cost?" asked Ben.

"I can get some bread, and tea, and sugar for thirty or forty cents," answered Tony.

"Forty cents! It's frightful!" exclaimed Ben. "I—I guess I'll do without it."

"Oh, well, if you prefer to lie there and die, it's none of my business," said Tony, rather provoked.

"But I don't want to die," whined Ben.

"Then do as I tell you."

Tony jumped up, unrolled his coat and put it on.

"Now," he said, "I'm ready to go for you, if you'll give me the money."

"But you may take it and not come back."

"If you think you can't trust me, you needn't."

"I think I'll go myself," said Ben.

He tried to raise himself, but a twinge of pain compelled him to lie down again.

"No, I can't," he said.

"Well, do you want me to go for you?"

"Yes," answered Ben reluctantly.

"Then give me the money."

Ben produced twenty-five cents from his pocket.

"Isn't that enough?" he asked.

"Better give me more," said Tony.

He produced ten cents more, and vowed it was all the money he had in the world.

Tony decided not to contradict his assertion, but to make this go as far as it would. He put on his hat and started out. He meant also to stop at the doctor's, and ask him to call round, for he thought it possible that the old man might be seriously sick.

After he left the grocery store, he called at the house of the village doctor.

"Old Ben sick?" said Dr. Compton. "How did you happen to be in his house?"

Tony explained.

"He has been repaid for taking you in," said the doctor. "I'll put on my hat and go right over with you."

After Tony left the house, old Ben tormented himself with the thought that the boy would never come back.

He was relieved by seeing the door open and Tony enter. But he looked dismayed when he saw the doctor.

"What did you come for?" he asked peevishly.

"To see what I can do for you, Mr. Hayden."

"But I can't pay you," whined old Ben.

"We'll talk about that afterward."

"You can't charge when I didn't send for you."

"Make your mind easy. I won't charge for this visit. Let me feel your pulse."

Old Ben no longer opposed medical treatment, finding it would cost nothing.

"Am I going to die?" he asked, with an anxious look.

"You need nourishing food and care, that is all," was the reply. "You have had a chill, and you are reduced by insufficient food."

"I have some bread and tea here," said Tony.

"Then make a fire and boil the tea. And, by the way, Mr. Hayden needs somebody for a few days. Can you look after him?"

"If he will give me money enough to buy what he needs," said Tony.

Old Ben whined that he was poor, and had no money, but the doctor interrupted him impatiently.

"That's all nonsense," he said. "You may not have much money, but you've got some, and you'll die if you don't spend some on yourself."

If you don't agree to it I shall advise this boy here to leave you to your fate. Then your only resource will be to go to the poorhouse."

This proposal was not acceptable to Ben, who was unwilling to leave the house where his treasures were concealed. He, therefore, reluctantly acceded to the doctor's conditions, and Tony got his breakfast.

"Well," thought Tony to himself, with a smile, "I've got a situation as plain cook and housekeeper. I wonder how long it will last, and what'll come of it. I don't believe Rudolph will look for me here."

CHAPTER IX

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

Tony was not only cook and housekeeper, but he was sick nurse as well.

Nor were his duties easy. The main difficulty was about getting money to buy what was absolutely necessary. This was very irritating, especially since Tony knew about Ben's hidden treasure.

One morning Tony went to Ben for money, saying:

"There isn't a scrap of food in the house except a little tea."

"You can make some tea. That will do," said Ben.

"It may do for you, but it won't for me."

"It costs a sight to support two people."

"I don't know about that. I've only spent two dollars in six days. You don't call that much, do you?"

"Two dollars!" ejaculated the old man, terrified. "Oh, it's too much. I am ruined!"

"Are you?" said Tony coolly. "Then all I can say is, you're easily ruined. I want half a dollar."

"I shan't give it to you," snarled Ben.

"Do you mean to starve?"

"I won't part with all I have. You are robbing me."

"That won't make much difference, as you'll be dead in three days," said Tony.

"What?" almost shrieked Ben, in dismay. "Who told you so? The doctor?"

"No."

"You ain't goin' to murder me, are you?"

"No; you are going to murder yourself."

"What do you mean?" demanded Ben peevishly.

"You're not willing to buy anything to eat," explained Tony, "and you can't live above three days on nothing."

"Is that all? What made you frighten me so?"

"I only told you the truth. Are you going to give me the money?"

"Perhaps you'll tell me where I'm going to get so much money?" said Ben, in the same tone.

"I will tell you if you want me to," answered Tony.

"Where?" asked Ben eagerly.

"Under the floor," returned Tony composedly.

"What!" screamed Ben, in consternation.

"Just where I said. There's plenty of money under that plank."

"Who told you?" groaned the old man, livid with terror. "Have—have you taken any?"

"Not a dollar. It's all there."

"Have you been spying when I was asleep?"

"No, I haven't. That ain't my style."

"How could you find out, then?"

"I'll tell you. The first night I was here, you got up in your sleep and took up the board. Then you drew out two bags of gold pieces and counted them."

"Oh, I'm ruined! I'm undone!" lamented Ben.

"I don't see how you are."

"I shall be robbed. There's only a little there—only a few dollars to bury me."

"I guess you mean to have a tall funeral," said Tony coolly. "There's a thousand dollars there."

"No, no, only fifty," answered the old man.

"There's no use talking, I know better. If you don't believe it, suppose I count the pieces."

"No, no!"

"Just as you say. As it is, you've got plenty of money, and I know it, and if you ain't willing to use some of it, I'll go off and leave you alone."

"Don't go," said Ben hastily. "You're a good boy. You wouldn't rob a poor old man, would you?"

"Nor a rich old man either, but I don't mean to starve. So give me fifty cents and I'll get some fresh bread and butter, and tea and sugar."

"No matter about the butter. It costs too much."

"I want butter myself. My constitution requires it," said Tony. "You needn't eat it if you don't want to."

Ben groaned again, but he produced the money required, and Tony soon returned from the grocery store with small supplies of the articles he had named.

"Now we'll have some breakfast," said Tony cheerfully. "Don't you feel hungry?"

"A—a little," acknowledged Ben reluctantly. "I wish I wasn't. It costs so much to live."

"I don't think it costs you much," said Tony. "This morning I'm going to give you a boiled egg."

"I can't afford it," groaned the old man.

"You may as well eat it, as it's here."

"How much did you pay?"

"Three cents for two."

Ben groaned again, but when breakfast was ready he showed an unusually good appetite, and did not refrain from partaking of the egg, expensive as it was.

Dr. Compton came in the next morning, and pronounced the old man better and stronger.

"Shall I be able to get up soon, doctor?" asked Ben.

"In a day or two, I think."

Ben heaved a sigh of relief.

"I'm glad of it," he said. "I can't afford to be sick."

"Has it cost you much?" asked the doctor, amused.

"It costs a sight to live. He eats a good deal."

"He's a growing boy; but he's worth all he costs you. You'd better ask him to stay with you a few weeks."

"No, no; I can't afford it," said Ben hastily. "He's a good boy; but he's very hearty—very hearty."

"Don't vex him, doctor," said our hero. "I'm tired of staying here. I want to get out on the road again."

Ben looked relieved.

"Right, boy," he said—"you're right. It's a dull place. You'll be better off to go."

"You have been lucky to have him here during your sickness," said the doctor. "Without his care, or that of some one else, you would probably have died."

"But I won't die now?" asked old Ben anxiously.

"Not at present, I hope. But you must live better than you have been accustomed to do."

"I shall be glad to get away," said Tony hurriedly, to the doctor, outside of the house. "I'm used to tramping, and I can't stand it much longer. There's one thing I want to tell you before I go."

"Go on, my boy."

"I am afraid the old man will be robbed sometime."

"Is there anything to steal?"

Tony, in a low tone, imparted to Dr. Compton the discovery he had made of the miser's hoards.

"I suspected as much," said the doctor. "I will do what I can to induce Ben to have the gold moved to a place of safety, but I don't feel confident of my ability to do it. Such men generally like to have their hoards within their own reach."

Two nights later Tony awoke shortly after midnight. It was a bright, moonlight night, as on the first night he slept there. Again he saw Ben crouched on the floor, engaged in counting his hoards. The old man had recovered enough strength to get out of bed without assistance.

This time, he was broad awake.

Tony was not the only witness of the spectacle. Casting his eyes toward the window, he was startled by seeing a dark, sinister face pressed against the pane, almost devouring the old man and his gold.

It was the face of Rudolph, the tramp!

CHAPTER X

RUDOLPH'S UNEXPECTED DEFEAT

"Has Rudolph tracked me, or is it only accident that has brought him here?"

This was the thought which naturally suggested itself to our hero, as in a very disturbed state of mind he stared at Rudolph through the uncertain light.

Tony felt the difficulties of the position. Not only would the gold be taken, but, he, too, would fall into the power of the tramp.

Old Ben had not yet discovered the sinister face at the window. He was too busily occupied with his pleasant employment of counting over his gold.

But he was speedily aroused by the noise of the window being raised from the outside.

Then he turned with a startled look, which quickly deepened into astonishment and dismay, as he caught the lowering look fixed upon him. There was more than this. There was recognition besides.

"You here?" he gasped.

"Yes, Ben, it's me. May I come in?"

"No, no!" ejaculated the old man hastily.

"I think I must," returned the tramp, in the same mocking tone. "I came to see you as an old friend, but I never dreamed you were so rich."

"Rich!" repeated Ben. "I'm very poor."

"That looks like it."

"It's only a few dollars—enough to bury me."

"Very well, Ben, I'll take charge of it, and when you need burial I'll attend to it. That's fair, isn't it?"

Rudolph, who had paused outside, now raised the window to its full height, and, despite the old man's terrified exclamations, bounded lightly into the room.

"Help! help! thieves!" screamed Ben.

"Hold your jaw, you driveling old idiot!" said Rudolph, "or I'll give you something to yell about."

"Help, Tony, help!" continued the old man.

The tramp's eyes, following the direction of Ben's, discovered our hero on his rude bed in the corner.

"Ho, ho!" he laughed, with a mirth that boded ill to Tony, "so I've found you at last, have I? You served me a nice trick the other day, didn't you?"

"I hoped I should never set eyes on you again."

"I've no doubt you did. You undertook to run away from me, did you? I knew I should come across you sooner or later."

While this conversation was going on Ben glanced from one to the other in surprise, his attention momentarily drawn away from his own troubles.

"Do you know this boy, Rudolph?" he inquired.

"I should think I did," answered the tramp grimly.

"Who is he?" asked Ben, evidently excited.

"What's that to you?" returned Rudolph. "It's a boy I picked up, and have taken care of, and this is his gratitude to me. A few days since he ran away from me, and I've had a long chase to find him."

"Is this true?" asked Ben, turning to Tony.

"Some of it is true," said our hero. "I've been with him ever since I could remember, and I ran away because he wanted me to join him in robbing a house. He calls me his son, but I know he is not my father."

"How do you know?" demanded the tramp sternly.

"Didn't you say so just now?"

"It was none of the old man's business, and I didn't care what I told him."

"There's something within me tells me that there's no relationship between us," said Tony boldly.

"Is there, indeed? Is there anything within you tells you you are going to get a good flogging?"

"No, there isn't."

"Then you needn't trust it, for that is just what is going to happen."

He advanced toward Tony in a threatening manner, when he was diverted from his purpose by seeing the old man hastily gathering up the gold.

Punishment could wait, he thought, but the gold must be secured now.

"Not so fast, Ben!" he said. "You must lend me some of that."

"I can't," said Ben, hurrying all the faster. "It's all I have, and I am very poor."

"I am poorer still, for I haven't a red to bless myself with. Come, I won't take all, but some I must have."

He stooped over and began to grasp at the gold pieces, some of which were heaped up in piles upon the floor.

Even the weakest are capable of harm when exasperated, and Ben was gifted with preternatural strength when he saw himself likely to lose the hoards of a lifetime, and his anger rose to fever heat against the scoundrel whom he had known years before.

With a cry like that of a wild beast, he sprang upon the tramp, who, in his crouching position, was unable to defend himself against a sudden attack. Rudolph fell backward, striking his head with great force against the brick hearth and he lay insensible, with the blood gushing from a wound in his head.

The old man stood appalled at the consequence of his sudden attack.

"Have I killed him? Shall I be hanged?"

"No, he's only stunned," said Tony, with all his wits about him. "We have no time to lose."

"To run away? I can't leave my gold," said Ben.

"I don't mean that. We must secure him. Have you got some stout cord?"

"Yes, yes," said Ben, beginning to understand our hero's design. "Stay, I'll get it right away."

"You'd better, for he may come to at any minute."

The old man fumbled round until in some out-of-the-way corner he discovered a quantity of stout cord.

The boy set to work with rapid hands to tie the prostrate tramp hand and foot.

"How brave you are," exclaimed the old man, admiringly. "I wouldn't dare to touch him."

"Nor I, if he were awake. I didn't think you were so strong. He went over as if he were shot."

"Did he?" asked the old man, bewildered.

"It's lucky for us you threw yourself upon him as you did. A little more cord, Mr. Hayden. I want to tie him securely. You'd better be gathering up that gold, and putting it away before he comes to."

Scarcely was the money put away in its place of concealment when the tramp recovered from his fit of unconsciousness, and looked stupidly around him. Then he tried to move, and found himself hampered by his bonds. Looking up, he met the terrified gaze of old Ben, and the steady glance of Tony. Then the real state of the case flashed upon him, and he was filled with an overpowering rage at the audacity of his late charge, to whom he rightly attributed his present humiliating plight.

CHAPTER XI

CAPTURED AT LAST

"Let me up!" roared Rudolph, struggling vigorously with the cords that bound him.

Ben was terrified by his demonstration, and had half a mind to comply with his demand.

"Don't you do it, Mr. Hayden!" Tony exclaimed.

"What, young jackanapes!" said the tramp, scowling fiercely. "You dare to give him this advice?"

"Yes, I do," said Tony boldly. "He will be a fool if he releases you."

"If he don't I'll kill him, and you, too."

"What shall I do?" added Ben helplessly.

"Do you know what he'll do if you untie him?"

"What will I do?" demanded Rudolph.

"You will steal this old man's money. It was what you were about to do when you fell over backward."

"He threw me over," said the tramp.

"I'm very sorry," stammered Ben.

"If you're very sorry untie them cords, and let me up."

"I didn't tie you."

"Who did?"

"The—the boy."

"You dared to do it!" exclaimed Rudolph.

"Yes, I did," said Tony calmly. "It was the only way to keep you out of mischief."

"Insolent puppy; if I only had my hands free I would strangle you both."

"You hear what he says?" said Tony, turning to old Ben. "Are you infavor of untying him now?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Ben, trembling. "He is a dreadful man. Oh, why did he come here?"

"I came for your gold, you fool, and I'll have it."

"What shall I do?" asked the old man, wringing his hands in the excess of his terror.

"Let me up, and I won't hurt you."

"Just now you said you would strangle the both of us, Rudolph."

"I'll strangle you, you cub, but I will do no harm to the old man."

"Don't you trust him, Mr. Hayden," said Tony. "He will promise anything to get free, but he will forget all about it when he is unbound."

"I'd like to choke you!" muttered Rudolph.

"I'll go and call for help to arrest him," said Tony.

"And leave me alone with him?" asked Ben, terrified.

"No, we will lock the door, and you shall go and stay outside till I come back."

Tony's proposal was distasteful to Rudolph. He had a wholesome dread of the law, and didn't fancy the prospect of an arrest. He made a fresh and violent struggle which portended danger to his captors.

"Come out quick," said Tony hastily. "It is not safe for you to stay here any longer."

The old man followed him nothing loath, and Tony locked the door on the outside.

"Do you think he will get free?" asked Ben nervously.

"He may, and if he does there is no safety for either of us till he is caught again."

"Oh, my gold! my gold!" groaned Ben. "He may get it."

"Yes, he may; our only hope is to secure him as soon as possible."

"I'm so weak I can't go fast."

"You must conceal yourself and let me run on."

"I don't know of any place."

"Here's a place. You will be safe here till I come for you."

Tony pointed to an old ruined shed.

"Will you be sure and come for me?"

"Yes, don't be alarmed. Only don't show yourself till you hear my voice."

Ben crept into the temporary shelter, glad that in his weakened condition he should not be obliged to go any further. He tormented himself with the thought that even now the desperate tramp might be robbing him of his treasures. Still he had great confidence in Tony and hope was mingled with his terror.

"He's a brave boy," he murmured. "I am glad he was with me, though he does eat a sight."

Tony hurried on to the village, where he lost no time in arousing a sufficient number to effect the capture of the burglar. He no longer felt any com-punction in turning against his quondam guardian.

"I owe him nothing," thought Tony. "What has he ever done for me? He is not my father. Probably he kidnapped me from my real home, and has made me an outcast and a tramp like himself."

Meanwhile Rudolph was not idle.

It may be thought strange that he should have so much difficulty in freeing himself from the cords with which Tony had bound him. But it must be remembered that the boy had done his work well.

After he had been locked in, Rudolph set to work energetically to obtain release. He succeeded in raising himself to his feet, but as his ankles were tied together, this did not do him much good. He tried to break the cords; but the only result was to chafe his wrists.

"What a fool I am!" he exclaimed, at length. "The old man must have some table knives about somewhere. With these I can cut the cords."

When found, they proved so dull that even if he had had free use of one of his hands, it would not have been found easy to make them of service. But when added to this was the embarrassment of his fettered hands, it will not excite surprise that it required a long time to sever the tough cords which bound him. But success came at length.

"Now for revenge!" thought the tramp. "The boy shall rue this night's task, or my name is not Rudolph."

But, angry as he was, and thirsting as he did for vengeance, he did not forget the object which had drawn him thither. Whatever else he might do, he must secure the miser's gold.

He removed the plank, and there, beneath him lay the much-coveted bags of golden treasure.

"These," he said to himself, "will carry me back to England, and provide for me like a gentleman, till I can get some more."

He rose from the floor, and, with the bags in his hand, jumped out of the still open window.

But he was too late. Two strong men seized him, each by an arm, and said sternly:

"You are our prisoner!"



CHAPTER XII

TONY STARTS OUT ONCE MORE

After Rudolph's seizure Ben discovered the bags of gold in the hands of the tramp.

"Give me my money!" he shrieked.

"It's safe, Ben," said one of the captors. "But who would have supposed you had so much money?"

"It isn't much," faltered the old man.

"The bags are pretty heavy," was the significant rejoinder. "Will you take two hundred dollars apiece for them?"

"No," said the old man, embarrassed.

"Then there is considerable after all. But never mind. Take better care of them hereafter."

Ben stooped to pick up the bags. He had got hold of them when the tramp aimed a kick at him which completely upset him.

Even though he fell, however, he did not lose his grip of the bags, but clung to them while crying with pain.

"Take that, you old fool!" muttered the tramp. "It's the first installment of the debt I owe you."

"Take him away, take him away! He will murder me!" exclaimed old Ben, in terror.

"Come along. You've done mischief enough," said his captors, sternly, forcing the tramp along.

"I'll do more yet," muttered Rudolph.

He turned to Tony, who stood at a little distance.

"I've got a score to settle with you, young traitor."

"I'm sorry for you, Rudolph," said Tony; "but you've brought it on yourself."

"Bah! you hypocrite!" retorted the tramp. "I don't want any of your sorrow. It won't save you when the day of reckoning comes."

He was not allowed to say more, but was hurried away to the village lockup for detention.

Dr. Compton was among the party who had been summoned by Tony. He lingered behind, and took Ben apart.

"Mr. Hayden," he said, "I want to give you a piece of advice."

"What is it?" asked the old man.

"Don't keep this gold in your house. It isn't safe."

"Who do you think will take it?" asked Ben.

"None of those here this morning, unless this tramp should escape from custody."

"If he don't, what danger is there?"

"It will get about that you have money secreted here, and I venture to say it will be stolen before three months are over."

"It will kill me," said Ben piteously.

"Then put it out of reach of danger."

"Where?"

"I am going over to the county town, where there is a bank. Deposit it there, and whenever you want any go and get it."

"But banks break sometimes," said Ben, in alarm.

"This is an old established institution. You need not be afraid of it."

"But I can't see the money—I can't count it."

"You can see the deposit record in a book. Even if that doesn't suit you as well, you can sleep comfortably, knowing that you are not liable to be attacked and murdered by burglars."

The old man vacillated, but finally yielded to the force of the doctor's reasoning. A day or two later he rode over to the neighboring town, and saw his precious gold deposited in the vaults of the bank.

We are anticipating, however.

When the confusion incident to the arrest was over, Tony came forward.

"Mr. Hayden," he said, "you are so much better that I think you can spare me now."

"But suppose Rudolph comes back."

"I don't think he can. He will be put in prison."

"I suppose he will. What a bold, bad man."

"Yes, he is a bad man, but I'm sorry for him."

"How did you come to be with him?"

"I don't know, I have been with him as long as I can remember. You used to know him, didn't you?"

"A little," said the old man hastily.

"Where was it?"

"In England—long ago."

"In England. Was he born in England?"

"Yes."

"Do you think I am English, too?"

"I think so; yes, I think so," answered Ben cautiously.

"Have you any idea who I am—who were my parents?"

"Don't trouble me now," said Ben peevishly. "I am not well. My head is confused. Some day I will think it over and tell you what I know."

"But if I am not here?"

"I will write it down, and give it to the doctor."

"That will do," said Tony. "I know he will keep it for me. Now, good-by."

"Are you going?"

"Yes, I have my own way to make in the world. I can't live on you any longer."

"To be sure not," said Ben. "I am too poor to feed two persons, and you have a very large appetite."

"Yes," said Tony, laughing, "I believe I have a healthy appetite. I'm growing, you know."

"It must be that. What is your name?"

"That is more than I know. I have always been called Tony, or Tony the Tramp. Rudolph's last name is Rugg, and he pretends that I am his son."

"You are not his son. He never had any son."

"I am glad to hear that. I shan't have to say now that my father is in jail. Good-by, Mr. Hayden."

"Good-by," said Ben, following the boy thoughtfully with his eyes, till he had disappeared.

With a light heart, and a pocket still lighter, Tony walked on for several miles. Then he stopped at a country grocery store, and bought five cents' worth of crackers. These he ate with a good appetite, slaking his thirst at a wayside spring.

He was lying carelessly on the greensward when a tin peddler's cart drove slowly along the road.

"Hello, there!" said the peddler.

"Hello!" said Tony.

"Do you want a lift?"

"Yes," said Tony, with alacrity.

"Then get up here. There's room enough for both of us. You can hold the reins when I stop anywhere."

"It's a bargain," said Tony.

"Are you travelin' for pleasure?"

"On business," said Tony.

"What is your business?"

"I want to find work," said Tony.

"You're a good, stout youngster. You'd ought to get something to do."

"So I think," said Tony.

"Got any folks?"

"If you mean wife and children, I haven't," answered our hero, with a smile.

"Ho, ho!" laughed the peddler. "I guess not. I mean father or mother, uncles or aunts, and such like."

"No, I am alone in the world."

"Sho! you don't say so. Well, that's a pity. Why, I've got forty-seven cousins and a mother-in-law to boot. I'll sell her cheap."

"Never mind!" said Tony.

"I'll tell you what," said the peddler, "I feel interested in you. I'll take you round with me for a day or two, and maybe I can get you a place. What do you say?"

"Yes, and thank you," said Tony.

"Then it's settled. Gee up, Dobbin!"

CHAPTER XIII
TONY GETS A PLACE

Toward the close of the next day the tin peddler halted in front of a country tavern.

"I'm going to stay here overnight," he said.

"Maybe they'll let me sleep in the barn," said Tony.

"In the barn! Why not in the house?"

"I haven't got any money, you know Mr. Bickford."

"What's the odds? They won't charge anything extra for you to sleep with me."

"You're very kind, Mr. Bickford, but they won't keep me for nothing, and I don't want you to pay for me."

At this moment the landlord came out on the piazza, and asked the hostler:

"Where's Tom?"

"Gone home—says he's sick," answered James.

"Drat that boy! It's my opinion he was born lazy. That's what's the matter with him."

"I guess you're right, Mr. Porter," said James.

"I wouldn't take him back if I had anybody to take his place."

"Do you hear that, Tony?" said the peddler.

Tony walked to the landlord and said:

"I'll take his place."

"Who are you?" asked the landlord, in surprise.

"I have just come," said Tony.

"What can you do?"

"Anything you want me to do."

"Have you any references?"

"I can refer to him," said Tony, pointing to the tin peddler.

"Oh, Mr. Bickford," said the landlord, with a glance of recognition.

"Well, that's enough. I'll take you. James, take this boy to the kitchen, and give him some supper. What's your name, boy?"

"Tony Rugg."

"Very well, Tony, I'll give you three dollars a week and your board as long as we suit each other."

"I've got work sooner than I expected," thought Tony.

The hostler set him to work in the barn, and, though he was new to the work, he quickly understood what was wanted, and did it.

"You work twice as fast as Sam," said the hostler.

"Won't Sam be mad when he finds I have taken his place?" asked Tony.

"Probably he will, but it's his own fault."

"Not if he's sick."

"He's no more sick than I am."

"Well, I am glad he left a vacancy for me," said Tony.

"Where did you work last?" asked the hostler.

"Nowhere."

"Never worked? Then how did you live?"

"I traveled with my guardian."

"Were you rich?" asked James.

"No; I just went round and lived as I could. I didn't like it, but I couldn't help it. I had to go where Rudolph chose to lead me."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know. I got tired of being a tramp, and ran away from him."

"You did right," said James, who was a steady man, and looked forward to a snug home of his own ere long. "All the same, Mr. Porter wouldn't have taken you if he had known you were a tramp."

"I hope you won't tell him, then."

"No; I won't tell him. I want you to stay here."

Tony was assigned to a room in the attic. There were two beds in this chamber, one being occupied by James. He slept soundly, and was up betimes in the morning. After breakfast Mr. Bickford, the tin peddler, made ready to start.

"Good-by, Tony," he said, in a friendly manner, "I'm glad you've got a place."

"I wouldn't have got it if I hadn't you to refer to."

"The landlord didn't ask how long I'd known you," said Bickford, smiling. "Good luck to you."

As the peddler drove away, Tony noticed a big, overgrown boy, who was just entering the hotel yard.

"That's Sam," said the hostler. "He don't know he's lost his place."

Sam was about two inches taller than Tony, red-haired, and freckled, with a big frame, loosely put together. He was a born bully, and many were the tricks he had played on smaller boys in the village.

Sam strutted into the yard with the air of a proprietor. He took no particular notice of Tony, but accosted James. The latter made a signal to Tony to be silent.

"Well, have you just got along?" asked the hostler.

"Ye-es," drawled Sam.

"What made you go home yesterday afternoon?"

"I didn't feel well," said Sam nonchalantly.

"Do you think Mr. Porter can afford to pay you wages, and let you go home three times a week in the middle of the afternoon?"

"I couldn't work when I was sick of course."

"I suppose you have come to work this morning?"

"Ye-es, but I can't work very hard—I ain't quite got over my headache."

"Then you'll be glad to hear that you won't have to work at all."

"Ain't there anything to do?" asked Sam.

"Yes, there's plenty to do, but your services ain't required. You're bounced!"

"What!" exclaimed Sam.

"Mr. Porter's got tired of your delicate health. It interferes too much with business. He's got a tougher boy to take your place."

"Where is he?" demanded Sam.

"There," answered the hostler, pointing out our hero, who stood quietly listening to the conversation.

Sam regarded Tony with a contemptuous scowl.

"Who are you?" he demanded roughly.

"Your successor," answered Tony coolly.

"What business had you to take my place?"

"The landlord hired me."

"I don't care if he did. He hired me first."

"Then you'd better go to him and complain about it. It's none of my business——"

"It's my business," said Sam, with emphasis.

"Just as you like."

"Will you give up the place?"

"No," said Tony. "You must think I'm a fool. What should I give it up for?"

"Because it belongs to me."

"I don't see that. I suppose Mr. Porter has a right to hire anybody he likes."

"He had no right to give you my place."

"That's his business. What shall I do next, James?"

"Go and shake down some hay for the horses."

Sam walked off deeply incensed, muttering threats of vengeance against Tony.

Three days later a boy entered the stable, and, calling for Tony, presented the following missive:

"If you ain't a coward, meet me to-morrow night at seven o'clock, back of the schoolhouse, and we'll settle, by fighting, which shall have the place, you or I? If you get licked you must clear out and leave it to me.

SAM PAYSON"

Tony showed the note to the hostler.

"Well, Tony, what are you going to do about it?"

"I'll be on hand," said Tony, promptly.



CHAPTER XIV

THE BOYS' DUEL

Sam Payson felt perfectly safe in challenging Tony to single combat.

He had seen that he was two inches shorter and probably twenty pounds lighter. But appearances were deceitful, and he had no idea that Tony had received special training which he lacked.

In the course of his wanderings Tony had attracted the attention of a pugilist.

"I'll tell you what, Rudolph," said the pugilist, "you can make something of that boy?"

"How?" asked the tramp.

"I'll teach him to box, and you can get an engagement for him in a circus."

"Do it if you like," said the tramp.

So Tony received a gratuitous course of lessons in boxing, which were at last interrupted by a little difficulty between his teacher and the officers of the law, resulting in the temporary confinement of the former. The lessons were never resumed, but they had gone so far that Tony was a skillful boxer for a boy.

He, too, had measured Sam and felt quite sure of being able to conquer him, and that with ease. He did not, however, mention the grounds of his confidence to James, when the latter expressed some apprehension that he would find Sam too much for him.

"Don't be alarmed, James," said Tony quietly.

"He's bigger than you," said James doubtfully.

"I know that, but he's clumsy."

"He's slow, but he's pretty strong."

"So am I."

"You've got pluck, and you deserve to win, Tony."

"I mean to," answered Tony. "Come along and see that it's all fair."

"I will if I can get away. Will you give up your place if you are licked?"

"Yes," replied Tony. "I'll give up my place and leave the village."

"I don't believe Mr. Porter will take Sam back."

"I see you are expecting I will be whipped," said Tony, laughing; "but you're mistaken. Sam isn't able to do it."

Meanwhile Sam had made known the duel which was about to take place.

He confidently anticipated victory, and wanted the village boys to be witnesses of the manner in which he was going to polish off the interloper.

"I'll learn him to cut me out of my place," he said boastfully: "I'll learn him to mind his own business."

"Will you get your place again if you lick him?" asked one of his companions.

"Of course, I will."

"Suppose he won't give it up?"

"Then I'll lick him every day till he's glad to clear out. All you boys know I don't stand no nonsense."

The result of Sam's boastful talk was that about a hundred boys collected behind the schoolhouse.

Many of them who had suffered from Sam's bullying disposition would have been glad to see him worsted, but none anticipated it.

Nothing was known of Tony except that he was considerably smaller and lighter, and probably weaker.

Tony tried to be on hand at the time appointed, but he had more than usual to do, and it was five minutes past seven before he entered the field.

There had been various speculations as to the cause of his delay.

"He won't come," said Sam, with a sneer.

"What'll you do if he don't come?" asked John Nolan.

"What will I do? I'll pitch into him wherever I see him."

"There he comes!" shouted a small boy.

All eyes were turned upon Tony, as he entered the field, with James at his side.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, boys," said our hero politely.

"We concluded you'd backed out," said Sam.

"That isn't my style," returned Tony, with a quiet smile. "I had more to do than usual to-night."

"You've still more to do," said Sam jeeringly. "I pity you."

"Do you? You're very kind," said Tony, unmoved.

"Oh, don't thank me too soon."

"Then I won't. When are the exercises to commence?"

"He takes it cool," said Nolan.

"Oh, it's only show off," said Sam. "You'll see how he'll wilt down when I get hold of him."

The two boys stripped off coat and vest and faced each other. Tony was wary and looked into the eyes of his adversary, showing no disposition to begin.

Sam swung heavily with his right. With scarcely an effort, Tony blocked the blow and returned it quick as lightning, striking Sam full in the nose.

Sam was not only maddened but disagreeably surprised, especially when he discovered that blood was trickling from the injured organ. He was still more incensed by the murmur of applause which followed from the crowd of boys.

He breathed an audible curse, and losing all prudence began to swing at Tony with each fist in rapid succession, with the intention of overpowering him. But unfortunately for him this exposed him to attack, and a couple of heavy blows in his face warned him that this was too dangerous.

Tony stood upright, as cool and collected as at first. He had warded off every blow of his adversary.

There was a murmur of surprise among the boys. They had come to see Tony used up, and all the using up proved to be from the other side.

James was as much delighted as surprised. He could not repress clapping his hands and was quickly imitated by the boys.

"Tony knows how to take care of himself," he thought. "That's why he took matters so coolly."

Sam felt humiliated and maddened. He regretted now that he had undertaken a task which seemed every moment more formidable. What! Was it possible that he, Sam Payson, the crack fighter of the village, was being ignominiously whipped, and that by a smaller boy? He felt that if he permitted this, his prestige would be forever gone, and with it the influence which he so much prized. He must make one desperate effort.

"If I can only get hold of him," he thought. "I can shake the life out of him."

He tried to grasp Tony round the body intending to throw him; but our hero was too quick for him, and showered the blows upon him with such rapidity that, blinded and overwhelmed, Sam himself staggered and fell on his back.

Instead of following up the victory, Tony drew off and let his adversary rise. Sam renewed the attack so wildly that in two minutes he was again lying flat.

"That's enough, Sam! You're whipped!" shouted the boys.

He got up sullenly, and, in a voice nearly choked with rage, said:

"I'll be even with you yet, see if I don't."

"Hurrah for the stranger!" shouted the boys, enthusiastically, as they crowded around our hero.

"Boys," said Tony modestly, "I'm much obliged to you for your congratulations. Was it a fair fight?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Then it's all right. Don't say anything to him about it. He feels bad, as I should in his place. I haven't any ill will toward him, and I hope he hasn't toward me."

This speech made Tony a still greater favorite, and the boys, making a rush, took him on their shoulders, and bore him in triumph to the inn.

Poor Sam slunk home, suffering keener mortification than he had ever before experienced in his life.

CHAPTER XV

RUDOLPH ESCAPES

Leaving Tony for a short time, we must return to Rudolph, whom we left in charge of a self-constituted body of police on his way to the lockup.

When first arrested Rudolph was disposed to be violent and abusive.

His disappointment was keen, for he was just congratulating himself on the possession of the miser's gold. Five minutes later, and he would probably have been able to make good his escape. Mingled with his disappointment was a feeling of intense hostility against Tony for his part in defeating his plans.

"I'll be revenged upon him yet," he muttered.

They reached the lockup and he was led in. A small oil lamp was lighted and set on the floor.

"Where are the handcuffs?" asked one of the captors.

"I don't know. They haven't been needed for so long that they have been mislaid."

"They won't be needed now. The man can't get out."

Rudolph's face betrayed satisfaction.

"There's your bed," said Moses Hunt, who had Rudolph by the arm, pointing to a rude cot.

Rudolph threw himself upon it.

"I'm dead tired," he said, and closed his eyes.

The door was locked and Rudolph was left alone.

When five minutes had elapsed—time enough for his captors to get away—he got up.

"I must get away from this if I can," thought the tramp, "and before morning. I am glad they didn't put on handcuffs. Let me see, how shall I manage it?"

He looked about him thoughtfully.

It was a basement room, lighted only by windows three feet wide and a foot high.

"I should like to set fire to the building, and burn it up," thought the tramp. "That would cost them something. But it wouldn't be safe."

Like as not I would be burned up myself, or at any rate be taken again in getting away. No, no! that won't do. I wonder if I can't get through one of those windows?"

He stood on the chair, and as the room was low-ceiled he found he could easily reach the windows.

He shook them and found to his joy that it would be a comparatively easy thing to remove one of them.

"What fools they are!" he muttered contemptuously. "Did they really expect to keep me here?"

He removed the window, and by great effort succeeded in raising himself so that he might have a chance of drawing himself through the aperture. It did not prove so easy as he expected. He did, however, succeed at length, and drew a long breath of satisfaction as he found himself once more in the possession of his liberty.

"I'm a free man once more," he said. "What next?"

He would have been glad to return to the miser's house and possess himself of some of his gold, but the faint gray of dawn was already perceptible, and there was too much risk attending it.

Moreover, prudence dictated his putting as great a distance as possible between himself and the village.

The hundred miles intervening between New York and that place he got over in his usual way, begging a meal at one house and a night's lodging at another. He was never at a loss for a plausible story. At one place, where he was evidently looked upon with suspicion, he said:

"I ain't used to beggin'. I'm a poor, hard-workin' man, but I've heard that my poor daughter is sick in New York, and I want to get to her."

"What took her to New York?" asked the farmer whom he addressed.

"She went to take a place in a store."

"I'm sorry for you," said the farmer's wife, sympathizingly. "Ephraim, can't we help along this poor man?"

"If we can believe him. There's many impostors about."

"I hope you don't take me for one," said Rudolph meekly. "Poor Jane; what would she think if she knew her poor father was so misunderstood."

"Poor man! I believe you," said the farmer's wife. "You shall sleep in Jonathan's bed. He's away now."

So Rudolph was provided with two abundant meals and a comfortable bed.

The farmer's wife never doubted his story, though she could not help feeling that his looks were not prepossessing.

A few days later he was in New York. As a general thing he shunned the city, for he was already known to the police, and he felt that watchful eyes would be upon him as soon as it was known that he was back again.

On the second day he strolled into a low drinking place in the lower part of the city.

A man in shirt sleeves, and with an unhealthy complexion, was mixing drinks behind the bar.

"Hello, Rudolph! Back again?" was his salutation.

"Yes," said the tramp, throwing himself down in a seat.

"Where have you been?"

"Tramping round the country."

"Where's the boy you used to have with you?"

"Run away; curse him!"

"Got tired of your company, eh?"

"He wants to be honest and respectable."

"And he thought he could learn better under another teacher, did he?" said the bartender, with a laugh.

"Yes, I suppose so. I'd like to wring his neck."

"You're no friend to the honest and respectable, then."

"No, I'm not."

"Then, there's no love lost, for they don't seem to fancy you. What'll you have to drink?"

"I've got no money."

"I'll trust. You'll have some sometime."

"Give me some whisky, then," said the tramp.

The whisky was placed in his hands. He gulped it down, and breathed a sigh of satisfaction.

Then resuming his seat, he took up a morning paper. At first he read it listlessly, but soon his face assumed a look of eager interest.

This was the paragraph that arrested his attention:

"Should this meet the eye of Rudolph Rugg, who left England in the fall of 1887, he is requested to communicate with Jacob Morris, attorney at law, Room 1,503, No. — Nassau Street."

Rudolph rose hurriedly.

"Going?" asked the bartender.

"Yes; I'll be back again soon."

CHAPTER XVI

AT THE ST. REGIS

When Rudolph reached the sidewalk he stopped to reflect on the meaning of the advertisement.

"Perhaps it's a trap," he thought. "Perhaps after so many years they want to punish me. Shall I go?"

His hesitation was only temporary.

Ten minutes' walk brought him to Nassau street. He ascended to the proper floor, opened the door of No. 1,503, and found himself in a lawyer's office. A tall man of forty was seated at a desk.

"Well," he said, "what can I do for you, sir?"

The address was not very cordial, for Rudolph did not have the look of one likely to be a profitable client.

"Are you Mr. Jacob Morris, attorney-at-law?"

"That is my name."

"I am Rudolph Rugg."

"Rudolph Rugg!" exclaimed the lawyer briskly, jumping from his chair.

"You don't say so. I am very glad to see you. Take a chair, please."

Reassured by this reception, Rudolph took the seat indicated.

"So you saw my advertisement?"

"Yes, sir. I only saw it this morning."

"It has been inserted for the last two weeks, daily. How happens it that you did not see it sooner?"

"I have been away from the city. It was only an accident that I happened to see it to-day."

"A lucky accident, Mr. Rugg."

"I hope it is, sir, for I've been out of luck. What is the business, sir?"

"My business has been to find you."

"What for?"

"For a client of mine—an English lady."

"A lady?" ejaculated the tramp.

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"I suppose I am at liberty to tell. The lady is Mrs. Harvey Middleton, of Middleton Hall, England."

A peculiar expression swept over Rudolph's face, but he only said:

"I have heard the name of Harvey Middleton. Is—is the lady in New York?"

"Yes; she is staying at the St. Regis Hotel."

"And she wants to find me?"

"Yes. She authorized me to seek you out."

"Well," said Rudolph, "what next?"

"I shall at once send a messenger to Mrs. Middleton, and await her orders. You will stay here."

He went to the door, and called "John" in a loud voice.

"Look here," said Rudolph, suspiciously. "Just tell me one thing. There ain't any trap, is there?"

"Trap, my good friend? What can you mean?"

"You ain't sending for the police?"

"To be sure not. Besides, why should a gentleman like you fear the police?"

"Oh, that's all gammon. I do fear the police uncommon. But if you tell me it's all on the square, I'll believe you."

"On my honor, then, it's all on the square, as you call it. No harm whatever is designed you. Indeed, I have reason to think that you will make considerable money out of it. Now, hark ye, my friend, a word in confidence. We can do each other good."

"Can we?" asked the tramp.

"Yes, and I'll tell you how. This lady, Mrs. Middleton, appears to be rich."

"She is rich."

"So much the better for us. I mean to give her the idea that I have been at great trouble and expense in finding you."

"I see," said Rudolph, smiling. "You mean to charge it in the bill?"

"Of course, I shall represent that I sent out messengers in search of you, and you were found by one of them."

In a private parlor at the St. Regis sat a lady of middle age. She had a haughty face, and stern, compressed lips. She was one to repel rather than to attract. She had a note before her, which she threw down with an exclamation of impatience.

"So he has heard nothing yet. For three weeks I have been wasting my time at this hotel, depending on this lawyer, and he has done absolutely nothing."

At this moment a light knock was heard at the door.

"Enter," said the lady.

"A note for Mrs. Middleton," announced a servant.

She took the missive and hastily opened it. It read thus:

"MY DEAR MADAM: At last, after unwearied exertions, I have succeeded. The man, Rudolph Rugg, has been found by one of my messengers, and is at this moment in my office, ready to obey your summons. Shall I send him to you?"

*Yours respectfully,
JACOB MORRIS*

"P.S.—I assured you at the outset that if he were living I would find him. I am sure you will appreciate my exertions in your behalf."

"That means a larger bill," thought the lady. "However, I am willing to pay handsomely. The man is found, and he can doubtless produce the boy."

"Wait!" she said, in an imperious tone, to the servant, who was about to withdraw. "There is an answer."

She hastily penciled the following note:

"I am very glad you have found Rudolph Rugg. I wish to speak to him at once. Send him here directly."

"Short and not sweet!" commented the lawyer, when it was placed in his hands. "She says nothing about the compensation."

"Is it about me?" asked the tramp.

"Yes; it is from Mrs. Middleton. She wants you to come to the hotel at once. But, my friend, I would advise you, since you are about to call upon a lady, to put on a better suit of clothes."

"How am I to do it," he demanded roughly, "when these are all the clothes I have?"

The lawyer whistled.

"A pretty-looking figure to call upon a lady at a fashionable hotel!" he thought.

"You must go as you are," he said. "Wait a minute."

He took a blank card and wrote upon it the name:

RUDOLPH RUGG

"When you reach the hotel," he said, "inquire for Mrs. Middleton and send that card up to her."

"Very well, sir."

The tramp started, his mind busily occupied.

"What does she want with me? She wasn't Mrs. Middleton when I knew her, she was Miss Vincent, the governess. I suppose she's a great lady now. So she got Mr. Harvey to marry her. That ain't surprisin'. She looked like a schemer even then, and I was a fool not to see what she was at. Likely she was up to the other thing. Well, I shall soon know."

CHAPTER XVII

TWO CONSPIRATORS

"You want to see Mrs. Middleton?" demanded the hotel clerk, surveying Mr. Rugg's exterior.

"Yes," said the tramp.

"I don't think she'll see one of your sort."

"That's where you're mistaken, young feller."

"You're a strange visitor for a lady."

"What if I am? There's my card."

The clerk took the card, and looked at it doubtfully. Then summoning an attendant, he said:

"Take this up to 57."

Presently the servant returned.

"The gentleman is to go up," he said.

Rudolph looked at the clerk triumphantly.

"What did I tell you?" he said.

"Show the gentleman up," said the clerk, purposely emphasizing the word.

As Rudolph entered the handsome parlor occupied by Mrs. Middleton, she said:

"Take a seat, sir." Then to the attendant: "You may go. You are Rudolph Rugg?" she commenced when they were alone.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered; "and you are Miss Vincent, the governess. I haven't forgotten you."

"I am Mrs. Harvey Middleton," she said haughtily.

"Excuse me, ma'am. I hadn't heard as you had changed your condition. You was the governess when I knowed you."

"You never knew me," she said.

"Well, I knowed Mr. Harvey, at any rate."

"That is not to the purpose. Do you know why I have sought you out?"

"I couldn't guess, ma'am," said Rudolph cunningly.

He could guess, but he wanted to force her to speak out.

"Where is the boy? Is he living?"

"What boy?" asked Rudolph vacantly.

"You know very well. Anthony Middleton, my husband's cousin, whom you stole away when he was scarcely more than an infant."

"Can you prove what you say, Miss Vincent—I mean Mrs. Middleton?"

"Yes. It is idle to beat about the bush. My husband has told me all."

"Then he has told you that he hired me to carry the boy off, in order that he might inherit the estate?"

"Yes, he told me that," she answered composedly.

"Well, I didn't think he'd own up to that."

"My husband and I had no secrets."

"What does he want of the boy now?" asked Rudolph.

"It is I that want to find the boy."

"Without his knowledge?"

"If you refer to my husband, he is dead."

"Well, I didn't expect that. Who has got the estate?"

"I have."

The tramp whistled. Here was a poor governess, who had succeeded in life with a vengeance. When he knew her she was not worth fifty pounds in the world. Now she was mistress of a fine English estate, with a rental of two thousand pounds.

"Wasn't there no heirs?" he asked.

"Only this boy."

"And if this boy was alive, would the estate be his?"

The lady paused, meanwhile fixing her eyes steadily upon the man before her. Then she approached him and placed her jeweled hand on his arm.

"Rudolph Rugg," she said, "do you want to be comfortable for life?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's exactly what I do want."

"It will come to you now if you say the word," she said.

"I'll say it quick enough. Tell me what you want."

"You talk like a sensible man. But first tell me, is the boy living?"

"He is alive and well."

"When did you see him last?"

"Last week."

"Very well, you know where he is. That is important. Now, in order that you may understand what service I want of you, I must tell you a little of my circumstances. I told you that my husband left me the estate."

"Yes, ma'am."

"But only in trust."

"For the boy?" asked the tramp, in excitement.

"Precisely."

"Well, I'll be blown."

"What excites you, Mr. Rugg?"

"To think that Tony the Tramp should be the owner of a splendid estate in old Hingland."

"I am the owner," said the lady, frowning.

"But you're only takin' care of it for him."

"I don't mean that he shall ever know it."

Rudolph whistled.

"My husband secured the inheritance, as you are aware, through the disappearance of his young cousin."

"And mighty well he managed it."

"But after he was given over by the doctors, he became a prey to superstitious fears, the result of his weakness, and at times experienced great regret for the hand he had in the abduction of the boy."

"You surprise me, ma'am. He wasn't that sort when I knew him."

"No; he was then bold and resolute. Ill health and the approach of death made him superstitious."

"You ain't that way, ma'am, I take it."

"No; I have a stronger will and greater resolution."

Her face did not belie her words. There was a cold look in her light gray eyes, and a firmness in her closely pressed lips, which made it clear that she was not likely to be affected by ordinary weakness. She was intensely selfish, and thoroughly unscrupulous as to the means which she employed to carry out her selfish ends.

"So you're afraid the boy'll turn up, ma'am?"

"Precisely."

"Then why do you look for him?"

"I want to guard against his ever turning up."

"He don't know about the property."

"But he might have learned, or you might. My husband, with the idea of reparation, left the property to me, in trust, but if it should ever be fully ascertained that the boy had died, then it was to be mine absolutely."

"I begin to see what you're driving at, ma'am."

"You say the boy is alive?"

"Stout and hearty, ma'am. He's been under my care ever since he was a young un, ma'am, and I've treated him like he was my own."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, ma'am. I'm poor, but I've always shared my crust with him, givin' him the biggest half."

"Very kind, I'm sure," said the lady, sarcastically. "I suppose you're very fond of him."

"Of course I am," said Rudolph. "But," he added, after a slight pause, "there's one thing I like better."

"What is that?"

"Money."

"Good! I see we understand one another."

"That's so, ma'am. You needn't be afraid to say anything to me. Business is business."

CHAPTER XVIII

ROGUES CONFER

"It appears to me, Mr. Rugg, that you have not prospered," said the lady.

"That's where you're right, ma'am."

"I am sorry for that."

"So am I," said the tramp, adding, with a cunning look, "but times will be better now."

"Why will they be better?" asked Mrs. Middleton.

"Tony won't see me want when he comes into two thousand a year."

"Who said he was coming into it?"

"You said he was the heir."

"He hasn't got the estate, and I don't mean he shall have it."

"How will you prevent that, ma'am?"

Mrs. Middleton again put her hand on the man's tattered coat sleeve, and, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, said:

"Mr. Rugg, you must prevent it."

"How can I prevent it?" asked the tramp, with an assumption of innocence.

Mrs. Middleton said, with slow significance:

"This boy is in my way. Don't you think he might manage to get sick and die?"

"Perhaps he might," said Rudolph, who did not appear to be shocked at the suggestion.

"Couldn't you manage it?" she asked.

"I might," he answered shrewdly, "if it was going to do me any good."

"Then the only question is as to pay," she continued.

"That's about it, ma'am. It's a big risk. I might get caught and then money wouldn't do me much good."

"Nothing venture, nothing have. You don't want to be a pauper all your life?"

"No, I don't," answered the tramp, with energy. "I'm tired of tramping round the country, sleeping in barns and under haystacks, and picking up meals where I can."

"Do as I wish and you need never suffer such privations again," said the tempter.

"How much will you give me?" asked Rudolph.

"Five hundred dollars down, and five hundred dollars income as long as you live."

This was good fortune of which Rudolph had not dreamed, but he understood how to make the most of the situation.

"It is not enough," he said, shaking his head.

"Not enough!" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton. "Why, it seems to me very liberal. You can live comfortably all your life just for doing one thing."

"A thing which may bring me to the gallows. It's all very well to talk, but I can't risk my neck for that."

The lady was not surprised. She had expected that she would be compelled to drive a bargain, and she had named a sum less than she was willing to pay.

"You see," continued Rudolph, "it's going to be a great thing for you."

You'll be sure of a big estate and an income of two thousand pounds—that's ten thousand dollars—a year, and it'll be me that gives it to you."

"You overestimate your service, Mr. Rugg," she said, coldly. "If I decline to proceed further the estate will be mine."

"Not if I bring on the boy, and say he's the real heir."

"I shall deny it," said the lady, composedly, "and challenge you to the proof."

"Then I'll prove it."

"Who will believe you?" asked Mrs. Middleton, quietly.

"Why shouldn't they?"

"You are a tramp, and a discreditable person. I suppose the boy is one of the same sort."

"No, he isn't. I don't like him overmuch, but he's a handsome chap, looks the gentleman every inch."

"I should charge you with conspiracy, Mr. Rugg. You'd find it uphill work fighting me, without influence and without money."

"Then, if there ain't no danger from me or the boy, why do you want me to put him out of the way?"

Mrs. Middleton hesitated.

"I may as well tell you," she said. "I take it for granted you will keep the matter secret."

"Of course I will."

"Then it is this: I married Mr. Harvey Middleton to secure a home and a position. I didn't love him."

"Quite right, ma'am."

"He had no reason to complain of me, and when he died he left me in charge of the estate."

"For the boy?"

"Yes, for the boy, and this has given me trouble."

"He hasn't never troubled you."

"Not yet, and but for one thing I would not have come to America in search of him."

"What is that?"

"I want to marry again."

The tramp whistled.

Mrs. Middleton frowned, but went on:

"This time I love the man I want to marry. He is from an excellent family, but he is a younger son, and has little or nothing himself. If the estate were mine absolutely, there would be no opposition on the part of his family, but with the knowledge that the boy may turn up at any time nothing will be done."

"I see," said the tramp, nodding.

"But for this I would never have stirred in the matter at all. I did not think it probable that the boy would ever hear of his inheritance."

"He don't even know who he is," said Rudolph.

"You never told him, then?" said the lady.

"No. What was the good?"

"There was no good, and you did wisely. Now I have told you how matters stand, and I renew the offer which I made a few minutes since."

"It is too little," said the tramp, shaking his head.

"Tell me what you expect."

"I want just double what you offered me, ma'am."

"Why, that's extortion."

"That's as you choose to consider it, ma'am."

"Suppose I refuse?"

"Then I'll go and see a lawyer."

"Even if you succeeded, and got the boy in possession, do you think he would give you any more than I?"

This was a consideration which had not occurred to the tramp. He asked himself, moreover, did he really wish Tony to come into such a piece of good fortune, after the boy had been instrumental in having him arrested. No, anything but that!

"I'll tell you what I'll do, ma'am," he said. "I'll say eight hundred dollars down, and the same every year."

To this sum Mrs. Middleton finally agreed.

"You say you know where the boy is?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then there need be no delay."

"Only a little. But I shall want some money."

Mrs. Middleton took out her purse.

"Here are a hundred dollars," she said. "The rest shall be paid you when you have earned it."

Rudolph went downstairs, thinking: "That woman's a devil if ever there was one. How coolly she hires me to kill the boy. I don't half like the job. It's too risky. But there's money in it, and I can't refuse. The first thing is to find him!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE FIGHTING QUAKER

The tramp decided that the best way to find Tony would be to return to that part of the country where he had lost him, and make inquiries for a boy of his description. He could do it comfortably now, being provided with funds, thanks to Mrs. Middleton.

But there was a difficulty which gave him uneasiness. He was liable to be arrested.

"I must disguise myself," thought Rudolph.

It was not the first time in his varied experience that he had felt the need of a disguise, and he knew just where to go to find one. In the lower part of the city there was a shop well provided with such articles as he required. He lost no time in seeking it out.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Rugg?" asked the old man who kept the establishment.

"I want a disguise."

"Then you've come to the right shop. What will you be—a sailor, a Quaker, a——"

"Hold, there," said Rudolph. "You've named the very thing."

"What?"

"A Quaker. Can you make me a good Broadbrim?"

"Yea, verily," answered the old man, laughing. "I can suit thee to a T."

"Do so, then."

From out of a pile of costumes the old man drew a suit of drab and a broad-brimmed hat.

"How will that do?" he asked.

"First tell me the price."

"Thirty dollars."

"Thirty dollars!" exclaimed the tramp, aghast. "Do you think I'm made of money?"

"Look at the quality, my good friend."

"Why, I may not want the things for more than a week."

"Then I'll tell you what I'll do. If you only use them a week, you shall bring them back, and I will pay you back twenty-five dollars; that is," the old man added, cautiously, "if you don't hurt 'em too much."

"That's better," said Rudolph. "I'll try them on."

He went into an inner room provided for the purpose, and soon came out entirely transformed. In addition to the drab suit, a gray wig had been supplied.

The old man laughed heartily.

"How does thee like it?" he asked.

"Capital," said Rudolph. "Would you know me?"

"I wouldn't dream it was you. But, Mr. Rugg, there's one thing you mustn't forget."

"What's that?"

"To use the Quaker lingo. Just now you said, 'Would you know me?' That isn't right."

"What should I say?"

"Would thee know me?"

"All right. There's your money."

"There you are again. You must say thy money."

"I see you know all about it. You've been a Quaker yourself, haven't you?"

"Not I; but I was brought up in Philadelphia, and I have seen plenty of the old fellows. Now, don't forget how to talk. Where are you going?"

"Into the country on a little expedition," said Rudolph.

"Well, good luck to you."

"I wish thee good luck, too," said the tramp.

"Ha! ha! you've got it; you'll do."

The tramp emerged into the street, a very fair representative of a sedate Quaker. He soon attracted the attention of some street boys, who, not suspecting his genuineness, thought him fair game.

"How are you, old Broadbrim?" said one.

Rudolph didn't resent this.

"You'd make a good scarecrow," said another.

Still the tramp kept his temper.

A third boy fired a half-eaten apple at him.

This was too much for the newly converted disciple of William Penn.

"Just let me catch you, you little rascal, and I'll give you the worst licking you ever had."

The boys stared open mouthed at such language.

"He's a fighting Quaker," said the first one. "Keep out of his way."

"If thee don't, thee'll catch it," said Rudolph, fortunately remembering how he must talk.

He had thought of pursuing the disturbers of his peace, but motives of prudence prevented him.

CHAPTER XX

RUDOLPH FINDS TONY

Four days afterward Rudolph arrived in the town where Tony was employed. He had not been drawn thither by any clew, but by pure accident.

He put up for the night at the hotel where our hero had found work. He enrolled himself on the register as "Obadiah Latham, Philadelphia."

"Can thee give me a room, friend?" he inquired.

"Certainly, sir," was the polite reply. "Here, Henry, show this gentleman up to No. 6. No. 6 is one of our best rooms, Mr. Latham."

"I thank thee," said the tramp.

"The Quakers are always polite," said the book-keeper. "They are good pay, too, and never give any trouble. I wish we had more of them stop here."

"If all your customers were of that description, your bar wouldn't pay very well."

"That is true."

But later in the evening the speaker was obliged to change his opinion.

The Quaker came to the bar and asked:

"Will thee give me a glass of brandy?"

"Sir!" said the barkeeper, astounded.

"A glass of brandy!" repeated Rudolph, irritably.

"I beg pardon, sir, but I was surprised. I did not know that gentlemen of your faith ever drank liquor."

"Thee is right," said the tramp, recollecting himself. "It is only for my health. Thee may make it strong, so that I may feel better soon."

Rudolph drained the glass, and then, after a little hesitation, he said: "I feel better. Will thee mix me another glass, and a little stronger?"

A stronger glass was given him.

The barkeeper looked at him shrewdly.

"Quaker as he is, he is evidently used to brandy," he said to himself.

"If he wasn't, those two glasses would have upset him."

But Rudolph did not appear to be upset.

He put his broad-brimmed hat more firmly on his head, and went outside. He decided to take a walk about the village. He little suspected that Tony was in the stable yard in the rear of the hotel.

He walked on for perhaps a quarter of a mile, and then leaned against a fence to rest. As he stood here two boys passed him slowly, conversing as they walked.

"I was surprised, Sam, at Tony Rugg's licking you," said the first.

"He couldn't do it again," said Sam, sullenly.

Rudolph's attention was at once drawn.

"Boys," he asked, "did thee mention the name of Tony Rugg?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does thee know such a boy?"

"Yes, sir. He is working at the hotel. He got my place away from me," said Sam. "Do you know him?"

"I once knew such a boy."

Rudolph was very much elated at what he had heard.

"Well, good luck has come to me at last," he said to himself. "The young scoundrel, is found, and now I must consider how to get him into my hands once more."

The Quaker, to designate him according to his present appearance, at once made his way back to the hotel.

"There can't be two Tony Ruggs in this world," he said to himself. "I am sure this is the boy."

On reaching the hotel he sauntered out to the stable yard in the rear of the house. His eyes lighted with pleasure, for he at once caught sight of Tony, standing beside James, the hostler.

"There comes old Broadbrim," said James, in a low voice. "The barkeeper told me he took two stiff horns of brandy. He's a queer sort of Quaker."

Tony gave a glance at the tramp but entertained no suspicion of his not being what he represented. Rudolph came nearer. His disguise had been so successful that he felt perfectly safe from discovery.

"Does thee keep many horses?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; we have twelve."

"That is a large number. Yea, verily, it is."

"Well, it is. There's a good deal of carting to do for the hotel; besides Mr. Porter keeps a livery stable. Was you ever this way before?" asked James.

"Nay, verily."

"Are you going away to-morrow morning?"

"Nay, friend, I think I shall tarry a day or two. Is that lad thy son?"



"Tony, he asks if you are my son," said James, laughing. "No, his name is Tony Rugg, while mine is James Woodley."

"Anthony, was thee born in this town?" asked the tramp, boldly defying detection.

"No, sir," answered Tony. "I only came here a few weeks ago."

"I'd like to choke the boy. I can hardly keep my hands off him," thought Rudolph. "But I'd better be going. He is looking at me closely."

"Good-night," he said, and the two responded civilly.

"Well, Tony, what do you think of Broadbrim?"

"I don't know, there's something in his voice that sounds familiar to me."

"Perhaps you may have met him somewhere."

"No; I never met any Quaker before."

"Well, there's stranger likenesses sometimes. Did I ever tell you my adventure out in Maine?"

"No, what was it?"

"I went down East to see a sister of mine that is married down near Augusta. When, as I was goin' through Portland, a woman came up and made a great ado about my deserting her. She took me for her husband, and came near having me arrested for desertion. You see, I and her husband was alike as two peas, that's what some of her neighbors said."

"How did you get off?"

"Luckily I had documents in my pocket showing who I was. Besides, my brother-in-law happened to be in the city, and he identified me."

Rudolph sat in the public room of the hotel for a time, and then he went up to his room, partly to be out of the way of possible recognition, partly to think how he could manage to get Tony into his clutches once more.

He had a back room, the window of which looked out upon the stableyard. He seated himself at this window, and could easily see and hear all that passed there.

Tony and the hostler were lounging about, the latter smoking a clay pipe, their work being done for the day.

"Tony," said the hostler, "I almost forgot to tell you you're to go to Thornton to-morrow."

"What for?"

"There's a top-buggy Mr. Porter has sold to a man there. You're to take it over, and lead the horse back."

"All right. I'd just as leave go as stay here. Can I find the road easily?"

"There's no trouble about that. Part of it runs through the woods—about a mile, I should say."

"Did Mr. Porter say when he wanted me to start?"

"About nine o'clock; by that time you'll be through with your chores."

Rudolph heard this conversation with pleasure.

"It's the chance I was waiting for," he said to himself. "I'll lie in wait for him as he comes back."

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE WOODS

Rudolph took care to breakfast in good season the next morning. He felt that this day was to make his fortune. The deed which would entitle him to a life support was to be perpetrated on that day. He shuddered a little when he reflected that a life must be sacrificed, and that the life of the boy who had been for years under his guardianship, who had slept at his side, and borne with him the perils and privations of his adventurous career. He was a reckless man, but he had never before shed blood, or at any rate taken the life of a human being.

"What's the odds?" he said to himself. "The boy's got to die some time or other, and his dying now will make me comfortable for life. No more hungry tramps for me. I'll settle down and be respectable. Eight hundred dollars a year will relieve me from all care."

At a few minutes after nine Tony set out on his journey. It never occurred to him that the old Quaker in suit of sober drab, who sat on the piazza and saw him depart, was a man who cherished sinister designs upon him. In fact, he had forgotten all about him, and was intent upon his journey alone.

"Take care of yourself, Tony," said James.

"Oh, yes, I'll do that," said Tony, little dreaming how necessary the admonition was likely to prove.

"I may as well be starting, too," thought Rudolph.

About two miles on began the woods. They extended for nearly a mile on either side of the road.

"I'll explore a little," thought Rudolph. "I shall have plenty of time before the boy comes back."

Some forty rods from the road on the right-hand side the tramp discovered a ruined hut, which had once belonged to a recluse who had for years lived apart from his kind. This had now fallen into decay.

The general appearance of the building satisfied Rudolph that it was deserted.

A rod to the east there was a well, open to the view; the curb having decayed, and being in a ruined condition, Rudolph looked down into it, and judged that it might be about twenty feet deep.

A diabolical suggestion came to him. If he could only lure Tony to this well and dispose of him forever.

"I'll do it," he muttered to himself.

Meantime, Tony drove rapidly to Thornton and sought the purchaser of the buggy. There was a delay of half an hour in finding him, but at last his business was done, and he set out for home.

It was not quite so amusing leading the horse as sitting in a buggy and driving him. But all our pleasures have to be paid for, and Tony was ready to pay the price for this one. After all, he reflected, it was quite as amusing as working about the stable yard, especially after it occurred to him to mount the animal.

Everything went smoothly till he entered the woody part of the road.

"Now I shall be home soon," he said to himself. "But, hello! who's that?" as a figure stepped out from the side of the road. "Oh, it's the Quaker. I wonder what brought him here?"

"Friend, is thee in a hurry?" asked the impostor.

"I suppose I ought to get back as soon as I can," said Tony. "Why, what's up?"

"Thee is the boy from the hotel, is thee not?"

"Well, what do you want of me?"

"There's a man in the woods that has fallen down a well, and I fear he is badly hurt."

"How did you find him?"

"I was walking for amusement when I heard groans, and, looking down, I could see the poor man."

Tony never thought of doubting this statement, and said, in a tone of genuine sympathy: "Poor fellow!"

"Will thee go with me and help get him out?"

"Yes," said Tony, readily, "I'll do it. Never mind if I am a little late. Where shall I put the horse?"

"Lead him into the woods, and tie him to a tree."

"All right. I guess that will be the best way."

The horse was disposed of as had been suggested and the two set out on what Tony supposed to be their charitable errand.

"I don't see what made you go into the woods?" said our hero, a little puzzled.

"I was brought up in the woods, my young friend. It reminds me of the time when I was a boy like thee."

"Oh, that's it. Well, it was lucky for the man—that is, if we can get him out. Did you speak to him?"

"Yea, verily."

"And did he answer?"

"He groaned. I think he was insensible. I saw that I should need help, and I came to the road again. Luckily thee came by."

"Had you been waiting long?"

"Only five minutes," answered Rudolph.

In reality he had been compelled to wait nearly an hour, much to his disgust. In fact, he had been led to fear that there might be some other road by which one could

return from Thornton, and that Tony had taken it. Should this be the case, his elaborate trap would be useless.

They had come quite near the ruined dwelling, and already the curb of the well was visible.

"Is that the well?" asked Tony.

"Yes," answered the Quaker.

"Let us hurry, then," said Tony.

But the time had come when Tony was to have revealed to him the real character of his companion. A branch, which hung unusually low, knocked off the hat and wig of the pseudo Quaker, and Tony was petrified with dismay when he saw revealed the black, cropped head and sinister face of Rudolph, the tramp.

"Rudolph!" he exclaimed, stopping short in his amazement.

"Yes," said the tramp, avowing himself, now that he saw disguise was useless; "it's Rudolph. At last I have you, you young scamp!" and he seized the boy's arms as in the grip of a vise.

Tony tried to shake off the grip, but what could a boy do against an athletic man?

"It's no use," said the tramp, between his teeth. "I've got you, and I don't mean to let you go."

"What do you mean to do, Rudolph?" asked Tony, uneasily.

"What do I mean to do? I mean to make you repent of what you've done to me, you young whelp."

"What have I done?"

"What haven't you done? You betrayed me, and sold me to my enemies. That's what you've done."

"I've only done what I was obliged to do. I don't want to do you any more harm. Let me go, and I won't meddle with you any more, nor say a word about you at the hotel."

"Really," said Rudolph, with a disagreeable sneer, "I feel very much obliged to you. You are very kind, upon my soul. So you won't tell at the hotel that the Quaker gentleman is only a tramp, after all."

"No, I will say nothing about you."

"I don't think you are to be trusted, boy."

"Did you ever know me to tell a lie, Rudolph?" asked Tony, proudly. "I don't pretend to be a model boy, but there's one thing I won't do, and that is lie."

"I think I had better make sure that you don't say anything about me," said the tramp, significantly.

"How?" asked Tony.

"I don't mean to let you go back to the hotel at all."

"But I must go back. I must carry the horse back."

"That's of no importance."

"Yes, it is," persisted Tony, anxiously. "They will think I have stolen it."

"Let them think so."

"But I don't want them to think me a thief."

"I can't help it."

"What are you going to do with me? Where are we going?"

"Before I tell you that I will tell you something more. You have often asked me who you were."

"You always told me I was your son."

"It was not true," said Rudolph, calmly. "You are not related to me."

"I felt sure of it."

"Oh, you did!" sneered the tramp. "You are glad that you are not my son!"

"Who am I?"

"I will tell you this much, that you are the heir to a fortune."

"I—the heir to a fortune!" exclaimed Tony, in natural excitement.

"Yes; and I could help you to secure it, if I pleased."

Tony knew not what to say or to think. Was it possible that he—Tony the Tramp—was a gentleman's son, and heir to a fortune? It was almost incredible. Moreover, what was the object of Rudolph in imparting this secret, and at this time, when he sought revenge upon him?

"Is this true?" he asked.

"Perfectly true."

"And you know my real name and family?"

"Yes, I do."

"Oh, Rudolph, tell me who I am," Tony said, imploringly. "Help me to the fortune which you say I am entitled to, and I will take care that you are rewarded."

Rudolph surveyed the boy, whom he still held in a firm grasp, and watched his excitement with malicious satisfaction.

"There's one objection to my doing that, boy," he said.

"What is that?"

"I'll tell you," he hissed, as his grip grew tighter, and his dark face grew darker yet with passion, "I hate you!"

This he uttered with such intensity that Tony, brave as he was, was startled and dismayed.

"Then why did you tell me?" he asked.

"That you might know what you are going to lose—that you might repent betraying me," answered Rudolph, rapidly. "You ask what I am going to do with you? I am going to throw you down that well, and leave you there—to die!"

Then commenced a struggle between the man and boy. Tony knew what he had to expect, and he fought for dear life. Rudolph found that he had undertaken no light task, but he, too, was desperate. He succeeded at last in dragging Tony to the well curb, and raising him in his sinewy arms, he let him fall.

Then, without waiting to look down, he hurried out of the wood with all speed. He reached the hotel, settled his bill, and paid to have himself carried over to the nearest railroad station.

Not until he was fairly seated in the train, and was rushing through the country at the rate of forty miles an hour, did he pause to congratulate himself.

"Now for an easy life!" he ejaculated. "My fortune is made! I shall never have to work any more."

CHAPTER XXII

"I HOLD YOU TO THE BOND"

On reaching New York, Rudolph made his way at once to the shop from which he had obtained his Quaker dress.

"Has thee come back?" asked the old man, in a jocular tone.

"Yea, verily," answered Rudolph.

"How do you like being a Quaker?"

"I've had enough of it. I want you to take them back. You promised to return me twenty-five dollars."

"Let me look at them," said the old man, cautiously. "They've seen hard usage," he said. "Look at that rip, and that spot."

"Humbug!" answered Rudolph. "There's nothing but what you can set straight in half an hour, and five dollars is handsome pay for that."

But the old man stood out for seven, and finally the tramp, though grumbling much, was obliged to come to his terms.

"Where have you been?" asked the old man, whose curiosity was aroused as to what prompted Rudolph to obtain the disguise.

"That's my business," said Rudolph, who had his reasons for secrecy, as we know.

"I meant no offense—I only wondered if you left the city."

"Yes, I've been into New Jersey," answered the tramp, who thought it politic to put the costumer on the wrong scent. "You see, I've got an old uncle—a Quaker—living there. The old man's got plenty of money, and I thought if I could only make him think me a good Quaker, I should stand a good chance of being remembered in his will."

"I see—a capital idea. Did it work?"

"I can't tell yet. He gave me four dollars and his blessing for the present," said Rudolph, carelessly.

"That's a lie, every word of it!" said the old man to himself, after the tramp went out. "You must try to fix up a more probable story next time, Mr. Rudolph. He's been up to some mischief, probably. However, it's none of my business. I've made seven dollars out of him, and that pays me well—yes, it pays me well."

When Rudolph left the costumer's, it occurred to him that the tramp's dress which he had resumed had better be changed, partly because he thought it probable that a journey lay before him. He sought out a large readymade clothing establishment on Broadway, and with the money which had been returned to him obtained a respectable-looking suit, which quite improved his appearance. He regarded his reflection in a long mirror with considerable satisfaction. He felt that he would now be taken for a respectable citizen, and that in discarding his old dress he had removed all vestiges of the tramp.

In this, however, he was not wholly right. His face and general expression he could not change. A careful observer could read in them something of the life he had led. Still, he was changed for the better, and it pleased him.

"Now," he reflected, "I had better go and see Mrs. Harvey Middleton. I have done the work, and I shall claim the reward."

He hurried to the St. Regis, and, experienced now in the ways of obtaining access to a guest, he wrote his name on a card and sent it up.

"The lady will see you," was the answer brought back by the servant.

"Of course she will," thought Rudolph. "She'll want to know whether it's all settled, and she has no further cause for fear."

Mrs. Middleton looked up as he entered.

"Sit down, Mr. Rugg," she said, politely.

Her manner was cool and composed; but when the servant had left the room, she rose from her chair, and in a tone which showed the anxiety which she had till then repressed, she asked, abruptly: "Well, Mr. Rugg, have you any news for me?"

"Yes, ma'am, I have," he answered, deliberately.

"What is it? Don't keep me in suspense," she said, impatiently.

"The job's done," said Rudolph, briefly.

"You mean that the boy——"

"Accidentally fell down a well and was killed," said the visitor, finishing the sentence.

"Horrible!" murmured the lady.

"Wasn't it?" said Rudolph, with a grin. "He must have been very careless."

Mrs. Middleton did not immediately speak. Though she was responsible for this crime, having instigated it, she was really shocked when it was brought home to her.

"You are sure he is dead?" she said, after a pause.

"When a chap pitches head first down a well thirty feet deep, there isn't much hope for him, is there?"

"No, I suppose not. Where did this accident happen?" asked the lady.

"That ain't important," answered Rudolph. "It's happened—that's all you need to know. Tony won't never come after that estate of his."

"It would have done him little good. He was not fitted by education to assume it."

"No; but he might have been educated. But that's all over now. It's yours. Nobody can take it from you."

"True!" said Mrs. Middleton, and a look of pleasure succeeded the momentary horror. "You will be ready to testify that the boy is dead?"

"There won't be any danger, will there? They won't ask too many questions?"

"As to that, I think we had better decide what we will say. It won't be necessary to say how the boy died."

"Won't it?"

"No. Indeed, it will be better to give a different account."

"Will that do just as well?"

"Yes. You can say, for instance, that he died of smallpox, while under your care in St. Louis, or any other place."

"And that I tended him to the last with the affection of a father," added Rudolph, grinning.

"To be sure. You must settle upon all the details of the story, so as not to be caught in any discrepancies."

"What's that?" asked the tramp, rather mystified.

"Your story must hang together. It mustn't contradict itself."

"To be sure. How long are you going to stay in New York?"

"There is no further occasion for my staying here. I shall sail for England in a week."

"Will it be all right about the money?" asked Rudolph, anxiously.

"Certainly."

"How am I to be sure of that?"

"The word of a lady, sir," said Mrs. Middleton, haughtily, "ought to be sufficient for you."

"That's all very well, but suppose you should get tired of paying me the money?"

"Then you could make it very disagreeable for me by telling all you know about the boy. However, there will be no occasion for that. I shall keep my promise. Will you be willing to sail for England next week?"

"Do you mean that I am to go with you?"

"I mean that you are to go. Your testimony must be given on the other side, in order to make clear my title to the estate."

"I see, ma'am. If I'd known that, I wouldn't have had no fears about the money."

"You need have none, Mr. Rugg," said Mrs. Middleton, coldly. "The fact is, we are necessary to each other. Each can promote the interests of the other."

"That's so, ma'am. Let's shake hands on that," said Rudolph, advancing with outstretched hand.

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Middleton, coldly. "You forget yourself, sir. Do not forget that I am a lady, and that you are——"

"We are equal, ma'am, in this matter," said Rudolph offended. "You needn't shrink from shaking hands with me."

"That is not in the agreement," said Mrs. Middleton, haughtily. "I shall do what I have agreed, but except so far as it is necessary in the way of business, I wish you to keep yourself away from me. We belong to different grades in society."

"Why didn't you say that the other day, ma'am?" said Rudolph, frowning.

"Because I didn't suppose it to be necessary. You did not offer to shake hands with me then. Besides, at that time you had not——"

"Pushed the boy down the well, if that's what you mean," said Rudolph, bluntly.

"Hush! Don't refer to that. I advise you this for your own sake."

"And for the sake of somebody else."

"Mr. Rugg, all this discussion is idle. It can do no good. For whatever service you have rendered, you shall be well paid. That you understand. But it is best that we should know as little of each other henceforth as possible. It might excite suspicion, as you can understand."

"Perhaps you are right, ma'am," said Rudolph, slowly.

"Call here day after to-morrow, and I will let you know by what steamer I take passage for England, that you may obtain a ticket. Good afternoon."

Rudolph left the lady's presence not wholly pleased.

"Why wouldn't she take my hand?" he muttered to himself. "She's as deep in it as I am."

CHAPTER XXIII

TONY'S ESCAPE

We must now return to our young hero, who was certainly in a critical position. Though strong for his age, the reader will hardly be surprised that he should have been overpowered by a man like Rudolph.

When the false Quaker's hat and wig were taken off, though he was at first surprised, he for the first time understood why the man's face and voice had seemed familiar to him from the time they first met.

He struggled in vain against the fate in store for him. He felt that with him it was to be a matter of life and death, and, taken by surprise though he was, he was on the alert to save his life if he could.

The well curb was partially destroyed, as we have said, but the rope still hung from it. At the instant of his fall, Tony managed while in transit to grasp the rope by one hand. He swung violently from one side to the other, and slipped a few feet downward. This Rudolph did not see, for as soon as he had hurled the boy into the well, he hurried away.

Tony waited for the rope to become steady before attempting to ascend hand over hand. Unfortunately for his purpose, the rope was rotten, and broke just above where he grasped it, precipitating him to the bottom of the well. But he was already so far from the opening that his fall was not over ten feet. Luckily, also, the water was not over two feet in depth. Therefore, though he was jarred and startled by the sudden descent, he was not injured.

"Well," thought Tony, "I'm as low as I can get—that's one comfort. Now is there any chance of my setting out?"

He looked up, and it gave him a peculiar sensation to see the blue sky from the place where he stood. He feared that Rudolph was still at hand, and would resist any efforts he might make to get out of the well.

"If he don't interfere, I'm bound to get out," he said to himself, pluckily.

His feet were wet, of course, and this was far from comfortable.

He made a brief examination of the situation, and then decided upon his plan. The well, like most in the country, was made of a wall of stones, piled one upon another. In parts it looked rather loose, and Tony shuddered as he thought of the possibility of the walls falling, and his being buried in the ruins.

"It would be all up with me then," he thought. "I must get out of this as soon as I can. If I can only climb up as far as the rope, I can escape."

This, in fact, seemed to be his only chance. Using the wall as a ladder, he began cautiously to ascend. More than once he came near falling a second time, but by great

exertion he finally reached the rope. He did not dare to trust to it entirely, but contrived to ascend as before, clinging to the rope with his hands. He was in constant fear that it would break a second time, but the strain upon it was not so great, and finally, much to his delight, he reached the top.

He breathed a deep sigh of relief when he found himself once more on terra firma. He looked about him cautiously, under the apprehension that Rudolph might be near by, and ready to attack him again. But, as we know, his fears were groundless.

"He made sure that I was disposed of," thought Tony. "What could have induced him to attempt my life? Can it be true, as he said, that I am heir to a fortune? Why couldn't he tell me? I would have paid him well for the information when I got my money. Then he said he knew who I was—I care more for that than for the money."

But Tony could not dwell upon these thoughts. The claims of duty were paramount. He must seek the horse, and go back to the hotel. He had been detained already for nearly three-quarters of an hour, and they would be wondering what had become of him.

He made his way as quickly as possible to where he had tied the horse.

But he looked for him in vain. He had been untied and led away—perhaps stolen. Tony felt assured that the horse, of himself, could not leave the spot.

"It must be Rudolph," he said to himself. "He has made off with the horse. Now I am in a precious scrape. What will Mr. Porter say to me?"

Tony was in error, as we know, in concluding that Rudolph had carried away the horse. The tramp had no use for him. Besides, he knew that such a proceeding would have exposed him to suspicion, which it was very important for him to avoid.

Who, then, had taken the horse? That is a question which we are able to answer, though Tony could not.

Fifteen minutes before Sam Payson, whose place Tony had taken, with a companion, Ben Hardy, while wandering through the woods, had espied a horse.

"Hello!" said Ben. "Here's a horse!"

"So it is!" said Sam. "It's rather odd that he should be tied here."

"I wonder whose it is?"

Sam had been examining him carefully, and had recognized him.

"It's Mr. Porter's Bill. Don't you see that white spot? That's the way I know him. I have harnessed that horse fifty times."

"But how did he come here? That's the question."

"I'll tell you," said Sam. "I was at the hotel this morning, and heard that that boy Tony was to go over to Thornton with him."

"That don't explain why he is tied here, does it?"

"Tony must have tied him while he was taking a tramp in the woods. Wouldn't Porter be mad if he knew it?"

"I shouldn't wonder if Tony would get bounced."

"Nor I. I'll tell you what, Ben, I've a grand mind to untie the horse and take him back myself."

"What's the good? It would be an awful job. We came out here to have some fun," grumbled Ben.

"This would be fun to me. I'll get Tony into trouble, and very likely get back the place he cheated me out of. I guess it'll pay."

"All right, Sam. I didn't think of that. I'd like to see how Tony looks when he comes back and finds the horse gone."

"It'll serve him right," said Sam. "What business had he to interfere with me, I'd like to know?"

"If you're going to do it, you'd better hurry up. He may get back any time."

"That's so. Here goes, then."

In a trice Bill was untied, and Sam, taking the halter, led him away.

When Tony came up he was not in sight.

Though Tony felt convinced that Rudolph had carried away the horse, he felt it to be his duty to look about for him. There was a bare chance that he might find him somewhere in the wood. In this way he lost considerable time. Had he started for the hotel immediately, he would very likely have overtaken the two boys.

Sam kept on his way, and finally arrived at the hotel.

As he led the horse into the stable yard, James, the hostler, exclaimed, in surprise:

"How came you by that horse, Sam Payson?"

"Is that the way you thank me for bringing him back?" asked Sam.

"He left the stable under the charge of Tony Rugg this morning."

"Pretty care he takes of him, then!"

"What do you mean? Where did you find him?"

"Down in the woods."

"What woods?"

"Between here and Thornton."

"Wasn't Tony with him?"

"No."

"Are you sure of that? Are you sure you two boys didn't attack Tony and take the horse away?" demanded James, suspiciously.

"No, we didn't. If you don't believe me, you may ask Ben."

"How was it, Ben?" he asked.

"Just as Sam has said. We found the horse alone in the woods. We thought he might be stolen, and we brought him home. It was a good deal of trouble, for it's full two miles."

James looked from one to the other in perplexity.

"I don't understand it at all," he said. "It don't look like Tony to neglect his duty that way."

"You've got too high an opinion of that boy entirely," said Sam, sneeringly.

Just then the landlord passed through the yard.

"What's all this?" he asked.

The matter was explained to him.

"Send Tony to me as soon as he comes back," he said, with a frown of displeasure. "This must be looked into."

"He'll give Tony fits!" said Sam, gleefully.

"You know how it is yourself, Sam," said James.

"I never ran off and left the horse in the woods," retorted Sam.

CHAPTER XXIV

TONY IS DISCHARGED

Presently Tony came into the yard. He was looking very sober. He had lost the horse, and he didn't know how to excuse himself. He didn't feel that he had been to blame, but he suspected that he should be blamed, nevertheless.

"What did you do with the horse, Tony?" asked James.

"He was stolen from me," answered Tony.

"How could that be?"

"I expect it was the Quaker."

"The Quaker?" repeated James, in amazement. "Are you sure you're not crazy—or drunk?"

"Neither one," said Tony. "It's a long story, and—"

"You must tell it to Mr. Porter, then. He wants to see you right off. But I'll tell you for your information that the horse is here."

"Is here? Who brought him?"

"Sam Payson brought him a short time since."

"Sam Payson! Where did he say he found him?"

"In the woods."

"Then he might have left it there," said Tony, indignantly. "What business had he to untie him, and give me all this trouble?"

"You can speak to Mr. Porter about that."

"Where is he?"

"In the office."

Tony entered the office.

Mr. Porter regarded him with a frown.

"How is this, Tony?" he began. "You leave my horse in the woods to be brought home by another boy. He might have been stolen, do you know that?"

"I've been deceived and led into a trap," said Tony.

"What on earth do you mean? Who has deceived and trapped you?"

"The Quaker, who was stopping here. Has he come back?"

"He has settled his bill and left the hotel. What cock-and-bull story is this you have hatched up?"

"It is a true story, Mr. Porter. This man was not a Quaker at all. He was a tramp."

"Take care what you say, Tony. Do you take me for a fool?"

"He is a man I used to know. When I was coming home he was waiting for me in the woods, only I didn't know who he really was. He told me there was a man who had fallen into a well in the woods, and he wanted my help to get him out. So I tied the horse and went with him. I wouldn't have left him but for that story of the man in the well."

"Go on," said the landlord. "I warn you I don't believe a word of this wonderful story of yours."

"I can't help it," said Tony, desperately. "It's true."

"Go on, and I'll give you my opinion of it afterward."

"Just before we got to the well, a branch took off his hat and wig, and I saw that he was no Quaker, but my enemy, Rudolph Rugg."

"Rudolph Rugg! A very good name for a romance."

Tony proceeded:

"Then I tried to get away, but it was too late. The man seized me and threw me down the well. But first he told me that he knew who I was, and that I was heir to a large fortune."

"Indeed! How happens it that you are not at the bottom of the well still?"

"I got out."

"So I see. But how?"

"I climbed up by the stones till I reached the rope, and then I found it easy. I hurried to where I had left the horse, but he was gone. I supposed that the Quaker had taken him, but James tells me Sam Payson found him and brought him back."

"Look here, boy," said the landlord, sternly, "do you expect me to believe this romance of yours?"

"I don't know whether you will or not, sir. All I can say is that it is the exact truth."

"I cannot keep you in my employ any longer. I have been deceived in you, and should no longer trust you. You

certainly have mistaken your vocation. You are not fit to be a stableboy."

"I should like to know what I am fit for?" said Tony, despondently.

"I will tell you, then. Judging from the story you have told me, I should think you might succeed very well in writing dime novels. I don't know whether it pays, but you can try it."

"Sometime you will find out that I have told the truth," said Tony.

"Perhaps so, but I doubt it."

"When do you want me to go?"

"You can stay till to-morrow morning. Wait a minute. Here is a five-dollar bill. That is a fair price for the time you have been with me."

As Tony was going out he came near having a collision with Sam Payson.

Sam looked at him inquiringly.

"Have you been bounced?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tony. "It was your fault. What made you take that horse?"

"I was afraid Mr. Porter might lose him. Is he in?"

"Yes. You can apply for my place, if you want to."

"I mean to."

Sam went in, and addressed the landlord.

"I brought your horse back," he said.

"Thank you. Here's two dollars for your trouble."

Sam tucked it away with an air of satisfaction.

"Tony tells me he is going away."

"Yes. He don't suit me."

"Wouldn't I suit you?" asked Sam, in an ingratiating tone.

"No; I've tried you, and you won't suit," was the unexpected reply.

"But I brought back the horse," pleaded Sam, crestfallen.

"I've paid you for that," said the landlord. "Didn't I pay you enough?"

"Yes, sir; but I thought you'd take me back again."

"I know you too well, Sam Payson, to try any such experiment. The Widow Clark told me yesterday that she wanted to get her boy into a place, and I am going to offer it to him."

"He don't know anything about horses," said Sam.

"He will soon learn. He is a good boy, and industrious. I am sure he will suit me better than you."

"I wish I hadn't brought back his old horse," muttered Sam, as he left the office and went back into the yard. He

hoped to triumph over Tony, by telling that he had taken his place, but the opportunity was not allowed him.

"Well, Sam, are you going to take my place?" asked Tony.

"No, I'm not," said Sam.

"Didn't you ask for it?"

"The old man had promised it to another boy," said Sam, sourly.

"He's been pretty quick about it, then," said James.

"A boy that don't know the first thing about horses," grumbled Sam.

"Who is it?"

"Joe Clark."

"He's a good boy; I'm glad he's coming, though I'm sorry to lose Tony."

"Thank you, James," said Tony. "I'd like to stay, but I can't blame Mr. Porter for not believing my story. It was a strange one, but it's true, for all that."

James shrugged his shoulders.

"Then you believe you're heir to a fortune, as he told you?"

"Yes; he had no reason to tell me a lie."

"What's that?" asked Sam.

"The Quaker gentleman who was here told Tony that he was heir to a large fortune."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Sam, boisterously. "That's a likely story, that is!"

"Why isn't it?" asked Tony, frowning.

"You heir to a fortune—a clodhopper like you! Oh, I shall split!" said Sam, giving way to another burst of merriment.

"I am no more a clodhopper than you are," said Tony, "and I advise you not to laugh too much, or I may make you laugh on the other side of your mouth."

"It'll take more than you do to do it!" said Sam, defiantly.

"I have done it already, Sam Payson, and I'm ready to try it again before I leave town."

"I wouldn't dirty my hands with you!" said Sam, scornfully.

"You'd better not!"

When Sam had gone, Tony turned to James.

"I wonder whether I shall ever see you again, James?" he said, thoughtfully.

"I hope so, Tony. I'm sorry you're going; but you couldn't expect Mr. Porter to swallow such a tough story as that."

"Then you don't believe it, James? I'll come back some day just to prove to you that it is true."

"Come back, at any rate; I shall be glad to see you. When do you go?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Where shall you go first?"

"To New York; but I'll help you till I go."

So Tony did his work as usual for the remainder of the day. He felt rather sober. Just as he had found a home, his evil genius, in the character of Rudolph, had appeared and deprived him of it.

CHAPTER XXV

TONY IN NEW YORK

Though Tony was out of a place, he was considerably better off than he had ever been. He had five dollars in his pocket for the first time in his life. A few weeks ago he would have considered himself rich with this amount, and would have been in high spirits. But now he took a different view of life. He had known what it was to have a settled home, and to earn an honest living, and he had learned to like it. But fortune was against him, and he must go.

"Good-by, James," he said, soberly, to the hostler, the next morning.

"Good-by, Tony, and good luck," said the kind-hearted hostler.

"I hope I shall have good luck, but I don't expect it," said Tony.

"Pooh, nonsense! You're young, and the world is before you."

"That's so, James, but so far the world has been against me."

"Come here a minute, Tony," said James, lowering his voice.

As Tony approached, he thrust a bank-note hastily into his hand.

"Take it," he said, quickly. "I don't need it, and you may."

Tony looked at the bill, and found it was a ten-dollar note.

"You're very kind, James," he said, touched by a kindness to which he was unaccustomed, "but I can't take it."

"Why not? I sha'n't need it."

"Nor I, James. I've got some money. It isn't much, but I'm used to roughing it. I've done it all my life. I always come down on my feet like a cat."

"But you may get hard up."

"If I do, I'll let you know."

"Will you promise that?"

“Honor bright.”

So James took back the money reluctantly, and Tony bade him good-by.

It was a rainy day when Tony arrived in New York. The stores were deserted, and the clerks lounged idly behind the counters. Only those who were actually obliged to be out appeared in the streets. If Tony's hopes had been high, they would have been lowered by the dreary weather.

He wandered aimlessly about the streets, having no care about his luggage, for he had brought none, looking about him listlessly. He found himself after a while in the lower part of Broadway, near where most of the European steamer lines have their offices.

All at once Tony saw a figure that attracted his eager attention.

It was Rudolph Rugg, his old comrade, and now bitter enemy.

“Where is he going?” thought Tony.

This question was soon solved.

Rudolph entered the office of the Cunard line of steamers.

“What can he want there?” thought Tony. “I’ll watch him.”

He took a position near by, yet far enough off to avoid discovery, and waited patiently for Rudolph to reappear. He waited about fifteen minutes. Then he saw the tramp come out with a paper in his hand, which he appeared to regard with satisfaction. He turned and went up Broadway.

As soon as he thought it safe, Tony crossed the street and entered the office. He made his way up to the counter, and inquired the price of passage. The rates were given him.

“Can you tell me,” he asked, carelessly, “if a Mr. Rugg is going across on one of your steamers?”

“Mr. Rugg? Why, it is the man who just left the office.”

“Did he buy a passage ticket?”

“Yes.”

“When does he sail?”

“On Saturday.”

“And where does he go?”

“To Liverpool, of course. Can I sell you a ticket?”

“I haven’t decided,” said Tony.

“If you go, you will find it for your advantage to go by our line.”

“I’ll go by your line, if I go at all,” said Tony. “I wonder whether he’d be so polite if he knew I had but three dollars and a quarter in my pocket,” said our hero to himself.

Then he began to wonder how it happened that Rudolph was going. First, it was a mystery where he could

have obtained the money necessary for the purchase of a ticket. Next, what could be his reason for leaving America.

“Probably he has picked somebody’s pocket,” thought Tony.

That disposed of the difficulty, but, as we know, Tony was mistaken.

It was money that he had received for a worse deed, but Tony never thought of connecting the state of Rudolph’s purse with the attempt that had been made upon his own life.

When Tony came to think of it, he felt glad that Rudolph was going abroad. He felt that his own life would be safer with an ocean flowing between him and the man who latterly had exhibited such an intense hatred for him. As to his motive, why perhaps he thought that he would be safer in London than in New York.

Tony bethought himself of securing a temporary home. He was not a stranger in New York, and knew exactly where to go. There was a house not far from Greenwich street, where he had lodged more than once before, and where he was known. It was far from a fashionable place, but the charge was small, and that was a necessary consideration with Tony.

He rang the bell, and the proprietor, a hard-favored woman of fifty, came to open it.

“How do you do, Mrs. Blodgett?” said Tony.

“Why, it’s Tony,” said the woman, not unkindly. “Where have you been this long time?”

“In the country,” answered our hero.

“And where is your father?”

“Do you mean the man I used to be with?”

“Yes. He was your father, wasn’t he?”

“No. He was no relation of mine,” said Tony, hastily. “We used to go together, that is all.”

“Where is he?”

“I don’t know exactly. We had a falling out, and we’ve parted.”

“Well, Tony, what can I do for you?”

“Have you got any cheap room to let, Mrs. Blodgett?”

“I’ve got a room in the attic. It’s small, but if it’ll suit you, you can have it for a dollar a week.”

“It’s just the thing,” said Tony, in a tone of satisfaction. “Can I go right up?”

“Yes, if you want to. I generally want a week’s pay in advance, but you’ve been here before——”

“No matter for that. Here’s the money,” said Tony.

“I’ll show you the way up.”

“All right. I guess I’ll lie down a while. I’ve been about the streets all day, and am pretty tired.”

The room was hardly large enough to swing a cat in, and the furniture was shabby and well-worn; but Tony was not particular. He threw himself on the bed, and soon fell asleep.

How long he slept he did not know, but when he woke up the room was quite dark. He stretched, and did not immediately remember where he was; but it flashed upon him directly.

"I wonder what time it is?" he asked himself. "I must have slept a long time. I feel as fresh as a lark. I'll get up and take a tramp."

When he went downstairs he found that it was already ten o'clock.

"I feel as fresh as if it were morning," thought Tony. "I'll go out on Broadway and watch some of the theaters when the people come out."

Ten o'clock seems late in the country; it is the usual hour for retiring for many families; but in the city it is quite different. There are still many to be seen in the streets, and for many it is the commencement of a season of festivity.

Tony walked for half an hour. He was so thoroughly rested that he felt no fatigue. Presently he stepped into a crowded billiard room, and, seating himself, began to watch a game between a young man of twenty-five and a man probably fifteen years his senior. The first was evidently a gentleman by birth and education; his dress and manners evinced this. The other looked like an adventurer, though he was well dressed.

"Come, let us play for the drinks," said the elder.

"I've drank enough," said the young man.

"Nonsense. You can stand a little more."

"Just as you say."

The game terminated in favor of the elder, and the drinks were brought. This went on for some time. The young man was evidently affected. Finally he threw down his cue, and said:

"I won't play again!"

"Why not?"

"My hand is unsteady. I have drank too much."

"I've drank as much as you, but I'm all right."

"You can stand more than I. I'll settle for the drinks and games and go home."

"Shan't I see you home?" asked the elder.

"I don't want to trouble you."

"No trouble at all."

The young man paid at the bar, displaying a well-filled pocketbook. There was something in his companion's expression which made Tony suspicious. He formed a sudden resolve.

"I'll follow them," he said, and when they left the room he was close behind them.

CHAPTER XXVI

A STRANGE ADVENTURE

The young man leaned on the arm of his companion. He was affected by the potations in which he had indulged, and was sensible of his condition.

"I ought not to have drank so much," he said, in unsteady accents.

"Pooh! it's nothing," said the other, lightly. "Where are you stopping?"

"St. Regis."

"We'd better walk. It will do you good to walk."

"Just as you say."

"Of course I would only advise you for your good."

"I know it; but, old fellow, why did you make me drink so much?"

"I thought you could stand it better. I'm as cool as a cucumber."

He pressed the young man's arm, and led him into a side street.

"What's that for? This ain't the way to the St. Regis."

"I know it."

"Why don't we go up Broadway?"

"You are not fit to go in yet. You need a longer walk, so that your condition will not be noticed when you go in."

"Go along, old fellow. You're right."

Still Tony kept behind. All seemed right enough, but somehow he could not help feeling suspicious of the older man.

"I'll watch him," he thought, "and if he attempts any mischief, I'll interfere."

The two men walked in a westerly direction, crossing several streets.

"Look here," said the young man, "we'd better turn back."

Now was the time.

The other looked swiftly around, but did not notice Tony, who was tracking him in the darkness.

"Give me your pocketbook and watch at once!" he whispered.

"What!" exclaimed the young man, startled, and trying to release his arm.

"Give me your watch and money at once, or I'll blow your brains out!"

"Look here, you're only trying to play a joke on me."

"You're mistaken. I'm a desperate man. I will do as I say."

"Then you're a villain," said the young man, with spirit. "You've made me drunk in order to rob me."

"Precisely. Your money or your life. That's about what I mean."

"I'll call the police."

"If you do it will be your last word. Now, make up your mind!"

The young man, instead of complying, endeavored to break away, but in his intoxication he had lost half his strength, and was no match for the other.

"You fool, your blood be on your own hands!" said his companion, and he drew a pistol from his side pocket.

An instant and he would have fired, but Tony was on the alert. He sprang forward, seized the would-be murderer by the arm, and the pistol went off, but the bullet struck a brick wall on the opposite side of the street.

"Police!" shouted Tony, at the top of his lungs.

"Confusion!" exclaimed the villain. "I must be getting out of this!"

He turned to fly, but Tony seized him by the coat, and he struggled fiercely, but in vain.

"Let go, you young scoundrel!" he shouted, "or I'll shoot you!"

"With an unloaded pistol?" asked Tony. "That don't scare much!"

A quick step was heard, and a policeman turned the corner.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I charge this man with an attempt at murder," said Tony.

"The boy is right," said the young man.

"They are both lying!" said the adventurer, furiously. "It's a plot against me."

"I know you, Bill Jones!" said the policeman, after a careful scrutiny of the man's features. "You're a hard ticket. Come along with me. You two must go with me to prefer your charge."

"Let me have your arm, my boy," said the young man. "I'm ashamed to own that I need your help. It is the last time I will allow liquor to get the better of me."

"I guess you're about right there," said Tony. "You've had a narrow escape."

"I owe my life to you," said the young man, warmly. "How did you happen to come up just in the nick of time?"

"I suspected the man meant you no good. I followed you from the billiard saloon where I saw you playing."

"You were sharper than I. I never suspected harm. You have done me the greatest possible service."

"Curse the young brat!" muttered the man in custody. "I'd like a good chance to wring your neck!"

"I've no doubt of it," said Tony. "I'll keep out of your way."

The station house was not far off. The party entered. The charge was formally made, and Tony and the young man went out.

"Won't your father and mother feel anxious about your being out so late?" asked George Spencer, for this was the young man's name.

"I don't think they will," answered Tony. "I haven't got any, for that matter."

"Who do you live with, then?"

"I take care of myself."

"Have you no one belonging to you?"

"Not one."

"Are you poor?" asked Spencer, for the first time taking notice of Tony's rather shabby apparel.

"Oh, no!" said our hero. "I've got a little over two dollars in my pocket."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, and it's a good deal more than I generally have."

"You don't say so. How do you make your living?"

"Any way I can—any way that's honest."

"And don't you ever get discouraged—down in the mouth?"

"Not often," answered Tony. "I've always got along, and I guess something will turn up for me. But there's one thing I am sorry for."

"What's that?"

"I would like to get some sort of an education. I don't know much."

"Can't you read?"

"A little, and write a little. I mostly picked it up myself."

The young man whistled.

"Have you any place to sleep to-night?"

"I've hired an attic room for a week."

"What do you pay?"

"A dollar a week."

"Of course it is a poor room?"

"Yes; but it's all I can expect, and better than I often have. Why, I've slept in barns and under haystacks plenty of times."

"What is your name?"

"Tony Rugg."

"Well, Tony, you must come and stop with me to-night."

"With you?"

"Yes, at the St. Regis Hotel. You can help me get there, and share my room."

Tony hesitated. "Do you mean it?" he asked.

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Because you are a gentleman, and I—do you know what they call me?"

"What?"

"Tony the Tramp."

"It is your misfortune, and not your fault. I repeat my invitation. Will you come?"

"I will," answered Tony.

He saw that the young man was in earnest, and he no longer persisted in his refusal.

"To-morrow morning I will talk with you further about your affairs. I want to do something for you."

"You are very kind."

"I ought to be. Haven't you saved my life? But there is the hotel."

Tony and his new friend entered the great hotel. It was brilliantly lighted, though it was now nearly midnight.

Mr. Spencer went up to the desk.

"My key," he said. "No. 169."

"Here it is, sir."

"This young man will share my room. I will enter his name."

The clerk looked at Tony in surprise. He looked rather shabby for a guest of the great caravansary.

"Has he luggage?" asked the clerk.

"None to-night. I will pay his bill."

"All right, sir."

They got into the elevator, and presently came to a stop. Mr. Spencer opened the door of No. 169.

It was a good-sized and handsomely furnished chamber, containing two beds.

"You will sleep in that bed, Tony," said Spencer. "I feel dead tired. Will you help me off with my coat?"

Scarcely was the young man in bed than he fell asleep. Tony lay awake some time, thinking of his strange adventure.

"It's the first time in my life," he said to himself, "when I've had two beds—one here and the other at my lodgings. What would Rudolph say if he knew I was stopping at a fashionable hotel, instead of being at the bottom of the well where he threw me?"



CHAPTER XXVII

BREAKFAST AT THE ST. REGIS

When Tony woke up in the morning, he looked about him with momentary bewilderment, wondering where he was.

George Spencer was already awake.

"How did you sleep, Tony?" he asked.

"Bully!"

"It must be late. Please look at my watch and tell me what time it is."

"Half-past eight," said Tony, complying with his request. "Why, it's late."

"Not very. I didn't get up till ten yesterday. Well, what do you say to getting up and having some breakfast?"

"Am I to breakfast with you, Mr. Spencer?"

"To be sure you are, unless you have another engagement," added Spencer, jocosely.

"If I have it can wait," said Tony. "How much do they charge here for board, Mr. Spencer?"

"Four or five dollars a day. I really don't know exactly how much."

"Four or five dollars a day!" exclaimed Tony, opening his eyes in amazement. "How much I shall cost you!"

"I expect you will cost me a good deal, Tony," said the young man. "Do you know, I have a great mind to adopt you."

"Do you really mean it, Mr. Spencer?"

"Yes; why shouldn't I? I like what I have seen of you, and I have plenty of money."

"It must be a nice thing to have plenty of money," said Tony, thoughtfully.

"There is danger in it, too, Tony. I am ashamed to tell you how much I have spent in gambling and dissipation."

"I wouldn't do it, Mr. Spencer," said Tony, soberly.

"Capital advice, Tony. I am going to keep you with me for fear I might forget, that is, if you think you like me well enough to stay."

"I am sure to like you, Mr. Spencer, but you may get tired of me."

"I'll let you know when I do, Tony. How much income do you think I have?"

"A thousand dollars?" guessed Tony, who considered that this would be a very large income.

Spencer laughed.

"It is over ten thousand," he said.

"Ten thousand!" exclaimed Tony. "How can you spend it all?"

"I did spend it all last year, Tony, and got a thousand dollars in debt. I gambled, and most of it went that way. But I'll leave that off. I shall have you to take up my time now."

"Did you know that man you played billiards with last night, Mr. Spencer?"

"I made his acquaintance in a gambling house, and I was well punished for keeping company with such a man."

Tony was now nearly dressed.

"You didn't get your clothing from a fashionable tailor, I should judge," said his new guardian.

"No," said Tony. "I haven't been to fashionable tailors much."

"After breakfast I must go with you and see you properly clothed. If you are to be my ward, I must have your appearance do me credit."

"How very kind you are to me, Mr. Spencer," said Tony, gratefully. "I don't know how to repay you."

"You've done something in that way already."

"It seems like a dream that a poor boy like me should be adopted by a rich gentleman."

"It is a dream you won't wake up from very soon. Now if you are ready we will go down to breakfast."

Tony hung back.

"Won't you be ashamed to have me seen with you in these clothes?" he asked.

"Not a bit. Besides, you will soon be in better trim. Come along, Tony."

They went down together, and entered the breakfast room. A considerable number of persons were there. Several stared in surprise at Tony as he entered and took his seat. Our hero noticed it, and it made him nervous.

"Do you see how they look at me?" he said.

"Don't let it affect your appetite, Tony," said his friend. "When you appear among them again you will have no reason to feel ashamed."

A speech which Tony heard from a neighboring table did not serve to reassure him.

An overdressed lady of fifty said to a tall, angular young lady, her daughter:

"Elvira, do you see that very common-looking boy at the next table?"

"Yes, ma."

"He looks low. He is not as well dressed as our servants. It is very strange they should let him eat at an aristocratic hotel like this."

"Isn't he with that gentleman, ma?"

"It looks like it. He may be the gentleman's servant. I really think it an imposition to bring him here."

Mr. Spencer smiled.

"Don't mind it, Tony," he said. "I know those people by sight. They are parvenus. I suppose you don't understand the word. They are vulgar people who have become rich by a lucky speculation. They will change their tune presently. What will you have for breakfast?"

"There's such a lot of things," said Tony. "I don't know what to choose."

"You'll get used to that. I'll order breakfast for both."

The waiter appeared, and Mr. Spencer gave the order.

The waiter looked uncomfortable.

"Mr. Spencer," he said, "it's against the rules for you to bring your servant to the table with you."

"I have not done so," said Mr. Spencer, promptly. "This young gentleman is my ward."

"Oh, excuse me," said the waiter, confused.

"Has anyone prompted you to speak to me about him?"

"Those ladies at the next table."

"Then those ladies owe an apology to my ward," said the young man, loud enough for the ladies to hear.

The shot told. The ladies looked confused and embarrassed, and Tony and his guardian quietly finished their breakfast.

There was another lady who noticed Tony, and this was Mrs. Harvey Middleton. She was to sail for England in the afternoon.

As Tony and Mr. Spencer were going out of the breakfast room, they met her entering.

She started at the sight of Tony, and scanned his face eagerly.

"Who are you, boy?" she asked, quickly, laying her hand on his arm.

Tony was too surprised to answer, and Mr. Spencer answered for him.

"He is my ward, madam," he answered. "He has been roughing it in the country, which accounts for the state of his wardrobe."

"Oh, I beg pardon, sir," said Mrs. Middleton. "I thought his face looked familiar."

"You see, Tony, that your appearance attracts attention," said Mr. Spencer, laughing. "Now we'll go out, and I'll get you a fit-out."

They went to a well-known clothier's, and Mr. Spencer purchased two handsome suits for our hero, one of which

he put on at once. At another place a plentiful supply of underclothing was purchased. Next a hat and shoes were procured. Tony's hair was cut, he took a bath, and in a couple of hours he was transformed into a young gentleman of distinguished appearance.

"Really, Tony, I shouldn't have known you," said his friend.

"I shouldn't have known myself," said Tony. "I almost think it must be some other boy. Who'd think I was Tony the Tramp, now?"

"You are not to be a tramp any longer. I have not yet formed my plans for you, but I shall soon. I suppose, Tony, your education has been neglected."

"I should think it had," answered Tony. "I'm as ignorant as a horse."

"Then you ought to learn something."

"I wish I could."

"You shall, but, as I said, I must arrange details later."

* * * * *

About this time Rudolph and Mrs. Middleton were conversing, preparatory to starting for the steamer.

"You are sure the boy is dead?" she said.

"Sure? I ought to be. Didn't I see him dead with my own eyes?"

"I saw a boy this morning who looked as, I suppose, the boy would have looked—of the same age, too."

"Where did you see him?"

"He was with a gentleman, coming out of the breakfast room as I was entering it."

"It couldn't have been he," said Rudolph, positively. "Even if he were alive, he wouldn't be here. But he's dead, I tell you. There's no doubt of it."

"There are strange resemblances," said the lady. "But, of course, it couldn't have been the boy. Indeed the gentleman with him told me that it was his ward."

Rudolph laughed.

"Tony wasn't likely to have a gentleman for a guardian," he said.

But Rudolph would have felt less easy in his mind if he had known that the boy whom he supposed dead at the bottom of a well was really in the hotel at that very moment, and, strangely enough, in the adjoining room.



CHAPTER XXVIII

TONY AND HIS GUARDIAN HOUSEKEEPING

"Now, Tony," said George Spencer, after dinner, "I want to tell you what plans I have formed for you and myself. I have got tired of hotel life, and want a home. I shall seek a couple of handsomely furnished rooms uptown, make it social and pleasant with books and pictures, and we will settle down and enjoy ourselves."

"I am afraid you will get tired of me, Mr. Spencer," said Tony, modestly. "I am too ignorant to be much company for you."

"Ignorance, like poverty, can be remedied," said the young man. "I shall obtain a private tutor for you, and expect you to spend some hours daily in learning." Tony's face lighted up.

"That is just what I would like," he said.

"You would like it better than going to school?"

"Yes, for at school I should be obliged to go into a class with much younger boys."

"While with a tutor you can go on as fast as you please."

"Yes, sir."

"To-night we both need a little recreation. Suppose we go to Wallack's Theater. Have you ever been there?"

"Yes, sir; but I didn't take a reserved seat."

"I suppose not."

"I sat in the upper gallery."

"To-night you shall be fashionable. Have you a pair of kid gloves?"

"The last pair I had is worn out," said Tony, laughing.

"Then you must have another pair. We will get a pair on our way there."

It was already time to start.

At half-past eight Tony found himself occupying an orchestra chair near the stage, his hands encased in a pair of gloves of faultless fit, and looking enough like a young patrician to pass muster among his fashionable neighbors.

"How does it seem, Tony?" asked Spencer, smiling.

"Tiptop," answered Tony; "but how queer kid gloves feel! I never had a pair on in my life before."

"There are the two ladies who found fault with your appearance at the breakfast table this morning."

"They are looking at me through an opera glass."

"Wondering if you can be the same boy. I have no doubt they are puzzled to account for your transformation."

Mr. Spencer was right. The two ladies were at the same moment exchanging remarks about our hero.

"Goodness! Elvira, there is that boy that was at breakfast this morning at the hotel."

"The boy that was so shabbily dressed, mamma? Where?"

"Just to the left. He isn't shabby now. See how he is toggled out. Who would have thought it?"

"It's queer, isn't it?"

"I think we must have been mistaken about him. He looks like a young gentleman now. But why should he have worn such clothes before?"

"I can't tell, I am sure."

"That's a nice-looking young man, Elvira. I wish he would take a fancy to you."

"La, mamma! How you talk!" said Elvira, bridling and smiling.

"Depend upon it, Tony, those ladies will be polite to you if they get a chance," said Spencer, laughing.

"It makes a great deal of difference how a feller is dressed," said Tony.

"You are right, Tony; but don't say feller. Remember, you are fashionable now."

"There's a gentleman in front that I know," said Tony, suddenly.

"Where?"

"The man with a partly bald head."

"How do you know him?"

"He was staying two or three days at the country hotel where I was a stableboy."

"Do you think he would know you now?"

"May I see?"

"Yes, but don't let him find you out. It won't do in society to let it be known that you were ever a stableboy."

"All right."

Tony leaned over, and, addressing the gentleman, said:

"Would you be kind enough to lend me your program a minute, sir?"

"Certainly," was the reply. Then, looking at Tony: "Your face looks very familiar. Where have I seen you before?"

"Perhaps at the St. Regis, sir," said Tony; "I am stopping there."

"No; I never go to the St. Regis. Bless me! you're the very image of a boy I have seen somewhere."

"Am I?" said Tony. "I hope he was a good-looking boy."

"He was; but he was not dressed like you. In fact—I remember now—he was employed as stableboy in a country hotel."

"A stableboy!" exclaimed Tony, with comic horror. "I hope you don't think I am the boy."

"Of course not. But really the resemblance is wonderful."

"Mr. Spencer," said Tony, "this gentleman has met a stableboy who looks like me."

"I really beg your pardon," said the gentleman; "I meant no offense."

"My ward would not think of taking offense," said Mr. Spencer, courteously.

Tony smiled to himself; he had a strong sense of humor, and was much amused.

It is needless to say that he enjoyed the performance—all the more so from his luxurious seat and nearness to the stage.

"It's a good deal better than sitting in the gallery," he said, in a whisper, to his companion.

"I should think so. I never sat up there, Tony."

"And I never sat anywhere else."

As they were leaving the theater they found themselves close to the ladies whom they had noticed at breakfast.

Elvira chanced to drop her handkerchief, probably intentionally.

Tony stooped and picked it up. Though he had led the life of a tramp, he had the instincts of a gentleman.

"Thank you, young gentleman," said Elvira. "You are very polite."

"Oh, don't mention it!" said Tony.

"Really, mamma, he is a born gentleman," said Elvira, later, to her mother. "How could we make such a mistake?"

"His clothes were certainly very shabby, my dear."

"Very likely he had been out hunting or something. We must not judge so hastily next time."

The ladies were foiled in their intentions of cultivating the acquaintance of Tony and his guardian, as two days later they left the hotel and installed themselves in an elegant boarding house on Madison avenue.

"Now," said Mr. Spencer, "we must go to work."

"I must," said Tony.

"And I, too," said Spencer.

"What can you have to do?"

"I have received a proposal to invest a part of my money—only one-fourth—in a business downtown, and shall accept. I don't need to increase my income, but I think I shall be less likely to yield to temptation if I have some fixed employment. I shall be so situated that I can do as much or as little as I please. As to yourself I have put an advertisement in a morning paper for a teacher, and

expect some applicants this morning. I want you to choose for yourself."

"I am afraid I shan't be a very good judge of teachers. Shall I examine them, to see if they know enough?"

"I think, from what you say of your ignorance, that any of them will know enough to teach you for the present. The main thing is to select one who knows how to teach, and whom you will like."

"I wish you were a teacher, Mr. Spencer."

"Why?"

"Because then I should have a teacher whom I liked."

"Thank you, Tony," said the young man, evidently gratified. "The liking is mutual. I think myself fortunate in having you for my companion."

"The luck is on my side, Mr. Spencer. What would I be but for you? I wouldn't be a tramp any more, for I am tired enough of that, but I should have to earn my living as a newsboy or a bootblack, and have no chance of getting an education."

So the relations between Tony and his new friend became daily more close, until Mr. Spencer came to regard him as a young brother, in whose progress he was warmly interested.

A tutor was selected, and Tony began to study. His ambition was roused. He realized for the first time how ignorant he was, and it is not too much to say that he learned in one month as much as most boys learn in three. He got rid of the uncouth expressions which he had acquired in early life, and adapted his manners to the new position which he found himself occupying in society. Mr. Spencer, too, was benefited by his new friend. He gave up drink and dissipation, and contented himself with pleasures in which he could invite Tony to participate.

Meanwhile Mrs. Harvey Middleton and Rudolph had arrived in England, and we must leave our hero for a time and join them.

CHAPTER XXIX

HOME AGAIN

When Mrs. Harvey Middleton reached England she delayed but a day in London to attend to necessary business. This business was solely connected with her mission to America. Rudolph Rugg accompanied her to the chambers of a well-known lawyer, and testified to having had the charge of Tony, closing with the description of his death. Of course nothing was said of the well, or about his having thrown him in, for Rudolph was not a fool. The details of a probable story had been got up by Mrs. Middleton and Rugg in concert. According to them and the written testimony, Tony had been run over by a train on the Erie Railway, and a newspaper paragraph

describing such an accident to an unknown boy was produced in corroboration.

It was an ingenious fabrication, and Mrs. Middleton plumed herself upon it.

"Poor boy!" she said, with a hypocritical sigh, "his was a sad fate."

"It was, indeed," said the lawyer; "but," he added, dryly, "you have no cause to regret it, since it secures you the estate."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Brief. It is sad to profit by such a tragedy."

"You don't take a business view of it, madam. Such things happen, and if we can't prevent them, we may as well profit by them."

"Of course I shall not refuse what has fallen in my way," said Mrs. Middleton; "but I had formed the plan, if I found the boy alive, of bringing him home and educating him for his position. He would not have let me want."

"Don't she do it well, though?" thought Rudolph, who heard all this with a cynical admiration for the ex-governess. "If I was a gentleman I'd make up to her, and make her Mrs. Rugg if she'd say the word."

"You think this man's evidence will substantiate my claim to the estate?" she asked, after a pause.

"I should say there was no doubt on that point, unless, of course, his evidence is impeached or contradicted."

"That is hardly likely, Mr. Brief. The poor man suffered much at the death of the boy, to whom he was ardently attached."

"So you loved the boy, Mr. Rugg?" said the lawyer.

"Oh, uncommon!" answered Rudolph. "He was my pet, and the apple of my eye. We were always together, Tony and I."

"And I suppose he loved you?"

"He couldn't bear me out of his sight. He looked upon me as a father, sir."

"If he'd come into the estate he would probably have provided for you," suggested the lawyer, watching him keenly.

"It's likely, sir. I wish he had."

"So it is a personal loss to you—the death of the boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mrs. Middleton probably will not forget your services to the boy."

"No, sir. I shall, of course, do something for Mr. Rugg, though, perhaps, not as much as my poor cousin would have done. Mr. Rugg, will you see me to my carriage?"

"Certainly, ma'am."

Mrs. Middleton was anxious to go away. The conversation had taken a turn which she did not like. It almost seemed as if the lawyer were trying to find out something and she thought it best to get Rudolph away

from the influence, lest Mr. Brief might catechise him and draw out something to her disadvantage.

"Mr. Rugg," she said, as they were going downstairs, "I advise you not to go near Mr. Brief again."

"Why not, ma'am?"

"These lawyers are crafty. Before you knew what he was after he would extract the secret from you, and there would be trouble for both of us."

"Do you think so, ma'am? I didn't see nothing of it."

"I think he suspects something. That matters nothing, if it does not go beyond suspicion. Unless he can impeach your testimony or draw you into contradictions we are safe, and you are sure of an income for life."

"You needn't be afraid for me, ma'am. We're in the same boat."

She frowned a little at the familiar tone in which he spoke. It was as if he put himself on an equality with her. But it was true, nevertheless, and it was unpleasant for her to think of.

Was there nothing else that was unpleasant? Did she not think of the poor boy, who, as she thought, was killed, and at her instigation?

Yes, she thought of him, but as much as she could, she kept the subject away from her thoughts.

"He's better off," she said to herself. "He didn't know anything of the property, and he wasn't fit to possess it. All the troubles of life are over for him."

"What are your plans, Mr. Rugg?" she asked.

"I have a mind to go down to Middleton Hall with you, ma'am. I used to live there years ago, and I might find some of my old cronies."

"For that very reason you must not go," she said, hastily. "They would be asking you all sorts of questions, and you'd be letting out something."

"They wouldn't get nothing out of me."

"If you made no answer it would be as bad. They would suspect you."

"And you, too."

"Precisely."

"It's rather hard, Mrs. Middleton, I can't see my old friends."

"You can make new ones. A man with money can always find friends."

"That's true, ma'am," said Rudolph, brightening up. "Then you recommend me to stay in London."

"In London or anywhere else that you like better. Only don't come within twenty miles of Middleton Hall."

"Well, ma'am, you're wiser than I am, and you know better what it's best to do."

"Of course I do. You are safe in being guided by me."

"But about the money, ma'am. How am I to get that if I don't see you?"

"Once a quarter I will pay in forty pounds to your account at any bank you choose. You can let me know."

"All right, ma'am. It's strange to me to think of having a bank account."

"It need not be strange henceforth. And now, Mr. Rugg, we must part. I must hasten down to Middleton Hall to look after the estate. I have been absent from it now for nearly three months."

"I suppose you are in a hurry to see your young man?" said Rudolph, with a grin.

"Mr. Rugg," said the lady, haughtily, "I beg you will make no reference to my private affairs. You speak as if I were a nursery maid."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am. No offense was meant."

"Then none is taken. But remember my caution."

She stepped into the hansom which was waiting for her, and Rudolph remained standing on the sidewalk.

"She's puttin' on airs," said the tramp, frowning. "She forgets all about her bein' a governess once without five pounds in the world. She acts as if she was a lady born. I don't like it. She may try her airs on others, but not on Rudolph Rugg. He knows a little too much about you, Mrs. Harvey Middleton. Rich as you are, you're in his power, and if he was so inclined, he could bring you down from your high place, so he could."

But Rudolph's anger was only transient. He was too astute not to understand clearly that he could not harm Mrs. Middleton without harming himself quite as much. As things stood, he was securely provided for. No more tramping about the country for him in all weathers. He had enough to lodge and feed him, and provide all the beer and tobacco he could use. This was certainly a comfortable reflection. So he sought out a comfortable lodging and installed himself before night, determined to get what enjoyment he could out of London, and the income he had so foully won.

And Mrs. Middleton, she, too, congratulated herself.

She leaned back in the cab and gave herself up to joyful anticipations of future happiness and security.

"Thank Heaven! I have got rid of that low fellow," she ejaculated, inwardly. "I never want to see the brute again. He was necessary to my purpose, and I employed him, but I should be glad if he would get drowned, or be run over, or end his miserable life in some way, so that I might never see or hear of him again."

But the thought of Rudolph did not long trouble her. She thought rather of handsome Capt. Lovell, whom she loved, and to marry whom she had committed this crime, and the hard woman's face softened, and a smile crept over her face.

"I shall soon see him, my Gregory!" she murmured. "He will soon be mine, and I shall be repaid for my long, wearisome journey."

CHAPTER XXX

CAPT. GREGORY LOVELL

A carriage drove rapidly up the avenue leading to Middleton Hall.

The Hall was not large, but was handsome and well-proportioned, and looked singularly attractive, its gray walls forming a harmonious contrast with the bright green ivy that partially covered them, and the broad, smooth lawn that stretched out in front.

Mrs. Middleton regarded her home with unmingled satisfaction. It was to be her home now as long as she lived. Now that the boy was dead, no one could wrest it from her. She would live there, but not in solitary grandeur. The news of her success would bring Capt. Gregory Lovell to her side, and their marriage would follow as soon as decency would permit. If afterward he should desire to have the name of the residence changed to Lovell Hall, Mrs. Middleton decided that she would not object. Why should she? She had no superstitious love for her present name, while Lovell had for her the charm which love always gives to the name of the loved one.

The housekeeper, stout and matronly, received her mistress at the door.

"Welcome home, Mrs. Middleton," she said. "How long it seems since you went away!"

"How do you do, Sarah?" said her mistress, graciously. "I can assure you I am glad to be back."

"You will find everything in order, mum, I hope and believe," said Sarah. "We expected to see you sooner."

"I hoped to be back sooner, but the business detained me longer than I desired."

"And how did you succeed, mum, if I may be so bold?" inquired the housekeeper, curiously.

"As I expected, Sarah. I found that the poor boy was dead."

"Indeed, mum!"

"I hoped to bring him back with me, according to my poor husband's desire, but it was ordered otherwise by an inscrutable Providence."

Sarah coughed.

"It is very sad," she said, but she looked curiously at her mistress.

She knew very well that this sad news rejoiced the heart of Mrs. Middleton, and the latter knew that she could not for a moment impose upon her clear-sighted housekeeper. But the farce must be kept up for the sake of appearances.

"Come up to my chamber with me, Sarah. I want to ask

you what has been going on since I was away. Have you heard from Lady Lovell's family? Are they all well?"

Lady Lovell was the mother of Capt. Gregory Lovell, and the question was earnestly put.

"They are all well except the captain," answered Sarah.

"Is he sick?" demanded her mistress, turning upon her swiftly.

"No, mum; I only meant to say the captain was gone away."

"Gone away! When? Where?"

"He's ordered to India, I believe, mum. He went away a month ago."

Mrs. Middleton sank into her chair quite overcome. Her joy was clouded, for the reward of her long and toilsome journey was snatched from her.

"Did he not leave any message?" she asked. "Did he not call before he went away?"

"Yes, mum. He left a note."

"Give it to me quick. Why did you not mention it before?"

"It's the first chance I got, mum. The letter is in my own chamber. I took the best care of it. I will get it directly."

"Do go, Sarah."

Mrs. Middleton awaited the return of Sarah with nervous impatience.

Perhaps the captain had thrown her over after all, and, loving him as she did, this would have torn the heart of the intriguing woman, who, cold and selfish as she was so far as others were concerned, really loved the handsome captain.

Sarah speedily reappeared with the letter.

"Here it is, mum," she said. "I have taken the best care of it."

Mrs. Middleton tore it open with nervous haste. This is the way it ran:

MY DEAR JANE: I am about to set out for India

—not willingly, but my regiment is ordered there, and I must obey or quit the service. This, as you well know, I cannot do; for, apart from my official pay, I have but a paltry two hundred pounds a year, and that is barely enough to pay my tailor's bill. I am sorry to go away in your absence. If I were only sure you would bring home good news, I could afford to sell my commission and wait. But it is so uncertain that I cannot take the risk.

I need not say, my dear Jane, how anxious I am to have all the impediments to our union removed. I am compelled to be mercenary. It is, alas! necessary for me, as a younger son, to marry a woman with money. I shall be happy indeed if interest and love go hand in hand, as they will if your absolute claim to your late husband's estate is proved beyond a doubt. I append my India address, and shall anxiously expect a communication from you on your return. If you have been successful, I will arrange to return at once, and our union can be solemnized without delay. Once more, farewell.

Your devoted
GREGORY LOVELL

Mrs. Middleton, after reading this letter, breathed a sigh of relief.

He was still hers, and she had only to call him back. There would be a vexatious delay, but that must be submitted to. She had feared to lose him, and this apprehension, at least, might be laid aside.

To some the letter would have seemed too mercenary. Even Mrs. Middleton could not help suspecting that, between love and interest, the latter was far the most powerful in the mind of Capt. Lovell. But she purposely closed her eyes to this unpleasant suspicion. She was in love with the handsome captain, and it was the great object of her life to become his wife. She decided to answer the letter immediately.

Her desk was at hand, and she opened it at once, and wrote a brief letter to her absent lover.

DEAR GREGORY: I have just returned. I am deeply disappointed to find you absent; for, my darling, I have succeeded. I have legal proof—proof that cannot be disputed — that the boy, my husband's cousin, is dead. The poor boy was accidentally killed. I have the sworn affidavit of the man who took him to America, and who was his constant companion there.

It is a sad fate for the poor boy. I sincerely deplore his tragical end—he was run over by a train—yet—is it wicked?—my grief is mitigated by the thought that it removes every obstacle to our union. I do not for an instant charge you with interested motives. I am sure of your love, but I also comprehend the necessities of your position. You have been brought up as a gentleman, and you have the tastes of a gentleman. You cannot surrender your social position.

It is necessary that, if you marry, you should have an adequate income to live upon. My darling Gregory, I am proud and happy in the thought that I can make you such. You know my estate. The rental is two thousand pounds, and that is enough to maintain our social rank. Come home, then, as soon as you receive this letter. I am awaiting you impatiently, and can hardly reconcile myself to the delay that must be. Make it as short as possible, and let me hear from you at once.

Your own
JANE MIDDLETON

There was unexpected delay in the reception of this letter. It was three months before it came into the hands of Capt. Lovell. When at length it was received, he read it with a mixture of emotions.

“Decidedly,” he said, removing the cigar from his mouth, “the old girl is fond of me. I wish I were fond of her, for I suppose I must marry her. It will be rather a bad pill to swallow, but it is well gilded.

Two thousand pounds a year are not to be thrown away by a fellow in my straits. The prospect might be brighter, but I suppose I have no right to complain. It will make me comfortable for life. I must take care to have the estate settled upon me, and then the sooner the old girl dies the better.”

So Capt. Lovell wrote at once, saying that he would return home as soon as he could make arrangements for doing so—that every day would seem a month till he could once more embrace his dear Jane. The letter was signed, “Your devoted Gregory.”

Mrs. Middleton read it with unfeigned delight. Her plans had succeeded, and the reward would soon be hers.

But there was fresh delay. Arrangements to return could not be made so easily as Capt. Lovell anticipated. It was seven months from the day that Mrs. Middleton reached England when Capt. Lovell was driven to his hotel in London. Meanwhile events had occurred which were to have an effect upon Mrs. Middleton's plans.



CHAPTER XXXI

TONY ASTONISHES HIS OLD FRIENDS

"Tony," said George Spencer, one evening, "you have been making wonderful progress in your studies. In six months you have accomplished as much as I did at boarding school in two years, when at your age."

"Do you really mean it, Mr. Spencer?" said Tony, gratified.

"I am quite in earnest."

"I am very glad of it," said Tony. "When I began I was almost discouraged. I was so much behind boys of my age."

"And now your attainments raise you above the average. Your tutor told me so yesterday, when I made inquiries."

"I am rejoiced to hear it, Mr. Spencer. I was very much ashamed of myself at first, and did not like to speak before your friends for fear they would find out what sort of a life I had led. That is what made me work so hard."

"Well, Tony, you may congratulate yourself on having succeeded. I think you can venture now to take a little vacation."

"A vacation! I don't need one."

"Suppose it were spent in Europe?"

"What!" exclaimed Tony, eagerly, "you don't think of our going abroad?"

"Yes. The house with which I am connected wants me to go abroad on business. If I go you may go with me if you would like it."

"Like it!" exclaimed Tony, impetuously. "There is nothing I would like better."

"So I supposed," said George Spencer, smiling. "I may as well tell you that our passage is taken for next Wednesday, by the *Coronia*."

"And this is Friday evening. How soon it seems!"

"There won't be much preparation to make—merely packing your trunk."

"Mr. Spencer," said Tony, "I want to ask a favor."

"What is it?"

"I have told you about being employed at a country hotel, just before I came to the city and found you."

"Yes."

"I would like to go back there for a day, just to see how all my old friends are."

"You don't mean to apply again for your old place?"

"Not unless you turn me off, and I have to find work somewhere."

"Turn you off, Tony! Why, I shouldn't know how to get along without you. You are like a younger brother to me," said the young man, earnestly.

"Thank you, Mr. Spencer. You seem like an older brother to me. Sometimes I can hardly believe that I was once a tramp."

"It was your misfortune, Tony, not your fault. So you want to go back and view your former home?"

"Yes, Mr. Spencer."

"Then you had better start to-morrow morning, so as to be back in good time to prepare for the journey."

"Do you know, Mr. Spencer," said Tony, "I've got an idea. I'll go back wearing the same clothes I had on when I left there."

"Have you got them still?"

"Yes, I laid them away, just to remind me of my old life. I'll take my other clothes and after a while I can put them on."

"What is your idea in doing this, Tony?" asked the young man.

"I want to give them a surprise."

"Very well, do as you please. Only don't stay away too long."

* * * * *

Tony proceeded to carry out the plan he had proposed. He traveled by rail to a village near by, and then with his bundle suspended to a stick, took up his march to the tavern.

He entered the familiar stable yard. All looked as it did the day he left. There was only one person in the yard, and that one Tony recognized at once as his old enemy, Sam Payson, who appeared to be filling his old position, as stableboy.

"Hello, Sam!" said Tony, whose entrance had not been observed.

Sam looked up and whistled.

"What! have you come back?" he said, not appearing overjoyed at the sight of Tony.

"Yes, Sam," said Tony.

"Where have you been all the time?"

"In New York part of the time."

"What have you been doing for a living?"

"Well, I lived with a gentleman there."

"What did you do—black his boots?"

"Not exactly."

"Did he turn you off?"

"No; but he's going to Europe next Wednesday."

"So you're out of a place?"

"I have no employment."

"What made you come back here?" demanded Sam, suspiciously.

"I thought I'd like to see you all again."

"That don't go down," said Sam, roughly. "I know well enough what you're after."

"What am I after?"

"You're after my place. You're hoping Mr. Porter will take you on again. But it's no use. There ain't any chance for you."

"How long have you been back again, Sam?"

"Three months, and I am goin' to stay, too. You got me turned off once, but you can't do it again."

"I don't want to."

"Oh, no, I presume not," sneered Sam. "Of course, you don't. You've got on the same clothes you wore away, haven't you?"

"Yes, it's the same suit, but I've got some more things in my bundle."

"I guess you haven't made your fortune, by the looks."

"The fact is, Sam, I haven't earned much since I went away."

"I knew you wouldn't. You ain't so smart as people think."

"I didn't know anybody thought me smart."

"James, the hostler, is always talking you up to me, but I guess I can rub along as well as you."

"You talk as if I was your enemy, Sam, instead of your friend."

"I don't want such a friend. You're after my place, in spite of all you say."

Just then James, the hostler, came out of the stable.

"What! is it you, Tony?" he asked, cordially.

"Yes, James; I hope you're well."

"Tiptop; and how are you?" asked the hostler, examining Tony, critically.

"I'm well."

"Have you been doing well?"

"I haven't wanted for anything. I've been with a gentleman in New York."

Here Mr. Porter appeared on the scene.

He, too, recognized Tony.

"What! back again, Tony?" he said.

"I thought I'd just look in, sir."

"Do you want a place?"

"What sort of a place?"

"Your old place."

Sam heard this, and looked the picture of dismay. He took it for granted that Tony would accept at once, and privately determined that if he did he would give him a flogging, if it were a possible thing.

He was both relieved and surprised when Tony answered:

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Porter, but I wouldn't like to cut out Sam. Besides, I have a place engaged in New York."

"I would rather have you than Sam, any day."

"Thank you, sir, but I've made an engagement, and can't break it."

"How long are you going to stay here?"

"If you've a spare room, I'll stay over till to-morrow."

"All right. Go into the office, and they'll give you one."

"I say, Tony," said Sam, after the landlord had gone, "you're a better fellow than I thought you were. I thought you'd take my place when it was offered you."

"You see you were mistaken, Sam. I'll see you again."

Tony went into the hotel—went up to a small chamber that had been assigned him, changed his clothes for a handsome suit in his bundle, took a handsome gold watch and chain from his pocket and displayed them on his vest, and then came down again.

As he entered the yard again, Sam stared in amazement.

"It can't be you, Tony!" he said. "Where'd you get them clothes? And that watch?"

"I came by them honestly, Sam."

"But I can't understand it," said Sam, scratching his head. "Ain't you poor, and out of work?"

"I'm out of work, but not poor. I've been adopted by a rich gentleman, and am going to sail for Europe on Wednesday."

"Cracky! who ever heard the like? Wouldn't he adopt me, too?"

"I believe there is no vacancy," said Tony, smiling.

"Was that the reason you wouldn't take my place?"

"One reason."

"James!" called Sam, "just look at Tony, now."

James stared, and when explanation was made, heartily congratulated our hero.

"Sam," said Tony, producing a couple of showy neckties, "to prove to you that I am not your enemy, I have brought you these."

"They're stunning!" exclaimed the enraptured Sam. "I always thought you was a good fellow, Tony. Are they really for me?"

"To be sure they are, but I'm afraid, Sam, you didn't always think quite so well of me."

“Well, I do now. You’re a tramp.”

“And, James, I’ve brought you a present, too.” Here Tony produced a handsome silver watch with a silver chain appended. “It’s to remember me by.”

“I’d remember you without it, Tony, but I’m very much obliged to you.

It’s a real beauty.”

When the landlord was told of Tony’s good fortune, he was as much surprised as the rest. Our hero was at once changed to the handsomest room in the hotel, and was made quite a lion during the remainder of his stay.

There is something in success after all.

“Good-by, Tony,” said Sam, heartily, when our hero left the next day. “You’re a gentleman, and I always said so.”

“Thank you, Sam. Good luck to you!” responded Tony, smiling.

“I’m a much finer fellow than when I was a tramp,” he said to himself. “Sam says so, and he ought to know. I suppose it’s the way of the world. And now for Europe!”

CHAPTER XXXII

TONY’S BAD LUCK

Two weeks later Tony and his friend were guests at a popular London hotel, not far from Charing Cross.

“We will postpone business till we have seen a little of London,” said George Spencer. “Luckily my business is not of a pressing character, and it can wait.”

“You have been in London before, Mr. Spencer,” said Tony. “I am afraid you will find it a bore going round with me.”

“Not at all. I spent a week here when a boy of twelve, and saw nothing thoroughly, so I am at your disposal. Where shall we go first?”

“I should like to see Buckingham Palace, where the king lives.”

“He doesn’t live there much. However, we’ll go to see it, but we’ll take the Parliament House and Westminster Abbey on the way.”

In accordance with this program they walked—for the distance was but small—to Westminster Abbey. It would be out of place for me to describe here that wonderful church where so much of the rank and talent of past ages lies buried. It is enough to say that Tony enjoyed it highly. He afterward visited the Parliament House. This occupied another hour. When they came out Mr. Spencer said: “Tony, I have got to go to my banker’s. Do you care to come?”

“No, thank you, Mr. Spencer, I would rather walk round by myself.”

“Very well, Tony, just as you please. Only don’t get lost.”

“I’ll take care of that; I’m used to cities.”

“You are not used to London. It is one of the blindest cities in the world; it is a complete labyrinth.”

“I don’t mean to get lost. You’ll find me at the hotel at four o’clock.”

“Very well. That will be early enough.”

So George Spencer went his way, and Tony set out upon his rambles.

He found plenty to amuse him in the various buildings and sights of the great metropolis. But after a while he began to wonder where he was. He had strayed into a narrow street, scarcely more than a lane, with a row of tumble-down dwellings on either side.

“There’s nothing worth seeing here,” said our hero. “I’ll inquire my way to Charing Cross.”

He went into a small beer house, and preferred his request.

“Charing Cross?” repeated the publican. “It’s a good ways from ’ere.”

“How far?” asked Tony.

“A mile easy, and there’s no end of turns.”

“Just start me, then,” said Tony, “and I’ll reach there. Which way is it?”

“Turn to the left when you go out of this shop.”

“All right, and thank you.”

Tony noticed that there were three or four men seated at tables in the back part of the shop, but he had not the curiosity to look at them.

If he had, he would have been startled, for among these men was Rudolph Rugg, more disreputable than ever in appearance, for he had been drinking deeply for the last six months. He stared at Tony as one dazed, for he supposed him dead long ago at the bottom of a well, three thousand miles away.

“What’s the matter, Rugg?” asked his companion. “You look as if you’d seen a ghost.”

“So I have,” muttered Rugg, starting for the door.

“Where are you going?”

“I’ve got a headache,” said Rudolph.

“You’ve left your drink.”

“I don’t want it.

“What’s come over him?” said his late companion, in surprise.

“No matter. He’ll be back soon.”

Rudolph swiftly followed Tony. He wanted to find out whether it was really the boy whom he had sought to murder or not. Then, what did his appearance in London

mean? Was he possibly in search of him—Rugg? It was wonderful, certainly. How had he obtained the means of coming to England?—as a gentleman, too, for Rudolph had not failed to notice his rich clothes. Had he obtained rich and powerful friends, and was he in search of the inheritance that had been wrongfully kept from him?

Rudolph asked himself all these questions, but he could not answer one.

“If I could only ask him,” he thought, “but that wouldn’t be safe.”

By this time he had come in sight of Tony, who was walking along slowly, not feeling in any particular hurry.

An idea struck Rudolph.

A boy who had been employed in begging was standing on the sidewalk.

“Gi’ me a penny, sir,” he said.

Rudolph paused.

“Walk along with me, and I’ll show you how you can earn half a crown,” he said.

“Will you?” said the boy, his face brightening.

“Yes, I will, and you won’t find it hard work, either.”

“Go ahead, guv’nor.”

“Do you see that boy ahead?”

“That young gentleman?”

“Yes,” said Rudolph.

“I see him.”

“I want you to manage to get him up to my room; it’s No. 7 — street, top floor, just at the head of the stairs.”

“Shall I tell him you want to see him?”

“No, he wouldn’t come. Tell him your poor grandfather is sick in bed—anything you like, only get him to come.”

“S’posin’ he won’t come?”

“Then follow him, and find out where he is staying. Do you understand?”

“Yes, guv’nor. I’ll bring him.”

“Go ahead, and I’ll hurry round to the room. I’ll be in bed.”

“All right.”

The boy was a sharp specimen of the juvenile London beggar. He was up to the usual tricks of his class, and quite competent to the task which Rudolph had engaged him to perform.

He came up to Tony, and then began to whimper.

“What’s the matter, Johnny?” said Tony, addressing him by the usual New York name for an unknown boy.

“Oh, my poor grandfather is so sick!” said the boy.

“What’s the matter with him?”

“I don’t know. I guess he’s goin’ to die.”

“Why don’t you send for a doctor?”

“He wouldn’t come—we’re so poor.”

“Do you live near here?”

“Oh, yes, sir; only a little way.”

“I want to go to Charing Cross—is it much out of the way?”

“No, sir; it’s right on the way there.”

“Then, if you’ll show me the way to Charing Cross afterward, I will go round with you and look at your grandfather. Perhaps I can do something for him.”

“Oh, sir, how kind you are! I know’d you was a gentleman when I fust saw you.”

“When was your grandfather taken sick?”

“Two days ago,” said the boy.

“Is he in bed?”

“Yes, sir. Leastways, he was when I came out. We didn’t have no breakfast.”

“I am sorry for that. Don’t you want to buy something to take to him?”

“If you’ll give me a shillin’, sir, I’ll ask him what he can eat. Sick folks can’t eat the same things as the rest of us.”

“To be sure. You are right. Well, here’s a shilling.”

“The boy little thinks that I have known many a time what it is to bewithout breakfast, or money to buy any,” thought Tony. “I’ll do something for the poor man, if only to show how grateful I am for my own good fortune.”

He followed the boy for about ten minutes, until they reached rather a shabby building. This was No. 7.

“Come right up after me,” said the boy.

The two went up till they reached the room indicated by Rudolph. The boy pushed the door open.

A sound of groaning proceeded from the bed.

“Grandfather, I’ve brought a kind young gentle-man,” said the boy.

“Come here,” muttered the person in bed.

Tony came up to the bed.

In an instant Rudolph had thrown off the clothes, and had him seized by the arm.

“There’s your money, boy. Go!” he said to the other, flinging a half crown.

“I’ve got you at last!” he shouted. “Now, you young villain, I’ll get even with you!”

His face was almost fiendish with rage, as he uttered these words.

CHAPTER XXXIII
VENGEANCE

To say that Tony was not startled would not be true. Without a moment's warning he found himself in the power of his old enemy—completely in his power, knowing, too, the desperate character of the man which would let him stick at nothing.

Rudolph enjoyed his evident surprise.

"I've been waiting for this," he said. "It's a great joy to me to have you here in my power."

By this time Tony had collected himself, and had become composed.

"Rudolph," he said, "what makes you hate me so?"

"Haven't you tried to injure me—didn't you get me arrested? Do you forget that night in the old miser's hut?"

"No, I don't forget it, but you forced me to act as I did. But even if I did injure you, you took your revenge."

"When, and how?"

"When you threw me into the well. How could you do such a dark deed?"

"What had I done that you should seek to murder me?"

"How did you get out?" asked Rudolph, giving way to curiosity.

"I climbed out."

"How?"

"By means of the wall that lined the well. Finally I got hold of the rope."

"So that was the way, was it? I ought to have made surer of your fate."

"How could you do that?"

"By throwing some rocks down on you," answered the tramp, with a malignant frown.

"I am glad I have not such a wicked disposition as you, Rudolph," said

Tony, looking at him fixedly.

"Take care how you insult me, boy!" said Rudolph, angrily.

"I have no wish to insult you. Now tell me why you have lured me here? I suppose you hired the boy."

"I did, and he did the work well," said the tramp, triumphantly.

"Well, now, I am here, what do you want of me?"

"First, tell me how you happen to be in London? Did you know I was here?"

"I knew you crossed the Atlantic."

"How?"

"I saw you buy your ticket."

"What!" exclaimed the tramp, in surprise. "Did you reach New York so soon?"

"Yes. I lost my situation at the inn, for they did not believe my story about having been thrown down the well by a Quaker."

Rudolph laughed.

"It was a good disguise," he said. "So they discharged you? That was good."

"I did not think so at the time, but it proved to be the luckiest thing that could happen to me."

"How was that?"

"It led me to go to New York. There I found a rich and generous friend. I have been with him ever since."

"As a servant?"

"No; as his adopted brother. He supplied me with teachers, and in little more than six months I have acquired as much as most boys do in two or three years."

"So you have gone in for education, have you?" said Rudolph, sneering.

"Yes. Could I go in for anything better?"

"And you consider yourself a young gentleman now, do you?"

"That is the rank I hold in society," said Tony, calmly.

"And you forget that you were once Tony the Tramp?"

"No, Rudolph, I have not forgotten that. It was not my fault, and I am not ashamed of it. But I should be ashamed if I had not left that kind of life as soon as I was able."

"By Heaven, you shall go back to it!" said Rudolph, malignantly.

"I never will," answered Tony, gently, but firmly.

"I will force you to it."

"Neither you nor anyone else can force me to it. I will black boots in the streets first."

"That will suit me just as well," said the tramp, laughing maliciously. "You have grown too proud. I want to lower your pride, young popinjay!"

"I am not afraid of anything you can do to me, Rudolph," said Tony, bravely.

"Suppose I choose to kill you?"

"You won't dare do it. We are not in the woods now."

Tony had hit the truth. Rudolph did not dare to kill him, though he would have been glad to. But he knew that he would himself be arrested, and he had more to live for now than formerly. He had an income, and comfortably provided for, and he did not choose to give up this comfortable and independent life.

"No," he said, "I won't kill you; but I will be revenged for all that. First I will keep you from that generous friend of yours."

"What will he think has become of me?" thought Tony, uneasily.

A thought came to him. He would appeal to the man's love of money.

"Rudolph," he said, "I am afraid my friend will be uneasy about me. If you will let me go I will give you ten pounds that I have in my pocket."

"I don't believe you have so much money," said Rudolph, cunningly.

Tony fell into the snare unsuspectingly. He drew out his pocketbook and displayed two five-pound notes on the Bank of England.

Rudolph quickly snatched them from him.

"They are mine already," he said, with a mocking laugh.

"So I see," said Tony, coolly; "but I was about to offer you fifty pounds besides."

"Have you the money in your pocketbook?"

"No, I haven't, but I could get it from Mr. Spencer?"

"It don't go down, Tony," said Rudolph, shaking his head. "I am not so much in need of money as to pay so dearly for it. Listen to me. If you have been lucky, so have I. I have an income, safe and sure, of one hundred and fifty pounds."

"You have!" exclaimed Tony, surprised.

"Yes."

"Do you hold any position?"

"No; I merely promise to keep my mouth shut."

"Is it about me?"

"Yes. The long and the short of it is that there is an English estate, bringing in two thousand pounds rental, that of right belongs to you."

"To me—an estate of two thousand pounds a year!" exclaimed Tony, in astonishment.

"Yes; the party who owns it pays me an income as hush money. I have only to say the word, and the estate will be yours, Tony."

"Say the word, Rudolph, and you shall have the same income," entreated Tony. "It isn't the money I so much care for, but I want to know who I am. I want to be restored to my rightful place in society. Is my mother living?"

"No."

"Nor my father?"

"No."

Tony looked sober.

"Then I should not care so much for the money. Still, it ought to be mine."

"Of course it ought," said Rudolph, gloating over the boy's emotion.

"You shall lose nothing by telling me—by becoming my friend. I will never refer to the past—never speak of what happened in America."

"No doubt," sneered Rudolph, "but it can't be."

"Why can't it be?"

"Because I hate you!" hissed the tramp, with a baleful look. "Not another word. It's no use. I shall lock you up here for the present, while I am out. When I come back I will let you know what I am going to do to you."

He left the room, locking the door behind him.

Tony sat down to reflect upon the strange position in which he was placed.

CHAPTER XXXIV

MRS. MIDDLETON AND HER LOVER

When Rudolph left Tony imprisoned he began to think over the situation with regard to his own interest.

He was already dissatisfied with the income he received from Mrs. Middleton; though at the time it seemed to him large, he found that he could easily spend more. He did not have expensive lodgings—in fact, they were plain, and quite within his means, but he drank and gambled, and both these amusements were expensive. He had already made up his mind to ask for a larger income, and Tony's offer stimulated him to ask at once.

"If Mrs. Middleton won't, the boy will," he said to himself.

Mrs. Middleton was in London. In fact, at that moment she was *tête-à-tête* with Capt. Lovell, to whom she had been formally betrothed. He had satisfied himself that the prospects were all right, and then had renewed his offer. The marriage was to take place in a month, and Mrs. Middleton was in town to make suitable preparations for it. She was perfectly happy, for she was about to marry a man she loved.

As for Capt. Lovell, he was well enough contented. He did not care a farthing for the lady as regards love, but he was decidedly in love with her property.

"It will make me comfortable for life," he said, with a shrug of the shoulders, "and after marriage, I can pay as little attention to Mrs. Lovell as I choose. She must be content with marrying my name."

The widow had taken handsome apartments at a West End boarding house; there she received callers.

Capt. Lovell was lounging in an easy-chair looking rather bored. His fiancée was inspecting an array of dry goods which had been sent in from a fancy London shop.

"Don't you think this silk elegant, Gregory?" she asked, displaying a pattern.

"Oh, ah, yes, I suppose so," he answered, with a yawn.

"I would like to have your taste, Gregory."

"I have no taste, my dear Mrs. Middleton, about such matters."

"Don't you think it will become me?"

"Why, to be sure; everything becomes you, you know."

She laughed.

"Would a yellow turban become me?" she asked.

"Well, perhaps not," he said; "but of course you know best."

"How little you men know about a lady's dress!"

"I should think so. The fact is, my dear Mrs. Middleton, that part of my education was neglected."

"When I am your wife, Gregory, I shall always appeal to your taste."

"Will you?" he said, rather frightened. "Pon my honor, I hope you won't, now."

"And I shall expect you to consult me about your wardrobe."

"What! about my trousers and coats? Really, that's very amusing, 'pon my honor it is."

"Don't you think I feel an interest in how my dear Gregory is dressed?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"But I do, and shall I tell you why?"

"If you want to."

"Because I love you," she said, softly, and she rose from her chair, and crossing, laid her hand affectionately on his shoulder.

He shrank, just the least in the world, and felt annoyed, but didn't like to say so. She might be angry, and though he did not love her, he did want to marry her, and so escape from his money troubles.

"Of course, I'm ever so much obliged to you," he said, "and all that sort of thing."

"And you love me, Gregory, don't you?" she asked, tenderly.

"Deuce take her, I wish she'd stop," he said to himself. "She makes me awful uncomfortable."

"Don't you love me, Gregory?"

"If I didn't love you, do you think I would have asked you to become Mrs. Lovell?" he said, evading the question.

"To be sure, Gregory," she replied, trying to look satisfied.

"And now I really must go—I must, 'pon honor!" he said, rising.

"You have been here so short a time," she pleaded.

"But I promised to be at the club. I'm to meet a fellow officer, and it's the hour now."

"Then I must let you go. But you'll come again soon?"

"Yes, 'pon honor!" and the captain kissed his hand to his fiancée.

"I wonder if he really loves me?" she said to herself, wistfully.

At this moment the servant entered.

"Please, ma'am, there is a rough-looking man below who says he wants to see you. His name is Rugg."

"Admit him," said Mrs. Middleton, looking annoyed.

"Why are you here, Mr. Rugg?" demanded Mrs. Middleton, coolly.

"On business," said the tramp, throwing himself, uninvited, upon the same chair from which Capt. Lovell had just risen.

Mrs. Middleton flushed with anger, but she did not dare to treat his insolence as it deserved.

"What business can you have with me?" she asked, coldly.

"It's about the allowance."

"It was paid punctually, was it not?"

"Yes."

"Then you can have no business with me. Have I not told you that you are not to call upon me at any time? My agent attends to that."

"I want the allowance raised," said Rudolph, abruptly.

"Raised?"

"Yes, you must double it."

Mrs. Middleton was now really angry.

"I never heard such insolence," she said. "You have taken your trouble for nothing. I shall not give you a pound more."

"You'd better, Mrs. Middleton," said Rudolph, "or I may tell all I know."

"You would only ruin yourself, and lose your entire income."

"I should ruin you, too."

"Not at all. No one would believe you against me. Besides, are you ready to be tried for murder?"

"Who has committed murder?"

"You have."

"Prove it."

"Didn't you kill the boy?"

"No."

"You swore to me he was dead."

"Suppose he didn't die."

"You are wasting your time, Mr. Rugg," said Mrs. Middleton, coldly. "Of course I understand your motives. You have been extravagant, and wasted your money, hoping to get more out of me. But it is useless."

"You'll be sorry for this, ma'am," said Rugg, angrily.

"I don't think I shall. Before doing anything that you will be sorry for, consider that to a man in your position the income I give you is very liberal."

"Liberal! It isn't one-tenth of what you get."

"Very true, but the case is different."

"You may believe me or not, but the boy is alive, and I know where he is."

Mrs. Middleton did not believe one word of what he said. She was convinced that Tony had been killed by the man before her, and was indignant at the trick which she thought he was trying to play upon her. She felt that if she yielded to his importunity, it would only be the beginning of a series of demands. She had courage and firmness, and she decided to discourage him once for all in his exactions.

"I don't believe you," she said, "and I am not afraid."

"Then you won't increase my income?" he said.

"No, I will not. Neither now nor at any other time will I do it. What I have agreed to do I will do, but I will not give you a penny more. Do you understand me, Mr. Rugg?"

"I believe I do," said Rudolph, rising, "and I tell you you'll be sorry for what you are saying."

"I will take the risk," she said, contemptuously.

Rudolph's face was distorted with passion as he left the room.

"I hate her more than the boy," he muttered. "He shall have the estate."

CHAPTER XXXV

TONY'S ESCAPE

When Tony found himself left a prisoner in his enemy's room, he did not immediately make an effort to escape. In fact, he didn't feel particularly alarmed.

"I am in a large city, and there are other lodgers in this building. There can be no danger. I will wait a while and think over what Rudolph has told me. Can it be true that I am heir to a large estate in England, and that he can restore me to it if he will? He can have no motive in deceiving me. It must be true."

Tony felt that he would give a great deal to know more. Where was this estate, and who now held it? It occurred to him that somewhere about the room he might find some clue to the mystery. He immediately began to explore it.

Rudolph was not a literary man. He had neither books nor papers, whose telltale testimony might convict him. In fact, the best of his personal possessions was very small. A few clothes were lying about the room. Tony decided to examine the pockets of these, in the hope of discovering something in his interest. Finally he found in the pocket of a shooting coat a small memorandum book, in which a few entries, chiefly of bets, had been made. In these Tony felt no interest, and he was about to throw down the book when his eye caught this entry:

*"Dead broke. Must write to Mrs. Middleton
for more money."*

Tony's heart beat rapidly.

This must be the person from whom Rudolph received his income, and, by consequence, the person who was in fraudulent possession of the estate that was rightfully his.

Mrs. Middleton!

"I wish I knew where she lives," thought our hero. "No doubt there are hundreds of the name in England."

This might be, but, probably, there was but one Mrs. Middleton in possession of an estate worth two thousand pounds rental.

"I am on the track," thought Tony. "Now let me get away, and consult George Spencer."

It was easier said than done. The door was locked, and it was too strong to break down.

"There must be somebody in the room below," thought Tony. "I'll pound till they hear me."

He jumped up and down with such force that it did attract attention in the room below. Presently he heard a querulous voice at the keyhole:

"What's the matter? Are you mad?"

"No, but I'm locked in," said Tony. "Can't you let me out?"

"I have no key to the door, but the landlady has."

"Won't you please ask her to let me out? I'll be ever so much obliged."

"Stop pounding, then."

"I will."

Scarcely two minutes had elapsed when a key was heard in the lock, and the door was opened.

"How came you here, sir?" asked the landlady—a short, stout woman—suspiciously.

"The gentleman locked me in—in a joke," said Tony.

"Maybe you're a burglar," said the landlady, eyeing him doubtfully.

Tony laughed.

"Do I look like it?" he asked.

"Well, no," the landlady admitted, "but appearances are deceitful."

"Not with me, I assure you. I am really sorry to put you to so much trouble to let me out. Won't you accept of this?" and Tony produced a half sovereign.

"Really, sir, I see that you are quite the gentleman," said the landlady, pocketing the piece with avidity. "Can't I do anything for you?"

"Only if you'd be kind enough to give this to the gentleman when he returns."

Tony hastily wrote a line on a card, and gave it to the now complacent dame.

Fifteen minutes after Tony's departure Rudolph returned.

He sprang upstairs, only to find the room empty and the bird flown.

"What's come of the boy?" he exclaimed, in dismay. "How did he get out?"

He summoned the landlady quickly.

"Do you know anything of the boy that was in my room, Mrs. Jones?"

"Yes, Mr. Rugg, I let him out. He said you locked him in for fun."

"Humph! What else did he say?"

"He left this card for you."

Rugg seized it hastily, and read with startled eyes:

I am at Morley's. Come and see me soon, or I will go to Mrs. Middleton.

Tony

"Confusion! where did the boy find out?" thought the tramp. "I must do something, or I am ruined."

It was a mystery to him how Tony had learned so much, and he naturally concluded that he knew a good deal more. He felt that no time was to be lost, and started at once for Morley's. Inquiring for Tony, he was at once admitted to the presence of Tony and George Spencer.

"So you got my card?" said Tony.

"Yes. What do you know about Mrs. Middleton?" demanded Rudolph.

"That she possesses the estate which ought to be mine. That's about it, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Rudolph; "but you can't get it without me."

"Why not?"

"I was the man that was hired to abduct you when you was a boy."

"Can you prove that?" asked Spencer.

"I can."

"Will your story be believed?"

"Yes. The tenantry will remember me. I was one of them at the time."

"Are you ready to help my young friend here to recover his rights?" asked Spencer.

"This morning I said no. Now I say yes, if he'll do the fair thing by me."

A conference was entered into, and a bargain was finally made. Rudolph was to receive two hundred pounds a year as a reward for his services, if successful.

When this arrangement had been completed, an appointment was made for the next morning, at which hour a lawyer of repute was also present.

After listening attentively to Rudolph's statement, he said, decisively:

"Your young friend has a strong case, but I advise you to see Mrs. Middleton privately. It may not be necessary to bring the matter into court, and this would be preferable, as it would avoid scandal."

"I put myself in your hands," said Tony, promptly.

"Mrs. Harvey Middleton is in London," said the lawyer. "I will call this afternoon."

CHAPTER XXXVI

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Mrs. Harvey Middleton sat in her boudoir, trying to read a novel. But it failed to interest her. She felt uneasy, she scarcely knew why. The evening previous she had been at the Haymarket Theater, and had been struck by a boy's face. Ten feet from her sat Tony, with his friend, George Spencer. He looked wonderfully like his father as she remembered him, and she was startled. She did not know Tony, but Rugg's angry warning struck her.

"Was he right? Can this be the boy I have so much reason to dread?" she asked herself.

She was thinking of this when the servant entered the room with a card.

"C. Barry," she repeated, "wishes to see Mrs. Middleton on business of the greatest importance."

"Ask him to come up," she said, uneasily.

It was the lawyer, as the reader may have suspected.

"Mrs. Middleton," he said, with a bow. "I must apologize for my intrusion."

"You say your business is important?" said the lady.

"It is—of the first importance."

"Explain yourself, I beg."

"I appear before you, madam, in behalf of your late husband's cousin, Anthony Middleton, who is the heir of the estate which you hold in trust."

It was out now, and Mrs. Middleton was at bay.

"There is no such person," she said. "The boy you refer to is dead."

"What proof have you of his decease?"

"I have the sworn statement of the man who saw him die."

"And this man's name?"

"Is Rudolph Rugg."

"I thought so. Mr. Rugg swore falsely. He is ready to contradict his former statement."

"He has been tampered with!" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton, pale with passion.

"That may be," said the lawyer; but he added, significantly: "Not by us."

"The boy is an impostor," said Mrs. Middleton, hotly. "I will not surrender the estate."

"I feel for your disappointment, madam; but I think you are hasty."

"Who will believe the statement of a common tramp?"

"You relied upon it before, madam. But we have other evidence," continued the lawyer.

"What other evidence?"

"The striking resemblance of my young friend to the family."

"Was—was he at the Haymarket Theater last evening?" asked the lady.

"He was. Did you see him?"

"I saw the boy I suppose you mean. He had a slight resemblance to Mr. Middleton."

"He is his image."

"Suppose—suppose this story to be true, what do you offer me?" asked Mrs. Middleton, sullenly.

"An income of three hundred pounds from the estate," said the lawyer.

"If the matter comes to court, this Rugg, I am bound to tell you, has an ugly story to tell, in which you are implicated."

Mrs. Middleton knew well enough what it meant. If the conspiracy should be disclosed, she would be ostracized socially. She rapidly made up her mind.

"Mr. Barry," she said, "I will accept your terms, on a single condition."

"Name it, madam."

"That you will give me six weeks' undisturbed possession of the estate, keeping this matter secret meanwhile."

"If I knew your motive I might consent."

"I will tell you in confidence. Within that time I am to be married."

The abrupt disclosure of this matter might break off the marriage."

"May I ask the name of the bridegroom?"

"Capt. Gregory Lovell."

The lawyer smiled. He knew of Capt. Lovell, and owed him a grudge. He suspected that the captain was mercenary in his wooing, and he thought that it would be a fitting revenge to let matters go on.

"I consent, upon my own responsibility," he said.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Middleton, with real gratitude.

She would not lose the man she loved after all.

A month later the marriage of Capt. Gregory Lovell, of her majesty's service, and Mrs. Harvey Middleton, of Middleton Hall, was celebrated.

There was a long paragraph in the morning *Post*, and Mrs. Lovell was happy.

When, a week later, at Paris, the gallant captain was informed of the trick that had been played upon him, there was a terrible scene. He cursed his wife, and threatened to leave her.

"But, Gregory, I have three hundred pounds income," she pleaded. "We can live abroad."

"And I have sold myself for that paltry sum!" he said, bitterly.

But he concluded to make the best of a bad bargain. Between them they had an income of five hundred

pounds, and on this they made shift abroad, where living is cheap. But the marriage was not happy. He was brutal at times, and his wife realized sadly that he had never loved her. But she has all the happiness she deserves, and so has he.

Rudolph drank himself to death in six months. So the income which he was to receive made but a slight draft upon the Middleton estate.

And Tony! No longer Tony the Tramp, but the Hon. Anthony Middleton, of Middleton Hall—he has just completed a course at Oxford, and is now the possessor of an education which will help fit him for the responsibilities he is to assume. His frank, off-hand manner makes him an immense favorite with the circle to which he now belongs.

He says little of his early history, and it is seldom thought of now. He has made a promise to his good friend, George Spencer, to visit the United States this year, and will doubtless do so. He means at that time to visit once more the scenes with which he became familiar when he was only Tony the Tramp.

The End

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