

MASTER
HUMPHREYS'S
CLOCK

BY "BOZ,"

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1841.

WITH
ILLUSTRATIONS BY G. CATTERMOLE & H. K. BROWNE.

BARNABY RUDGE.



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CHAPTER THE SEVENTY-NINTH.

OLD John did not walk near the Golden Key, for between the Golden Key and the Black Lion there lay a wilderness of streets—as everybody knows who is acquainted with the relative bearings of Clerkenwell and Whitechapel—and he was by no means famous for pedestrian exercises. But the Golden Key lies in our way, though it was out of his; so to the Golden Key this chapter goes.

The Golden Key itself, fair emblem of the locksmith's trade, had been pulled down by the rioters, and roughly trampled under foot. But now it was hoisted up again in all the glory of a new coat of paint, and showed more bravely even than in days of yore. Indeed the whole house-front was spruce and trim, and so freshened up throughout, that if there yet remained at large any of the rioters who had been concerned in the attack upon it, the sight of the old, goodly, prosperous dwelling, so revived, must have been to them as gall and wormwood.

The shutters of the shop were closed, however, and the window-blinds above were all pulled down, and in place of its usual cheerful appearance, the house had a look of sadness and an air of mourning; which the neighbours who in old days had often seen poor Barnaby go in and out, were at no loss to understand. The door stood partly open; but the locksmith's hammer was unheard: the cat sat moping on the ashy forge; all was deserted, dark, and silent.

On the threshold of this door, Mr. Haredale and Edward Chester met. The younger man gave place; and both passing in with a familiar air, which seemed to denote that they were tarrying there, or were well-accustomed to go to and fro unquestioned, shut it behind them.

Entering the old back parlour, and ascending the flight of stairs, abrupt and steep, and quaintly fashioned as of old, they turned into the best room; the pride of Mrs. Varden's heart, and erst the scene of Miggs's household labours.

"Varden brought the mother here last evening, he told me?" said Mr. Haredale.

"She is above stairs now—in the room over here," Edward rejoined. "Her grief, they say, is past all telling. I needn't add—for that you know beforehand—that the care, humanity, and sympathy of these good people have no bounds."

"I am sure of that. Heaven repay them for it, and for much more! Varden is out?"

"He returned with your messenger, who arrived almost at the moment of his coming home himself. He was out the whole night—but that of course you know. He was with you the greater part of it?"

"He was. Without him, I should have lacked my right hand. He is an older man than I; but nothing can conquer him."

"The cheeriest, stoutest-hearted fellow in the world."

"He has a right to be. He has a right to be. A better creature never lived. He reaps what he has sown—no more."

"It is not all men," said Edward, after a moment's hesitation, "who have the happiness to do that."

"More than you imagine," returned Mr. Haredale. "We note the harvest more than the seed-time. You do so in me."

In truth his pale and haggard face, and gloomy bearing, had so far influenced the remark, that Edward was, for the moment, at a loss to answer him.

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Haredale, "'twas not very difficult to read a thought so natural. But you are mistaken nevertheless. I have had my share of sorrows—more than the common lot, perhaps—but I have borne them ill. I have broken where I should have bent; and have mused and brooded, when my spirit should have mixed with all God's great creation. The men who learn endurance, are they who call the whole world, brother. I have turned *from* the world, and I pay the penalty."

Edward would have interposed, but he went on without giving him time.

"It is too late to evade it now. I sometimes think, that if I had to live my life once more, I would amend this fault—not so much, I discover when I search my mind, for the love of what is right, as for my own sake. But even when I make these better resolutions, I instinctively recoil from the idea of suffering again what I have undergone; and in this circumstance I find the unwelcome assurance that I should still be the same man, though I could cancel the past, and begin anew, with its experience to guide me."

"Nay, you make too sure of that," said Edward.

"You think so," Mr. Haredale answered, "and I am glad you do. I know myself better, and therefore distrust myself more. Let us leave this subject for another—not so far removed from it as it might, at first sight, seem to be. Sir, you still love my niece, and she is still attached to you."

"I have that assurance from her own lips," said Edward, "and you know—I am sure you know—that I would not exchange it for any blessing life could yield me."

"You are frank, honourable, and disinterested," said Mr. Haredale; "you have forced the conviction that you are so, even on my once-jaundiced mind; and I believe you. Wait here till I come back."

He left the room as he spoke; but soon returned, with his niece.

"On that first and only time," he said, looking from the one to the other, "when we three stood together under her father's roof, I bade you quit it, and charged you never to return."

"It is the only circumstance arising out of our love," observed Edward, "that I have forgotten."

"You own a name," said Mr. Haredale, "I had deep reason to remember. I was moved and goaded by recollections of personal wrong and injury, I know: but even now I cannot charge myself with having then, or ever, lost sight of a heartfelt desire for her true happiness; or with having acted—however much I was mistaken—with any other impulse than the one pure, single, earnest wish to be to her, as far as in my inferior nature lay, the father she had lost."

"Dear uncle," cried Emma, "I have known no parent but you. I have loved the memory of others, but I have loved you all my life. Never was father kinder to his child than you have been to me, without the interval of one harsh hour, since I can first remember."

"You speak too fondly," he answered, "and yet I cannot wish you were less partial; for I have a pleasure in hearing those words, and shall have in calling them to mind when we are far asunder, which nothing else could give me. Bear with me for a moment longer, sir, for she and I have been together many years; and although I believe that in resigning her to you I put the seal upon her future happiness, I find it needs an effort."

He pressed her tenderly to his bosom, and after a minute's pause, resumed:

"I have done you wrong, sir, and I ask your forgiveness—in no common phrase, or show of sorrow; but with earnestness and sincerity. In the same spirit, I acknowledge to you both that the time has been when I connived at treachery and falsehood—which if I did not perpetrate myself, I still permitted—to rend you two asunder."

"You judge yourself too harshly," said Edward. "Let these things rest."

"They rise up in judgment against me when I look back, and not now for the first time," he answered. "I cannot part from you without your full forgiveness; for busy life and I have little left in common now, and I have regrets enough to carry into solitude, without addition to the stock."

"You bear a blessing from us both," said Emma. "Never mingle thoughts of me—of me who owe you so much love and duty—with anything but undying affection and gratitude for the past, and bright hopes for the future."

"The future," returned her uncle, with a melancholy smile, "is a bright word for you, and its image should be wreathed with cheerful hopes. Mine is of another kind, but it will be one of peace; and free, I trust, from care or passion. When you quit England I shall leave it too. There are cloisters abroad; and now that the two great objects of my life are set at rest, I know no better home. You droop at that, forgetting I am growing old, and that my course is nearly run. Well, we will speak of it again—not once or twice, but many times; and you shall give me cheerful counsel, Emma."

"And you will take it?" asked his niece.

"I'll listen to it," he answered, kissing her fair brow, "and it will have its weight, be certain. What have I left to say? You have of late been much together. It is better and more fitting that the circumstances attendant on the past, which wrought your separation, and sowed between you suspicion and distrust, should not be entered on by me."

"Much, much better," whispered Emma. "Remember them no more!"

"I avow my share in them," said Mr. Haredale, "though I held it at the time in detestation. Let no man turn aside, ever so slightly, from the broad path of honour, on the plausible pretence that he is justified by the goodness of his end. All good ends can be worked out by good means. Those that cannot, are bad; and may be counted so at once, and left alone."

He looked from her to Edward, and said in a gentler tone:

"In goods and fortune you are now nearly equal; I have been her faithful steward, and to that remnant of a richer property which my brother left her, I desire to add, in token of my love, a poor pittance, scarcely worth the mention, for which I have no longer any need. I am glad you go abroad. Let

our ill-fated house remain the ruin it is. When you return after a few thriving years, you will command a better, and more fortunate one. We are friends?"

Edward took his extended hand, and grasped it heartily.

"You are neither slow nor cold in your response," said Mr. Haredale, doing the like by him, "and when I look upon you now, and know you, I feel that I would choose you for her husband. Her father had a generous nature, and you would have pleased him well. I give her to you in his name, and with his blessing. If the world and I part in this act, we part on happier terms than we have lived for many a day."



He placed her in his arms, and would have left the room, but that he was stopped in his passage to the door by a great noise at a distance, which made them start and pause.

It was a loud shouting, mingled with boisterous acclamations, that rent the very air. It drew nearer and nearer every moment, and approached so rapidly, that even while they listened, it burst into a deafening confusion of sounds at the street corner.

"This must be stopped—quieted," said Mr. Haredale, hastily. "We should have foreseen this, and provided against it. I will go out to them at once."

But before he could reach the door, and before Edward could catch up his hat and follow him, they were again arrested by a loud shriek from above stairs: and the locksmith's wife, bursting in, and fairly running into Mr. Haredale's arms, cried out:

"She knows it all, dear sir!—she knows it all! We broke it out to her by degrees, and she is quite prepared." Having made this communication, and furthermore thanked Heaven with great fervour and heartiness, the good

lady, according to the custom of matrons on all occasions of excitement, fainted away directly.

They ran to the window, threw up the sash, and looked into the crowded street. Among a dense mob of persons, of whom not one was for an instant still, the locksmith's ruddy face and burly form could be descried, beating about as though he were struggling with a rough sea. Now he was carried back a score of yards, now onward nearly to the door, now back again, now forced against the opposite houses, now against those adjoining his own: now carried up a flight of steps, and greeted by the outstretched hands of half a hundred men, while the whole tumultuous concourse stretched their throats, and cheered with all their might. Though he was really in a fair way to be torn to pieces in the general enthusiasm, the locksmith, nothing discomposed, echoed their shouts till he was hoarse as they, and in a glow of joy and right good-humour, waved his hat until the daylight shone between its brim and crown.

But in all the bandyings from hand to hand, and strivings to and fro, and sweepings here and there, which—saving that he looked more jolly and more radiant after every struggle—troubled his peace of mind no more than if he had been a straw upon the water's surface, he never once released his firm grasp of an arm, drawn tight through his. He sometimes turned to clap this friend upon the back, or whisper in his ear a word of staunch encouragement, or cheer him with a smile; but his great care was to shield him from the pressure, and force a passage for him to the Golden Key. Passive and timid, seared, pale, and wondering, and gazing at the throng as if he were newly risen from the dead, and felt himself a ghost among the living, Barnaby—not Barnaby in the spirit, but in flesh and blood, with pulses, sinews, nerves, and beating heart, and strong affections—clung to his stout old friend, and followed where he led.

And thus, in course of time, they reached the door, held ready for their entrance by no unwilling hands. Then slipping in, and shutting out the crowd by main force, Gabriel stood between Mr. Haredale and Edward Chester, and Barnaby, rushing up the stairs, fell upon his knees beside his mother's bed.

"Such is the blessed end, sir," cried the panting locksmith, to Mr. Haredale, "of the best day's work we ever did. The rogues! it's been hard fighting to get away from 'em. I almost thought, once or twice, they'd have been too much for us with their kindness!"

They had striven all the previous day to rescue Barnaby from his impending fate. Failing in their attempts, in the first quarter to which they addressed themselves, they renewed them in another. Failing there, likewise, they began afresh at midnight; and made their way, not only to the judge and jury who had tried him, but to men of influence at court, to the young Prince of Wales, and even to the antechamber of the king himself. Successful, at last, in awakening an interest in his favour, and an inclination to inquire more dispassionately into his case, they had had an interview with the minister, in his bed, so late as eight o'clock that morning. The result of a searching inquiry (in which they, who had known the poor fellow from his childhood, did other good service, besides bringing it about) was, that between eleven and twelve

o'clock, a free pardon to Barnaby Rudge was made out and signed, and entrusted to a horse-soldier for instant conveyance to the place of execution. This courier reached the spot just as the cart appeared in sight; and Barnaby being carried back to jail, Mr. Haredale, assured that all was safe, had gone straight from Bloomsbury Square to the Golden Key, leaving to Gabriel the grateful task of bringing him home in triumph.

"I needn't say," observed the locksmith, when he had shaken hands with all the males in the house, and hugged all the females, five-and-forty times, at least, "that, except among ourselves, *I* didn't want to make a triumph of it. But directly we got into the streets we were known, and this hubbub began. Of the two," he added, as he wiped his crimson face, "and after experience of both, I think I'd rather be taken out of my house by a crowd of enemies, than escorted home by a mob of friends!"

It was plain enough, however, that this was mere talk on Gabriel's part, and that the whole proceeding afforded him the keenest delight; for the people continuing to make a great noise without, and to cheer as if their voices were in the freshest order, and good for a fortnight, he sent up stairs for Grip (who had come home at his master's back, and had acknowledged the favours of the multitude by drawing blood from every finger that came within his reach), and with the bird upon his arm, presented himself at the first-floor window, and waved his hat again until it dangled by a shred, between his fingers and thumb. This demonstration having been received with appropriate shouts, and silence being in some degree restored, he thanked them for their sympathy; and taking the liberty to inform them that there was a sick person in the house, proposed that they should give three cheers for King George, three more for Old England, and three more for nothing particular, as a closing ceremony. The crowd assenting, substituted Gabriel Varden for the nothing particular; and giving him one over, for good measure, dispersed in high good-humour.

What congratulations they exchanged when they were left alone; what an overflowing of joy and happiness there was among them; how incapable it was of expression in Barnaby's own person; and how he went wildly from one to another, until he became so far tranquillized as to stretch himself on the ground beside his mother's couch, and fall into a deep sleep; are matters that need not be told. And it is well they happen to be of this class, for they would be very hard to tell, were their narration ever so indispensable.

Before leaving this bright picture, it may be well to glance at a dark and very different one which was presented to only a few eyes, that same night.

The scene was a churchyard; the time, midnight; the persons, Edward Chester, a clergyman, a grave-digger, and the four bearers of a homely coffin. They stood about a grave which had been newly dug, and one of the bearers held up a dim lantern,—the only light there—which shed its feeble ray upon the book of prayer. He placed it for a moment on the coffin, when he and his companions were about to lower it down. There was no inscription on the lid.

The mould fell solemnly upon the last house of this nameless man; and the rattling dust left a dismal echo even in the accustomed ears of those who had

borne it to its resting-place. The grave was filled in to the top, and trodden down. They all left the spot together.

"You never saw him, living?" asked the priest, of Edward.

"Often, years ago; not knowing him for my brother."

"Never since?"

"Never. Yesterday, he steadily refused to see me. It was urged upon him, many times, at my desire."

"Still he refused? That was hardened and unnatural."

"Do you think so?"

"I infer that you do not."

"You are right. We hear the world wonder every day at monsters of ingratitude. Did it never occur to you that it often looks for monsters of affection, as though they were things of course?"

They had reached the gate by this time, and bidding each other good night, departed on their separate ways.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTIETH.

THAT afternoon, when he had slept off his fatigue; had shaved, and washed, and dressed, and freshened himself from top to toe; when he had dined, comforted himself with a pipe, an extra Toby, a nap in the great arm-chair, and a quiet chat with Mrs. Varden on everything that had happened, was happening, or about to happen, within the sphere of their domestic concern; the locksmith sat himself down at the tea-table in the little back parlour: the rosiest, cosiest, merriest, heartiest, best-contented old buck, in Great Britain or out of it.

There he sat, with his beaming eye on Mrs. V., and his shining face suffused with gladness, and his capacious waistcoat smiling in every wrinkle, and his jovial humour peeping from under the table in the very plumpness of his legs: a sight to turn the vinegar of misanthropy into purest milk of human kindness. There he sat, watching his wife as she decorated the room with flowers for the greater honour of Dolly and Joseph Willet, who had gone out walking, and for whom the tea-kettle had been singing gaily on the hob full twenty minutes, chirping as never kettle chirped before; for whom the best service of real undoubted china, patterned with divers round-faced mandarins holding up broad umbrellas, was now displayed in all its glory; to tempt whose appetites a clear, transparent, juicy ham, garnished with cool green lettuce leaves and fragrant cucumber, reposed upon a shady table, covered with a snow white cloth; for whose delight, preserves and jams, crisp cakes and other pastry, short to eat, with cunning twists and cottage loaves, and rolls of bread both white and brown, were all set forth in rich profusion; in whose youth Mrs. V. herself had grown quite young, and stood there in a gown of red and white; symmetrical in figure, buxom in boddice, ruddy in cheek and lip, faultless in ankle, laughing in face and mood, in all respects delicious to behold—there sat the locksmith among all and every these delights, the sun that shone upon them all: the centre of the system: the source of light, heat, life, and frank enjoyment in the bright household world.

And when had Dolly ever been the Dolly of that afternoon? To see how she came in arm-in-arm with Joe; and how she made an effort not to blush or seem at all confused; and how she made believe she didn't care to sit on his side of the table; and how she coaxed the locksmith in a whisper not to joke; and how her colour came and went in a little restless flutter of happiness, which made her do everything wrong, and yet so charmingly wrong that it was much better than right!—why, the locksmith could have looked on at this (as he mentioned to Mrs. Varden when they retired for the night) for four-and-twenty hours at a stretch, and never wished it done.

The recollections, too, with which they made merry over that long protracted tea! The glee with which the locksmith asked Joe if he remembered that stormy night at the Maypole when he first asked after Dolly—the laugh they all had about that night when she was going out to the party in the sedan-chair—the unmerciful manner in which they rallied Mrs. Varden about putting those flowers outside that very window—the difficulty Mrs. Varden found in joining the laugh against herself at first, and the extraordinary perception she had of the joke when she overcame it—the confidential statements of Joe concerning the precise day and hour when he was first conscious of being fond of Dolly, and Dolly's blushing admissions, half volunteered, and half extorted, as to the time from which she dated the discovery that she "didn't mind" Joe—here was an exhaustless fund of mirth and conversation!

Then there was a great deal to be said regarding Mrs. Varden's doubts, and motherly alarms, and shrewd suspicions; and it appeared that from Mrs. Varden's penetration and extreme sagacity nothing had ever been hidden. She had known it all along. She had seen it from the first. She had always predicted it. She had been aware of it before the principals. She had said within herself (for she remembered the exact words) "that young Willet is certainly looking after our Dolly, and *I* must look after *him*." Accordingly she had looked after him, and had observed many little circumstances (all of which she named) so exceedingly minute that nobody else could make anything out of them even now; and had, it seemed from first to last, displayed the most unbounded tact and most consummate generalship.

Of course the night when Joe *would* ride homeward by the side of the chaise, and when Mrs. Varden *would* insist upon his going back again, was not forgotten—nor the night when Dolly fainted on his name being mentioned—nor the times upon times when Mrs. Varden, ever watchful and prudent, had found her pining in her own chamber. In short, nothing was forgotten; and everything by some means or other brought them back to the conclusion, that that was the happiest hour in all their lives; consequently, that everything must have occurred for the best, and nothing could be suggested which would have made it better.

While they were in the full glow of such discourse as this, there came a startling knock at the door, opening from the street into the workshop, which had been kept closed all day that the house might be more quiet. Joe, as in duty bound, would hear of nobody but himself going to open it; and accordingly left the room for that purpose.

It would have been odd enough, certainly, if Joe had forgotten the way to this door; and even if he had, as it was a pretty large one and stood straight before him, he could not easily have missed it. But Dolly, perhaps because she was in the flutter of spirits before mentioned, or perhaps because she thought he would not be able to open it with his one arm—she could have had no other reason—hurried out after him; and they stopped so long in the passage—no doubt owing to Joe's entreaties that she would not expose herself to the draught of July air which must infallibly come rushing in on this same door being opened—that the knock was repeated, in a yet more startling manner than before.

"Is anybody going to open that door?" cried the locksmith. "Or shall I come?"

Upon that, Dolly went running back into the parlour, all dimples and blushes; and Joe opened it with a mighty noise, and other superfluous demonstrations of being in a violent hurry.

"Well," said the locksmith, when he reappeared: "what is it? eh Joe? what are you laughing at?"

"Nothing sir. It's coming in."

"Who's coming in? what's coming in?" Mrs. Varden, as much at a loss as her husband, could only shake her head in answer to his inquiring look: so the locksmith wheeled his chair round to command a better view of the room door, and stared at it with his eyes wide open, and a mingled expression of curiosity and wonder shining in his jolly face.

Instead of some person or persons straightway appearing, divers remarkable sounds were heard, first in the workshop and afterwards in the little dark passage between it and the parlour, as though some unwieldy chest or heavy piece of furniture were being brought in, by an amount of human strength inadequate to the task. At length after much struggling and bumping, and bruising of the wall on both sides, the door was forced open as by a battering-ram; and the locksmith, steadily regarding what appeared beyond, smote his thigh, elevated his eyebrows, opened his mouth, and cried in a loud voice expressive of the utmost consternation:

"Damme, if it an't Miggs come back!"

The young damsel whom he named no sooner heard these words, than deserting a very small boy and a very large box by whom she was accompanied, and advancing with such precipitation that her bonnet flew off her head, burst into the room, clasped her hands (in which she held a pair of pattens, one in each), raised her eyes devotedly to the ceiling, and shed a flood of tears.

"The old story!" cried the locksmith, looking at her in inexpressible desperation. "She was born to be a damper, this young woman! nothing can prevent it!"

"Ho master, ho mim!" cried Miggs, "can I constrain my feelings in these here once agin united moments! Ho Mr. Warsen, here's blessedness among relations, Sir, here's forgivenesses of injuries, here's amicable-nesses!"

The locksmith looked from his wife to Dolly, and from Dolly to Joe, and

from Joe to Miggs, with his eyebrows still elevated and his mouth still open : when his eyes got back to Miggs, they rested on her ; fascinated.



“To think,” cried Miggs with hysterical joy, “that Mr. Joe, and dear Miss Dolly, has raly come together after all as has been said and done contrary ! To see them two a settin’ along with him and her, so pleasant and in all respects so affable and mild ; and me not knowing of it, and not being in the ways to make no preparations for their teas. Ho what a cutting thing it is, and yet what sweet sensations is awoke within me !”

Either in clasping her hands again, or in an ecstasy of pious joy, Miss Miggs clinked her pattens after the manner of a pair of cymbals, at this juncture ; and then resumed in the softest accents :

“And did my missis think—ho goodness, did she think—as her own Miggs, which supported her under so many trials, and understood her natur’ when them as intended well but acted rough, went so deep into her feelings—did she think as her own Miggs would ever leave her ? Did she think as Miggs, though she was but a servant, and knowed that servitudes was no inheritances, would forgit that she was the humble instruments as always made it comfortable between them two when they fell out, and always told master of the meekness and forgiveness of her blessed dispositions. Did she think as Miggs had no attachments ? Did she think the wages was her only object ?”

To none of these interrogatories, whereof every one was more pathetically delivered than the last, did Mrs. Varden answer one word : but Miggs, not at all abashed by this circumstance, turned to the small boy in attendance—her eldest nephew ; son of her own married sister ; born in Golden Lion Court, number twenty-sivin ; and bred in the very shadow of the second bell handle on the right hand door post—and with a plentiful use of her pocket

handkerchief, addressed herself to him : requesting that on his return home he would console his parents for the loss of her, his aunt, by delivering to them a faithful statement of his having left her in the bosom of that family, with which, as his aforesaid parents well knew, her best affections were incorporated; that he would remind them that nothing less than her imperious sense of duty, and devoted attachment to her old master and missis, likewise Miss Dolly and young Mr. Joe, should ever have induced her to decline that pressing invitation which they, his parents, had, as he could testify, given her, to lodge and board with them, free of all cost and charge, for evermore; lastly, that he would help her with her box up stairs, and then repair straight home, bearing her blessing and her strong injunctions to mingle in his prayers a supplication that he might in course of time grow up a locksmith, or a Mr. Joe, and have Mrs. Vardens, and Miss Dollys for his relations and friends.

Having brought this admonition to an end, upon which, to say the truth, the young gentleman for whose benefit it was designed, bestowed little or no heed, having to all appearance his faculties absorbed in the contemplation of the sweetmeats,—Miss Miggs signified to the company in general that they were not to be uneasy, for she would soon return; and, with her nephew's aid, prepared to bear her wardrobe up the staircase.

“My dear,” said the locksmith to his wife. “Do you desire this?”

“I desire it!” she answered. “I am astonished—I am amazed—at her audacity. Let her leave the house this moment.”

Miggs, hearing this, let her end of the box fall heavily to the floor, gave a very loud sniff, crossed her arms, screwed down the corners of her mouth, and cried, in an ascending scale, “Ho, good gracious!” three distinct times.

“You hear what your mistress says, my love,” remarked the locksmith. “You had better go, I think. Stay; take this with you, for the sake of old service.”

Miss Miggs clutched the bank-note he took from his pocket-book and held out to her; deposited it in a small, red leather purse; put the purse in her pocket (displaying, as she did so, a considerable portion of some undergarment, made of flannel, and more black cotton stocking than is commonly seen in public); and, tossing her head, as she looked at Mrs. Varden, repeated—

“Ho good gracious!”

“I think you said that once before, my dear,” observed the locksmith.

“Times is changed, is they, mim!” cried Miggs, bridling; “you can spare me now, can you? You can keep 'em down without me? You're not in wants of any one to scold, or throw the blame upon, no longer, an't you, mim? I'm glad to find you've grown so independent. I wish you joy, I'm sure!”

With that she dropped a curtsey, and keeping her head erect, her ear towards Mrs. Varden, and her eye on the rest of the company, as she alluded to them in her remarks, proceeded:

“I'm quite delighted, I'm sure, to find sich independency, feeling sorry though, at the same time mim, that you should have been forced into submissions when you couldn't help yourself—he he he! It must be great vexations, 'specially considering how ill you always spoke of Mr. Joe—to have him for a son-in-law at last; and I wonder Miss Dolly can put up with him, either, after being off and on for so many years with a coach-maker. But I *have* heard

say that the coachmaker thought twice about it—he he he!—and that he told a young man as was a frind of his, that he hoped he knowed better than to be drawed into that; though she and all the family *did* pull uncommon strong!”

Here she paused for a reply, and receiving none, went on as before.

“I *have* heerd say, mim, that the illnesses of some ladies was all pretensions, and that they could faint away stone dead whenever they had the inclinations so to do. Of course I never see sich cases with my own eyes—ho no! He he he! Nor master neither—ho no! He he he! I *have* heerd the neighbours make remark as some one as they was acquainted with, was a poor good-natur'd mean-spirited cretur, as went out fishing for a wife one day, and caught a Tartar. Of course I never to my knowledge see the poor person himself. Nor did you neither, mim—ho no. I wonder who it can be—don't you, mim? No doubt you do, mim. Ho yes. He he he!”

Again Miggs paused for a reply; and none being offered, was so oppressed with teeming spite and spleen, that she seemed like to burst.

“I'm glad Miss Dolly can laugh,” cried Miggs with a feeble titter. “I like to see folks a laughing—so do you, mim, don't you? You was always glad to see people in spirits, wasn't you, mim? And you always did your best to keep 'em cheerful, didn't you, mim? Though there an't such a great deal to laugh at now either; is there, mim? It an't so much of a catch after looking out so sharp ever since she was a little chit, and costing such a deal in dress and show, to get a poor, common soldier, with one arm, is it, mim? He he! I wouldn't have a husband with one arm, anyways. I would have two arms. I would have two arms, if it was me, though instead of hands they'd only got hooks at the end, like our dustman.”

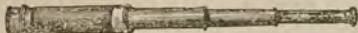
Miss Miggs was about to add, and had, indeed, begun to add, that, taking them in the abstract, dustmen were far more eligible matches than soldiers, though, to be sure, when people were past choosing they must take the best they could get, and think themselves well off too; but her vexation and chagrin being of that internally bitter sort which finds no relief in words, and is aggravated to madness by want of contradiction, she could hold out no longer, and burst into a storm of sobs and tears.

In this extremity she fell on the unlucky nephew, tooth and nail, and plucking a handful of hair from his head, demanded to know how long she was to stand there to be insulted, and whether or no he meant to help her to carry out the box again, and if he took a pleasure in hearing his family-reviled, with other inquiries of that nature: at which disgrace and provocation, the small boy, who had been all this time gradually lashed into rebellion by the sight of unattainable pastry, walked off indignant, leaving his aunt and the box to follow at their leisure. Somehow or other, by dint of pushing and pulling, they did attain the street at last; where Miss Miggs, all blowzed with the exertion of getting there, and with her sobs and tears, sat down upon her property; to rest and grieve until she could ensnare some other youth to help her home.

“It's a thing to laugh at, Martha, not to care for,” whispered the locksmith, as he followed his wife to the window, and good-humouredly dried her eyes. “What does it matter? You had seen your fault before. Come! Bring up Toby again, my dear; Dolly shall sing us a song; and we'll be all the merrier for this interruption.”

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18	1 16 1	1 12 4	35	2 16 2	2 11 1	52	4 17 0	4 12 1	
19	1 16 10	1 13 3	36	2 18 2	2 12 2	53	5 0 0	4 15 6	
20	1 17 9	1 14 3	37	2 19 11	2 13 10	54	5 3 6	4 18 9	
21	1 18 8	1 15 1	38	3 1 11	2 15 10	55	5 7 6	5 2 5	
22	1 19 9	1 16 1	39	3 3 9	2 18 0	56	5 11 0	5 6 1	
23	2 0 10	1 17 0	40	3 5 9	3 0 3	57	5 14 8	5 9 10	
24	2 1 11	1 18 1	41	3 7 9	3 2 1	58	5 18 11	5 13 10	
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