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# SOVEREIGN LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY,

No. 5, ST. JAMES'S STREET, LONDON.

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Perfect security in a subscribed Capital, which guarantees the prompt settlement of every claim, with participating and non-participating rates on the lowest scale, especially for terms of years.

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MATRESSES,  
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Are entirely prevented, and gently and effectually removed in Youth, and Ladies and Gentlemen, by the occasional use of the **IMPROVED ELASTIC CHEST EXPANDER**, which is light, simple, easily applied, either above or beneath the dress, and worn without any uncomfortable constraint or impediment to exercise. To Young Persons especially it is highly beneficial, immediately producing an evident IMPROVEMENT in the FIGURE, and tending greatly to prevent the incursion of PULMONARY DISEASES; whilst to the Invalid, and those much engaged in sedentary pursuits, such as Reading or Studying, Working, Drawing, or Music, it is found to be invaluable, as it expands the Chest and affords a great support to the back. It is made in Silk; and can be forwarded, per post, by **Mr. ALFRED BINYON, Sole Manufacturer and Proprietor, No. 40, Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, London;** or full particulars, with Prices and Mode of Measurement, on receipt of a Postage Stamp.





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Portable, 7s. 6d. Lever, 2l. Screw, 3l. 3s. to 5l. 5s.

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THE CHARGE FOR THIS UNIQUE HEAD OF HAIR ONLY £1 10s.



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The Establishment has been formed solely with the view of extending the blessings of Hydropathy, at an expense of more than £23,000. It is situated on an acclivity, in one of the loveliest Dales in Yorkshire; and is provided with a Piazza, Walks, Plantations, and Pleasure Grounds, 65 Acres in extent.

The Water and Atmosphere of this locality have been celebrated for ages, for their purity and stimulating properties.

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In addition to the qualifications of a thoroughly educated and experienced Physician, Dr. MACLEOD brings to the discharge of his duties a most minute acquaintance both with the Theory and Practice of the Water Cure.

For Particulars of Coaches, Terms, &c., application to be made to Mr. STRACHAN, House Steward.

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DRESS COATS, 38s. 42s. and 47s. 6d. Superior workmanship. FROCK COATS, silk facings, 46s. 48s. and 50s. ALL THE NEW PATTERNS for Trousers, 15s. 6d. 17s. 6d. and 21s. SPLENDID PATTERNS SUMMER Trousers, 10s. 6d. per pair, or 3 for 30s. NEW PATTERNS, for Summer Waist-coats, 7s. each, or 3 for 20s. Morning Coats, and Dressing Gowns, Fishing, and SHOOTING COATS, 10s. 6d. 18s. and 21s. An immense assortment of READY-MADE York Wrappers, Taglioni, Codringtons, and Chesterfields, 12s. 18s. and 21s. WATERPROOF Cloaks, 21s. DOUDNEY'S celebrated Spanish Army Cloth Cloak, nine-and-half yards round, 50s. Opera ditto 25s. SUIT OF LIVERIES, complete, 63s. Scarlet Hunting Coat. 63s. Ladies' Riding Habits, 63s. and 84s. BEST AND CHEAPEST HOUSE FOR BOYS' CLOTHING. COUNTRY GENTLEMEN preferring their Clothes Fashionably made, at a FIRST-RATE LONDON HOUSE, by post-paid Application, they will receive, free, a Prospectus, explanatory of their celebrated CONTRACT SYSTEM, Statement of Prices and Directions for Measurement. Or, if Three or Four Gentlemen unite, one of the Travellers will be despatched to wait on them.

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## COFFEE AS IN FRANCE.



**IT** is a fact beyond dispute, that in order to obtain really fine COFFEE, there must be a combination of the various kinds; and to produce strength and flavour, certain proportions should be mixed, according to their different properties; thus it is we have become celebrated for our delicious COFFEE, at 1s. 8d., which is the astonishment and delight of all who have tasted it, being the produce of Four Countries, selected and mixed by rule peculiar to our Establishment, in proportions not known to any other house.

From experiments we have made on the various kinds of COFFEE, we have arrived at the fact, that no one kind possesses strength and flavour; if we select a very strong COFFEE, it is wanting in flavour, by the same rule we find the finest and most flavorful COFFEES are generally wanting in strength; and as they are usually sold each kind separately, quite regardless of their various properties, the consumer is not able to obtain really fine COFFEE at any price. There is, also, another peculiar advantage which we possess over other houses—our roasting apparatus being constructed on decidedly scientific principles, whereby the strong aromatic flavour of the COFFEE is preserved, which in the ordinary process of roasting is entirely destroyed; and as we are COFFEE roasters, we are enabled to keep a full supply of fresh roasted COFFEE continually, after the Parisian and Continental method.

The rapid and still increasing demand for this COFFEE has caused great excitement in the trade; and several unprincipled houses have copied our papers, and professed to sell a similar article. We therefore think it right to CAUTION the Public, and to state that our superior mixture of Four Countries is a discovery of our own, and therefore the proportions are not known, nor can it be had of any other house, and that in future we shall distinguish it from all others as

### SPARROW'S CONTINENTAL COFFEE, at 1s. 8d. per lb.

*Packed in Tins of all sizes, perfectly air-tight, for the Country.*

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**TEAS** of the true old-fashioned kind, as formerly imported by the East India Company, and with which the name of SPARROW has for many years been identified, at the following reduced scale of prices:—Strong and full flavoured Congou, a most economical Tea for large consumers, 3s. 8d.; Sterling Congou, of superior strength and flavour, 4s.; Finest Congou, strongly recommended, 4s. 8d.; Fine Ripe Old Pekoe Souchong, one of the finest specimens imported, 5s.; Strong Green, 3s. 8d. to 4s.; Genuine Hyson, or Young Hyson, 5s.; the Finest Cowslip Hyson, or Young Hyson, very fragrant, 6s.; Strong Gunpowder, 5s. 4d. to 6s.; and the Finest Gunpowder, heavy pearl leaf, 7s. No Bohea or inferior Teas kept. Orders, by post or otherwise, containing a remittance, or respectable reference, will be dealt with in a way that will insure future orders and recommendations. The carts of this establishment deliver goods in all parts of town free of expense.

### TEA ESTABLISHMENT, 95, HIGH HOLBORN,

*Adjoining Day & Martin's, leading through into 22, Dean Street,*

**HENRY SPARROW, PROPRIETOR.**

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*A Visitor of distinction.*



*The rejected alms.*

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

## THE WOODEN MIDSHIPMAN GOES TO PIECES.

HONEST Captain Cuttle, as the weeks flew over him in his fortified retreat, by no means abated any of his prudent provisions against surprise, because of the non-appearance of the enemy. The Captain argued that his present security was too profound and wonderful to endure much longer; he knew that when the wind stood in a fair quarter, the weathercock was seldom nailed there; and he was too well acquainted with the determined and dauntless character of Mrs. Mac Stinger, to doubt that that heroic woman had devoted herself to the task of his discovery and capture. Trembling beneath the weight of these reasons, Captain Cuttle lived a very close and retired life; seldom stirring abroad until after dark; venturing even then only into the obscurest streets; never going forth at all on Sundays; and both within and without the walls of his retreat, avoiding bonnets, as if they were worn by raging lions.

The Captain never dreamed that in the event of his being pounced upon by Mrs. Mac Stinger, in his walks, it would be possible to offer resistance. He felt that it could not be done. He saw himself, in his mind's eye, put meekly into a hackney coach, and carried off to his old lodgings. He foresaw that, once immured there, he was a lost man: his hat gone; Mrs. Mac Stinger watchful of him day and night; reproaches heaped upon his head, before the infant family; himself the guilty object of suspicion and distrust: an ogre in the children's eyes, and in their mother's a detected traitor.

A violent perspiration, and a lowness of spirits, always came over the Captain as this gloomy picture presented itself to his imagination. It generally did so previous to his stealing out of doors at night for air and exercise. Sensible of the risk he ran, the Captain took leave of Rob, at those times, with the solemnity which became a man who might never return: exhorting him, in the event of his (the Captain's) being lost sight of, for a time, to tread in the paths of virtue, and keep the brazen instruments well polished.

But not to throw away a chance; and to secure to himself a means, in case of the worst, of holding communication with the external world; Captain Cuttle soon conceived the happy idea of teaching Rob the Grinder some secret signal, by which that adherent might make his presence and fidelity known to his commander, in the hour of adversity. After much cogitation, the Captain decided in favour of instructing him to whistle the marine melody, "Oh cheerily, cheerily!" and Rob the Grinder attaining a point as near perfection in that accomplishment as a landsman could hope to reach, the Captain impressed these mysterious instructions on his mind:

"Now, my lad, stand by! If ever I'm took—"

"Took, Captain!" interposed Rob, with his round eyes wide open.

"Ah!" said Captain Cuttle darkly, "if ever I goes away, meaning to come back to supper, and don't come within hail again, twenty-four hours arter my loss, go you to Brig Place and whistle that 'ere tune near my old moorings—not as if you was a meaning of it, you understand, but as if you'd drifted there, promiscuous. If I answer in that tune, you sheer off, my lad, and come back four-and-twenty hours arterwards; if I answer in another tune, do you stand off and on, and wait till I throw out further signals. Do you understand them orders now?"

"What am I to stand off and on of, Captain?" inquired Rob. "The horse-road?"

"Here's a smart lad for you!" cried the Captain, eyeing him sternly, "as don't know his own native alphabet! Go away a bit and come back again alternate—d'ye understand that?"

"Yes, Captain," said Rob.

"Very good my lad, then," said the Captain, relenting. "Do it!"

That he might do it the better, Captain Cuttle sometimes condescended, of an evening after the shop was shut, to rehearse this scene: retiring into the parlour for the purpose, as into the lodgings of a supposititious Mac Stinger, and carefully observing the behaviour of his ally, from the hole of espial he had cut in the wall. Rob the Grinder discharged himself of his duty with so much exactness and judgment, when thus put to the proof, that the Captain presented him, at divers times, with seven sixpences, in token of satisfaction; and gradually felt stealing over his spirit the resignation of a man who had made provision for the worst, and taken every reasonable precaution against an unrelenting fate.

Nevertheless, the Captain did not tempt ill-fortune, by being a whit more venturesome than before. Though he considered it a point of good breeding in himself, as a general friend of the family, to attend Mr. Dombey's wedding (of which he had heard from Mr. Perch), and to show that gentleman a pleasant and approving countenance from the gallery, he had repaired to the church in a hackney cabriolet with both windows up; and might have scrupled even to make that venture, in his dread of Mrs. Mac Stinger, but that the lady's attendance on the ministry of the Reverend Melchisedech rendered it peculiarly unlikely that she would be found in communion with the Establishment.

The Captain got safe home again, and fell into the ordinary routine of his new life, without encountering any more direct alarm from the enemy, than was suggested to him by the daily bonnets in the street. But other subjects began to lie heavy on the Captain's mind. Walter's ship was still unheard of. No news came of old Sol Gills. Florence did not even know of the old man's disappearance, and Captain Cuttle had not the heart to tell her. Indeed the Captain, as his own hopes of the generous, handsome, gallant-hearted youth, whom he had loved, according to his rough manner, from a child, began to fade, and faded more and more from day to day, shrank with instinctive pain from the thought of exchanging a word with Florence. If he had had good news to carry to her, the honest Captain would have braved the newly decorated house and splendid furniture—though these, connected with the lady he had seen at church, were awful to him—and made his way into her presence. With a dark horizon gathering around their common hopes, however, that darkened



every hour, the Captain almost felt as if he were a new misfortune and affliction to her; and was scarcely less afraid of a visit from Florence, than from Mrs. Mac Stinger herself.

It was a chill dark autumn evening, and Captain Cuttle had ordered a fire to be kindled in the little back parlour; now more than ever like the cabin of a ship. The rain fell fast, and the wind blew hard; and straying out on the housetop by that stormy bedroom of his old friend, to take an observation of the weather, the Captain's heart died within him, when he saw how wild and desolate it was. Not that he associated the weather of that time with poor Walter's destiny, or doubted that if Providence had doomed him to be lost and shipwrecked, it was over, long ago; but that beneath an outward influence, quite distinct from the subject-matter of his thoughts, the Captain's spirits sank, and his hopes turned pale, as those of wiser men had often done before him, and will often do again.

Captain Cuttle, addressing his face to the sharp wind and slanting rain, looked up at the heavy scud that was flying fast over the wilderness of house-tops, and looked for something cheery there in vain. The prospect near at hand was no better. In sundry tea-chests and other rough boxes at his feet, the pigeons of Rob the Grinder were cooing like so many dismal breezes getting up. A crazy weathercock of a midshipman, with a telescope at his eye, once visible from the street, but long bricked out, creaked and complained upon his rusty pivot as the shrill blast spun him round and round, and sported with him cruelly. Upon the Captain's coarse blue vest the cold rain-drops started like steel beads; and he could hardly maintain himself aslant against the stiff Nor' Wester that came pressing against him, importunate to topple him over the parapet, and throw him on the pavement below. If there were any Hope alive that evening, the Captain thought, as he held his hat on, it certainly kept house, and wasn't out of doors; so the Captain, shaking his head in a despondent manner, went in to look for it.

Captain Cuttle descended slowly to the little back parlour, and, seated in his accustomed chair, looked for it in the fire; but it was not there, though the fire was bright. He took out his tobacco-box and pipe, and composing himself to smoke, looked for it in the red glow from the bowl, and in the wreaths of vapour that curled upward from his lips; but there was not so much as an atom of the rust of Hope's anchor in either. He tried a glass of grog; but melancholy truth was at the bottom of that well, and he couldn't finish it. He made a turn or two in the shop, and looked for Hope among the instruments; but they obstinately worked out reckonings for the missing ship, in spite of any opposition he could offer, that ended at the bottom of the lone sea.

The wind still rushing, and the rain still pattering, against the closed shutters, the Captain brought to before the wooden Midshipman upon the counter, and thought, as he dried the little officer's uniform with his sleeve, how many years the Midshipman had seen, during which few changes—hardly any—had transpired among his ship's company; how the changes had come all together one day, as it might be; and of what a sweeping kind they were. Here was the little society of the back parlour broken up, and scattered far and wide. Here was no audience for Lovely Peg, even if there had been anybody to sing it,

which there was not; for the Captain was as morally certain that nobody but he could execute that ballad, as he was that he had not the spirit, under existing circumstances, to attempt it. There was no bright face of "Wal'r in the house;—here the Captain transferred his sleeve for a moment from the Midshipman's uniform to his own cheek;—the familiar wig and buttons of Sol Gills were a vision of the past; Richard Whittington was knocked on the head; and every plan and project, in connexion with the Midshipman, lay drifting, without mast or rudder, on the waste of waters.

As the Captain, with a dejected face, stood revolving these thoughts, and polishing the Midshipman, partly in the tenderness of old acquaintance, and partly in the absence of his mind, a knocking at the shop-door communicated a frightful start to the frame of Rob the Grinder, seated on the counter, whose large eyes had been intently fixed on the Captain's face, and who had been debating within himself, for the five hundredth time, whether the Captain could have done a murder, that he had such an evil conscience, and was always running away.

"What's that!" said Captain Cuttle, softly.

"Somebody's knuckles, Captain," answered Rob the Grinder.

The Captain, with an abashed and guilty air, immediately sneaked on tip-toe to the little parlour and locked himself in. Rob, opening the door, would have parleyed with the visitor on the threshold if the visitor had come in female guise; but the figure being of the male sex, and Rob's orders only applying to women, Rob held the door open and allowed it to enter: which it did very quickly, glad to get out of the driving rain.

"A job for Burgess and Co. at any rate," said the visitor looking over his shoulder compassionately at his own legs, which were very wet and covered with splashes. "Oh, how-de-do, Mr. Gills?"

The salutation was addressed to the Captain, now emerging from the back parlour with a most transparent and utterly futile affectation of coming out by accident.

"Thankee," the gentleman went on to say in the same breath; "I'm very well indeed, myself, I'm much obliged to you. My name is Toots,—*Mister Toots*."

The Captain remembered to have seen this young gentleman at the wedding, and made him a bow. Mr. Toots replied with a chuckle; and being embarrassed, as he generally was, breathed hard, shook hands with the Captain for a long time, and then falling on Rob the Grinder, in the absence of any other resource, shook hands with him in a most affectionate and cordial manner.

"I say! I should like to speak a word to you, Mr. Gills, if you please," said Toots at length, with surprising presence of mind. "I say! Miss D. O. M. you know!"

The Captain, with responsive gravity and mystery, immediately waved his hook towards the little parlour, whither Mr. Toots followed him.

"Oh! I beg your pardon though," said Mr. Toots, looking up in the Captain's face as he sat down in a chair by the fire, which the Captain placed for him; "you don't happen to know the Chicken at all; do you Mr. Gills?"

"The Chicken?" said the Capatin.

"The Game Chicken," said Mr. Toots.

The Captain shaking his head, Mr. Toots explained that the man alluded to was the celebrated public character who had covered himself and his country with glory in his contest with the Nobby Shropshire One; but this piece of information did not appear to enlighten the Captain very much.

"Because he's outside: that's all," said Mr. Toots. "But it's of no consequence; he won't get very wet, perhaps."

"I can pass the word for him in a moment," said the Captain.

"Well, if you *would* have the goodness to let him sit in the shop with your young man," chuckled Mr. Toots, "I should be glad; because, you know, he's easily offended, and the damp's rather bad for his stamina. I'll call him in, Mr. Gills."

With that, Mr. Toots repairing to the shop-door, sent a peculiar whistle into the night, which produced a stoical gentleman in a shaggy white great-coat and a flat-brimmed hat, with very short hair, a broken nose, and a considerable tract of bare and sterile country behind each ear.

"Sit down, Chicken," said Mr. Toots.

The compliant Chicken spat out some small pieces of straw on which he was regaling himself, and took in a fresh supply from a reserve he carried in his hand.

"There an't no drain of nothing short handy, is there?" said the Chicken, generally. "This here sluicing night is hard lines to a man as lives on his condition."

Captain Cuttle proffered a glass of rum, which the Chicken, throwing back his head, emptied into himself, as into a cask, after proposing the brief sentiment "Towards us!" Mr. Toots and the Captain returning then to the parlour, and taking their seats before the fire, Mr. Toots began:

"Mr. Gills—"

"Awast!" said the Captain. "My name's Cuttle."

Mr. Toots looked greatly disconcerted, while the Captain proceeded gravely.

"Cap'en Cuttle is my name, and England is my nation, this here is my dwelling place, and blessed be creation—Job," said the Captain, as an index to his authority.

"Oh! I couldn't see Mr. Gills, could I?" said Mr. Toots; "because—"

"If you could see Sol Gills, young gen'l'm'n," said the Captain, impressively, and laying his heavy hand on Mr. Toots's knee, "old Sol, mind you—with your own eyes—as you sit there—you'd be welcomer to me, than a wind astarn, to a ship becalmed. But you can't see Sol Gills. And why can't you see Sol Gills?" said the Captain, apprised by the face of Mr. Toots that he was making a profound impression on that gentleman's mind. "Because he's invisible."

Mr. Toots in his agitation was going to reply that it was of no consequence at all. But he corrected himself, and said, "Lor bless me!"

"That there man," said the Captain, "has left me in charge here by a piece of writing, but though he was a'most as good as my sworn brother, I know no more where he's gone, or why he's gone; if so be to seek his nevy, or if so be along of being not quite settled in his mind;

than you do. One morning at daybreak he went over the side," said the Captain, "without a splash, without a ripple. I have looked for that man high and low, and never set eyes, nor ears, nor nothing else, upon him from that hour."

"But, good gracious, Miss Dombey don't know—" Mr. Toots began.

"Why, I ask you as a feeling heart," said the Captain, dropping his voice, "why should she know? why should she be made to know, until such time as there warn't any help for it? She took to old Sol Gills, did that sweet creetur, with a kindness, with a affability, with a a—what 's the good of saying so? you know her."

"I should hope so," chuckled Mr. Toots, with a conscious blush that suffused his whole countenance

"And you come here from her?" said the Captain.

"I should think so," chuckled Mr. Toots.

"Then all I need observe, is," said the Captain, "that you know a angel, and are chartered *by* a angel."

Mr. Toots instantly seized the Captain's hand, and requested the favour of his friendship.

"Upon my word and honour," said Mr. Toots, earnestly, "I should be very much obliged to you if you 'd improve my acquaintance. I should like to know you, Captain, very much. I really am in want of a friend, I am. Little Dombey was my friend at old Blimber's, and would have been now, if he 'd have lived. The Chicken," said Mr. Toots, in a forlorn whisper, "is very well—admirable in his way—the sharpest man perhaps in the world; there 's not a move he isn't up to, everybody says so—but I don't know—he 's not everything. So she *is* an angel, Captain." If there is an angel anywhere, it 's Miss Dombey. That 's what I 've always said. Really though, you know," said Mr. Toots, "I should be very much obliged to you if you 'd cultivate my acquaintance."

Captain Cuttle received this proposal in a polite manner, but still without committing himself to its acceptance; merely observing "Aye aye, my lad. We shall see, we shall see;" and reminding Mr. Toots of his immediate mission, by inquiring to what he was indebted for the honour of that visit.

"Why the fact is," replied Mr. Toots, "that it 's the young woman I come from. Not Miss Dombey—Susan you know."

The Captain nodded his head once, with a grave expression of face, indicative of his regarding that young woman with serious respect.

"And I 'll tell you how it happens," said Mr. Toots. "You know, I go and call sometimes, on Miss Dombey. I don't go there on purpose, you know, but I happen to be in the neighbourhood very often; and when I find myself there, why—why I call."

"Nat'rally," observed the Captain.

"Yes," said Mr. Toots. "I called this afternoon. Upon my word and honour, I don't think it's possible to form an idea of the angel Miss Dombey was this afternoon."

The Captain answered with a jerk of his head, implying that it might not be easy to some people, but was quite so, to him.

"As I was coming out," said Mr. Toots, "the young woman, in the most unexpected manner, took me into the pantry."

The Captain seemed, for the moment, to object to this proceeding; and leaning back in his chair, looked at Mr. Toots with a distrustful, if not threatening visage.

"Where she brought out," said Mr. Toots, "this newspaper. She told me that she had kept it from Miss Dombey all day, on account of something that was in it, about somebody that she and Dombey used to know; and then she read the passage to me. Very well. Then she said—wait a minute; what was it, she said though!"

Mr. Toots, endeavouring to concentrate his mental powers on this question, unintentionally fixed the Captain's eye, and was so much discomposed by its stern expression, that his difficulty in resuming the thread of his subject was enhanced to a painful extent.

"Oh!" said Mr. Toots after long consideration. "Oh ah! Yes! She said that she hoped there was a bare possibility that it mightn't be true; and that as she couldn't very well come out herself, without surprising Miss Dombey, would I go down to Mr. Solomon Gills the Instrument Maker's in this street, who was the party's uncle, and ask whether he believed it was true, or had heard anything else in the city. She said, if he couldn't speak to me, no doubt Captain Cuttle could. By the bye!" said Mr. Toots, as the discovery flashed upon him, "you, you know!"

The Captain glanced at the newspaper in Mr. Toots's hand, and breathed short and hurriedly.

"Well," pursued Mr. Toots, "the reason why I'm rather late is, because I went up as far as Finchley first, to get some uncommonly fine chickweed that grows there, for Miss Dombey's bird. But I came on here, directly afterwards. You've seen the paper, I suppose?"

The Captain, who had become cautious of reading the news, lest he should find himself advertised at full length by Mrs. Mac Stinger, shook his head.

"Shall I read the passage to you?" inquired Mr. Toots.

The Captain making a sign in the affirmative, Mr. Toots read as follows, from the Shipping Intelligence:

"Southampton. The barque Defiance, Henry James, Commander, arrived in this port to-day, with a cargo of sugar, coffee, and rum, reports that being calmed on the sixth day of her passage home from Jamaica, in—in such and such a latitude, you know," said Mr. Toots, after making a feeble dash at the figures, and tumbling over them.

"Aye!" cried the Captain, striking his clenched hand on the table. "Heave a head, my lad!"

"—latitude," repeated Mr. Toots, with a startled glance at the Captain, "and longitude so-and-so,—the look-out observed, half an hour before sunset, some fragments of a wreck, drifting at about the distance of a mile. The weather being clear, and the barque making no way, a boat was hoisted out, with orders to inspect the same, when they were found to consist of sundry large spars, and a part of the main rigging of an English brig, of about five hundred tons burden, together with a portion of the stern on which the words and letters 'Son and H—' were yet plainly legible. No vestige of any dead body was to be seen upon the floating fragments. Log of the Defiance states, that a breeze

springing up in the night, the wreck was seen no more. There can be no doubt that all surmises as to the fate of the missing vessel, the *Son* and *Heir*, port of London, bound for Barbados, are now set at rest forever; that she broke up in the last hurricane; and that every soul on board perished."

Captain Cuttle, like all mankind, little knew how much hope had survived within him under discouragement, until he felt its death-shock. During the reading of the paragraph, and for a minute or two afterwards, he sat with his gaze fixed on the modest Mr. Toots, like a man entranced; then, suddenly rising, and putting on his glazed hat, turned, in his visitor's honour, he had laid upon the table, the Captain twitched his back, and bent his head down on the little chimney-piece.

"Oh, upon my word and honour," cried Mr. Toots, whose tender heart was moved by the Captain's unexpected distress, "this is a most wretched sort of affair this world is! Somebody's always dying, or going and doing something uncomfortable in it. I'm sure I never should have looked forward so much, to coming into my property, if I had known this. I never saw such a world. It's a great deal worse than Blimber's."

Captain Cuttle, without altering his position, signed to Mr. Toots not to mind him; and presently turned round, with his glazed hat thrust back upon his ears, and his hand composing and smoothing his brown face.

"Wal'r my dear lad," said the Captain, "farewell! Wal'r my child, my boy, and man, I loved you! He warn't my flesh and blood," said the Captain, looking at the fire—"I an't got none—but something of what a father feels when he loses a son, I feel in losing Wal'r. For why?" said the Captain, "Because it an't one loss, but a round dozen. Where's that there young schoolboy with the rosy face and curly hair, that used to be as merry in this here parlour, come round every week, as a piece of music? Gone down with Wal'r. Where's that there fresh lad, that nothing couldn't tire nor put out, and that sparkled up and blushed so, when we joked him about *Heart's Delight*, that he was beautiful to look at? Gone down with Wal'r. Where's that there man's spirit, all afire, that wouldn't see the old man hove down for a minute, and cared nothing for itself? Gone down with Wal'r. It an't one Wal'r. There was a dozen Wal'r's that I know'd and loved, all holding round his neck when he went down, and they're a-holding round mine now!"

Mr. Toots sat silent: folding and refolding the newspaper as small as possible upon his knee.

"And Sol Gills," said the Captain, gazing at the fire, "poor nevyless old Sol, where are *you* got to! you was left in charge of me; his last words was, 'Take care of my uncle;' What came over *you*, Sol, when you went and gave the go-bye to Ned Cuttle; and what am I to put in my accounts that he's a looking down upon, respecting you! Sol Gills, Sol Gills!" said the Captain, shaking his head slowly, "catch sight of that there newspaper, away from home, with no one as know'd Wal'r by, to say a word; and broadside to you broach, and down you pitch, head-foremost!"

Drawing a heavy sigh, the Captain turned to Mr. Toots, and roused himself to a sustained consciousness of that gentleman's presence.

"My lad," said the Captain, "you must tell the young woman honestly that this here fatal news is too correct. They don't romance, you see, on such pints. It's entered on the ship's log, and that's the truest book as a man can write. To-morrow morning," said the Captain, "I'll step out and make inquiries; but they'll lead to no good. They can't do it. If you'll give me a look-in in the forenoon, you shall know what I have heard; but tell the young woman from Cap'en Cuttle, that it's over. Over!" And the Captain, hooking off his glazed hat, pulled his handkerchief out of the crown, wiped his grizzled head despairingly, and tossed the handkerchief in again, with the indifference of deep dejection.

"Oh! I assure you," said Mr. Toots, "really I am dreadfully sorry. Upon my word I am, though I wasn't acquainted with the party. Do you think Miss Dombey will be very much affected, Captain Gills—I mean, Mr. Cuttle?"

"Why, Lord love you," returned the Captain, with something of compassion for Mr. Toots's innocence. "When she warn't no higher than that, they were as fond of one another as two young doves."

"Were they though!" said Mr. Toots, with a considerably lengthened face.

"They were made for one another," said the Captain mournfully; "but what signifies that now!"

"Upon my word and honour," cried Mr. Toots, blurring out his words through a singular combination of awkward chuckles and emotion, "I'm even more sorry than I was before. You know Captain Gills, I—I positively adore Miss Dombey;—I—I am perfectly sore with loving her;" the burst with which this confession forced itself out of the unhappy Mr. Toots, bespoke the vehemence of his feelings; "but what would be the good of my regarding her in this manner, if I wasn't truly sorry for her feeling pain, whatever was the cause of it. Mine an't a selfish affection, you know," said Mr. Toots, in the confidence engendered by his having been a witness of the Captain's tenderness. "It's the sort of thing with me, Captain Gills, that if I could be run over—or—or trampled upon—or—or thrown off a very high place—or any thing of that sort—for Miss Dombey's sake, it would be the most delightful thing that could happen to me."

All this, Mr. Toots said in a suppressed voice, to prevent its reaching the jealous ears of the Chicken, who objected to the softer emotions; which effort of restraint, coupled with the intensity of his feelings, made him red to the tips of his ears, and caused him to present such an affecting spectacle of disinterested love to the eyes of Captain Cuttle, that the good Captain patted him consolingly on the back, and bade him cheer up.

"Thankee Captain Gills," said Mr. Toots, "it's kind of you, in the midst of your own troubles, to say so. I'm very much obliged to you. As I said before, I really want a friend, and should be glad to have your acquaintance. Although I am very well off," said Mr. Toots with energy, "you can't think what a miserable Beast I am. The hollow crowd, you know, when they see me with the Chicken, and characters of distinction like that, suppose me to be happy; but I'm wretched. I suffer for Miss Dombey, Captain Gills. I can't get through my meals; I have no pleasure in my tailor; I often cry when I'm alone. I assure you it'll be a satisfaction to me to come back to-morrow, or to come back fifty times."

Mr. Toots, with these words, shook the Captain's hand; and disguising such traces of his agitation as could be disguised on so short a notice, before the Chicken's penetrating glance, rejoined that eminent gentleman in the shop. The Chicken, who was apt to be jealous of his ascendancy, eyed Captain Cuttle with anything but favour as he took leave of Mr. Toots, but followed his patron without being otherwise demonstrative of his ill-will: leaving the Captain oppressed with sorrow; and Rob the Grinder elevated with joy, on account of having had the honour of staring for nearly half an hour, at the conqueror of the Nobby Shropshire One.

Long after Rob was fast asleep in his bed under the counter, the Captain sat looking at the fire; and long after there was no fire to look at, the Captain sat gazing on the rusty bars, with unavailing thoughts of Walter and old Sol crowding through his mind. Retirement to the stormy chamber at the top of the house brought no rest with it; and the Captain rose up in the morning, sorrowful and unrefreshed.

As soon as the city offices were opened, the Captain issued forth to the counting-house of Dombey and Son. But there was no opening of the Midshipman's windows that morning. Rob the Grinder, by the Captain's orders, left the shutters closed, and the house was as a house of death.

It chanced that Mr. Carker was entering the office, as Captain Cuttle arrived at the door. Receiving the Manager's benison gravely and silently, Captain Cuttle made bold to accompany him into his own room.

"Well, Captain Cuttle," said Mr. Carker, taking up his usual position before the fire-place, and keeping on his hat, "this is a bad business."

"You have received the news as was in print yesterday, Sir?" said the Captain.

"Yes," said Mr. Carker, "we have received it! It was accurately stated. The under-writers suffer a considerable loss. We are very sorry. No help! Such is life!"

Mr. Carker pared his nails delicately with a penknife, and smiled at the Captain, who was standing by the door looking at him.

"I excessively regret poor Gay," said Carker, "and the crew. I understand there were some of our very best men among 'em. It always happens so. Many men with families too. A comfort to reflect that poor Gay had no family, Captain Cuttle!"

The Captain stood rubbing his chin, and looking at the Manager. The Manager glanced at the unopened letters lying on his desk, and took up the newspaper.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Captain Cuttle?" he asked, looking off it, with a smiling and expressive glance at the door.

"I wish you could set my mind at rest, Sir, on something it's uneasy about," returned the Captain.

"Aye!" exclaimed the Manager, "what's that? Come, Captain Cuttle, I must trouble you to be quick, if you please. I am much engaged."

"Looke'e here, Sir," said the Captain, advancing a step. "Afore my friend Wal'r went on this here disastrous voyage——"

"Come, come, Captain Cuttle," interposed the smiling Manager, "don't talk about disastrous voyages in that way. We have nothing to do with disastrous voyages here, my good fellow. You must have begun



very early on your day's allowance, Captain, if you don't remember that there are hazards in all voyages, whether by sea or land. You are not made uneasy by the supposition that young what's-his-name was lost in bad weather that was got up against him in these offices—are you? Fie, Captain! Sleep, and soda-water, are the best cures for such uneasiness as that."

"My lad," returned the Captain, slowly—"you are a'most a lad to me, and so I don't ask your pardon for that slip of a word,—if you find any pleasure in this here sport, you an't the gentleman I took you for. And if you an't the gentleman I took you for, may be my mind has call to be uneasy. Now this is what it is, Mr. Carker.—Afore that poor lad went away, according to orders, he told me that he warn't a going away for his own good, or for promotion, he know'd. It was my belief that he was wrong, and I told him so, and I come here, your head governor being absent, to ask a question or two of you in a civil way, for my own satisfaction. Them questions you answered—free. Now it 'ill ease my mind to know, when all is over, as it is, and when what can't be cured must be endoored—for which, as a scholar, you'll overhaul the book it's in, and thereof make a note—to know once more, in a word, that I warn't mistaken; that I warn't back'ard in my duty when I didn't tell the old man what Wal'r told me; and that the wind was truly in his sail, when he highsted of it for Barbadoes Harbour. Mr. Carker," said the Captain, in the goodness of his nature, "when I was here last, we was very pleasant together. If I ain't been altogether so pleasant myself this morning, on account of this poor lad, and if I have chafed again any observation of yours that I might have fended off, my name is Ed'ard Cuttle, and I ask your pardon."

"Captain Cuttle," returned the Manager, with all possible politeness, "I must ask you to do me a favour."

"And what is it, Sir?" inquired the Captain.

"To have the goodness to walk off, if you please," rejoined the Manager, stretching forth his arm, "and to carry your jargon somewhere else."

Every knob in the Captain's face turned white with astonishment and indignation; even the red rim on his forehead faded, like a rainbow among the gathering clouds.

"I tell you what, Captain Cuttle," said the Manager, shaking his forefinger at him, and showing him all his teeth, but still amiably smiling, "I was much too lenient with you when you came here before. You belong to an artful and audacious set of people. In my desire to save young what's-his-name from being kicked out of this place, neck and crop, my good Captain, I tolerated you; but for once, and only once. Now, go, my friend!"

The Captain was absolutely rooted to the ground, and speechless.

"Go," said the good-humoured Manager, gathering up his skirts, and standing astride upon the hearth-rug, "like a sensible fellow, and let us have no turning out, or any such violent measures. If Mr. Dombey were here, Captain, you might be obliged to leave in a more ignominious manner, possibly. I merely say, Go!"

The Captain, laying his ponderous hand upon his chest, to assist himself in fetching a deep breath, looked at Mr. Carker from head to foot,

and looked round the little room, as if he did not clearly understand where he was, or in what company.

"You are deep, Captain Cuttle," pursued Carker, with the easy and vivacious frankness of a man of the world who knew the world too well to be ruffled by any discovery of misdoing, when it did not immediately concern himself; "but you are not quite out of soundings, either—neither you nor your absent friend, Captain. What have you done with your absent friend, hey?"

Again the Captain laid his hand upon his chest. After drawing another deep breath, he conjured himself to "stand by!" But in a whisper.

"You hatch nice little plots, and hold nice little councils, and make nice little appointments, and receive nice little visitors too, Captain, hey?" said Carker, bending his brows upon him, without showing his teeth any the less; "but it's a bold measure to come here afterwards. Not like your discretion! You conspirators, and hiders, and runners-away, should know better than that. Will you oblige me by going?"

"My lad," gasped the Captain, in a choked and trembling voice, and with a curious action going on in the ponderous fist; "there's a many words I could wish to say to you, but I don't rightly know where they're stowed just at present. My young friend, Wal'r, was drowned only last night, according to my reckoning, and it puts me out, you see. But you and me will come alongside o' one another again, my lad," said the Captain, holding up his hook, "if we live."

"It will be anything but shrewd in you, my good fellow, if we do," returned the Manager, with the same frankness; "for you may rely, I give you fair warning, upon my detecting and exposing you. I don't pretend to be a more moral man than my neighbours, my good Captain; but the confidence of this house, or of any member of this house, is not to be abused and undermined while I have eyes and ears. Good day!" said Mr. Carker, nodding his head.

Captain Cuttle, looking at him steadily (Mr. Carker looked full as steadily at the Captain), went out of the office and left him standing astride before the fire, as calm and pleasant as if there were no more spots upon his soul than on his pure white linen, and his smooth sleek skin.

The Captain glanced, in passing through the outer counting-house, at the desk where he knew poor Walter had been used to sit, now occupied by another young boy, with a face almost as fresh and hopeful as his on the day when they tapped the famous last bottle but one of the old Madeira, in the little back parlour. The association of ideas, thus awakened, did the Captain a great deal of good; it softened him in the very height of his anger, and brought the tears into his eyes.

Arrived at the Wooden Midshipman's again, and sitting down in a corner of the dark shop, the Captain's indignation, strong as it was, could make no head against his grief. Passion seemed not only to do wrong and violence to the memory of the dead, but to be infected by death, and to droop and decline beside it. All the living knaves and liars in the world, were nothing to the honesty and truth of one dead friend.

The only thing the honest Captain made out clearly, in this state of

mind, besides the loss of Walter, was, that with him almost the whole world of Captain Cuttle had been drowned. If he reproached himself sometimes, and keenly too, for having ever connived at Walter's innocent deceit, he thought at least as often of the Mr. Carker whom no sea could ever render up; and the Mr. Dombey, whom he now began to perceive was as far beyond human recal; and the "Heart's Delight," with whom he must never foregather again; and the lovely Peg, that teak-built and trim ballad, that had gone ashore upon a rock, and split into mere planks and beams of rhyme. The Captain sat in the dark shop, thinking of these things, to the entire exclusion of his own injury; and looking with as sad an eye upon the ground, as if in contemplation of their actual fragments, as they floated past him.

But the Captain was not unmindful, for all that, of such decent and respectful observances in memory of poor Walter, as he felt within his power. Rousing himself, and rousing Rob the Grinder (who in the unnatural twilight was fast asleep), the Captain sallied forth with his attendant at his heels, and the door-key in his pocket, and repairing to one of those convenient slopselling establishments of which there is abundant choice at the eastern end of London, purchased on the spot two suits of mourning—one for Rob the Grinder, which was immensely too small, and one for himself, which was immensely too large. He also provided Rob with a species of hat, greatly to be admired for its symmetry and usefulness, as well as for a happy blending of the mariner with the coal-heaver; which is usually termed a sou'wester; and which was something of a novelty in connexion with the instrument business. In their several garments, which the vendor declared to be such a miracle in point of fit as nothing but a rare combination of fortuitous circumstances ever brought about, and the fashion of which was unparalleled within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, the Captain and Grinder immediately arrayed themselves: presenting a spectacle fraught with wonder to all who beheld it.

In this altered form, the Captain received Mr. Toots. "I'm took aback, my lad, at present," said the Captain, "and will only confirm that there ill news. Tell the young woman to break it gentle to the young lady, and for neither of 'em never to think of me no more—'special, mind you, that is—though I will think of them, when night comes on a hurricane and seas is mountains rowling, for which overhaul your Doctor Watts, brother, and when found make a note on."

The Captain reserved, until some fitter time, the consideration of Mr. Toots's offer of friendship, and thus dismissed him. Captain Cuttle's spirits were so low, in truth, that he half determined, that day, to take no further precautions against surprise from Mrs. Mac Stinger, but to abandon himself recklessly to chance, and be indifferent to what might happen. As evening came on, he fell into a better frame of mind, however; and spoke much of Walter to Rob the Grinder, whose attention and fidelity he likewise incidentally commended. Rob did not blush to hear the Captain earnest in his praises, but sat staring at him, and affecting to snivel with sympathy, and making a feint of being virtuous, and treasuring up every word he said (like a young spy as he was) with very promising deceit.

When Rob had turned in, and was fast asleep, the Captain trimmed the candle, put on his spectacles—he had felt it appropriate to take to spec-

tales on entering into the Instrument Trade, though his eyes were like a hawk's—and opened the prayer-book at the Burial Service. And reading softly to himself, in the little back parlour, and stopping now and then to wipe his eyes, the Captain, in a true and simple spirit, committed Walter's body to the deep.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### CONTRASTS.

TURN we our eyes upon two homes; not lying side by side, but wide apart, though both within easy range and reach of the great city of London.

The first, is situated in the green and wooded country near Norwood. It is not a mansion; it is of no pretensions as to size; but it is beautifully arranged, and tastefully kept. The lawn, the soft, smooth slope, the flower-garden, the clumps of trees where graceful forms of ash and willow are not wanting, the conservatory, the rustic verandah with sweet-smelling creeping plants entwined about the pillars, the simple exterior of the house, the well-ordered offices, though all upon the diminutive scale proper to a mere cottage, bespeak an amount of elegant comfort within, that might serve for a palace. This indication is not without warrant; for, within, it is a house of refinement and luxury. Rich colours, excellently blended, meet the eye at every turn; in the furniture—its proportions admirably devised to suit the shapes and sizes of the small rooms; on the walls; upon the floors; tinging and subduing the light that comes in through the odd glass doors and windows here and there. There are a few choice prints and pictures, too; in quaint nooks and recesses there is no want of books; and there are games of skill and chance set forth on tables—fantastic chessmen, dice, back-gammon, cards, and billiards.

And yet, amidst this opulence of comfort, there is something in the general air that is not well. Is it that the carpets and the cushions are too soft and noiseless, so that those who move or repose among them seem to act by stealth? Is it that the prints and pictures do not commemorate great thoughts or deeds, or render nature in the poetry of landscape, hall, or hut, but are of one voluptuous cast—mere shows of form and colour—and no more? Is it that the books have all their gold outside, and that the titles of the greater part qualify them to be companions of the prints and pictures? Is it that the completeness and the beauty of the place is here and there belied by an affectation of humility, in some unimportant and inexpensive regard, which is as false as the face of the too truly painted portrait hanging yonder, or its original at breakfast in his easy chair below it? Or is it that, with the daily breath of that original and master of all here, there issues forth some subtle portion of himself, which gives a vague expression of himself to everything about him!

It is Mr. Carker the Manager who sits in the easy chair. A gaudy parrot in a burnished cage upon the table tears at the wires with her beak, and goes walking, upside down, in its dome-top, shaking her house, and screeching; but Mr. Carker is indifferent to the bird, and looks with a musing smile at a picture on the opposite wall.

“A most extraordinary accidental likeness, certainly,” says he.

Perhaps it is a Juno; perhaps a Potiphar’s Wife; perhaps some scornful Nymph—according as the Picture Dealers found the market, when they christened it. It is the figure of a woman, supremely handsome, who, turning away, but with her face addressed to the spectator, flashes her proud glance upon him.

It is like Edith.

With a passing gesture of his hand at the picture—what! a menace? No; yet something like it. A wave as if triumph? No; yet more like that. An insolent salute wafted from his lips? No; yet like that too—he resumes his breakfast, and calls to the chafing and imprisoned bird, who, coming down into a pendant gilded hoop within the cage, like a great wedding-ring, swings in it, for his delight.

The second home is on the other side of London, near to where the busy great north road of bygone days is silent and almost deserted, except by wayfarers who toil along on foot. It is a poor, small house, barely and sparsely furnished, but very clean; and there is even an attempt to decorate it, shown in the homely flowers trained about the porch and in the narrow garden. The neighbourhood in which it stands has as little of the country to recommend it, as it has of the town. It is neither of the town nor country. The former, like the giant in his travelling boots, has made a stride and passed it, and has set his brick-and-mortar heel a long way in advance; but the intermediate space between the giant’s feet, as yet, is only blighted country, and not town; and here, among a few tall chimneys belching smoke all day and night, and among the brick-fields, and the lanes where turf is cut, and where the fences tumble down, and where the dusty nettles grow, and where a scrap or two of hedge may yet be seen, and where the bird-catcher still comes occasionally, though he swears every time to come no more—this second home is to be found.

She who inhabits it, is she who left the first in her devotion to an out-cast brother. She withdrew from that home its redeeming spirit, and from its master’s breast his solitary angel: but though his liking for her is gone, after this ungrateful slight as he considers it; and though he abandons her altogether in return, an old idea of her is not quite forgotten even by him. Let her flower-garden, in which he never sets his foot, but which is yet maintained, among all his costly alterations, as if she had quitted it but yesterday, bear witness!

Harriet Carker has changed since then, and on her beauty there has fallen a heavier shade than Time of his unassisted self can cast, all-potent as he is—the shadow of anxiety and sorrow, and the daily struggle of a poor existence. But it is beauty still; and still a gentle, quiet, and retiring beauty that must be sought out, for it cannot vaunt itself; if it could, it would be what it is, no more.

Yes. This slight, small, patient figure, neatly dressed in homely stuffs, and indicating nothing but the dull, household virtues, that have so little in

common with the received idea of heroism and greatness, unless, indeed, any ray of them should shine through the lives of the great ones of the earth, when it becomes a constellation and is tracked in Heaven straightway—this slight, small, patient figure, leaning on the man still young but worn and grey, is she his sister, who, of all the world, went over to him in his shame and put her hand in his, and with a sweet composure and determination, led him hopefully upon his barren way.

"It is early, John," she said. "Why do you go so early?"

"Not many minutes earlier than usual, Harriet. If I have the time to spare, I should like, I think—it's a fancy—to walk once by the house where I took leave of him."

"I wish I had ever seen or known him, John."

"It is better as it is, my dear, remembering his fate."

"But I could not regret it more, though I had known him. Is not your sorrow mine? And if I had, perhaps you would feel that I was a better companion to you in speaking about him, than I may seem now."

"My dearest sister! Is there anything within the range of rejoicing or regret, in which I am not sure of your companionship?"

"I hope you think not, John, for surely there is nothing!"

"How could you be better to me, or nearer to me than, than you are in this, or anything?" said her brother. "I feel that you did know him, Harriet, and that you shared my feelings towards him."

She drew the hand which had been resting on his shoulder, round his neck, and answered, with some hesitation:

"No, not quite."

"True, true!" he said; "you think I might have done him no harm if I had allowed myself to know him better?"

"Think! I know it."

"Designedly, Heaven knows I would not," he replied, shaking his head mournfully; "but his reputation was too precious to be perilled by such association. Whether you share that knowledge, or do not, my dear—"

"I do not," she said, quietly.

"It is still the truth, Harriet, and my mind is lighter when I think of him for that which made it so much heavier then." He checked himself in his tone of melancholy, and smiled upon her as he said "Good by'e!"

"Good by'e, dear John! In the evening, at the old time and place, I shall meet you as usual on your way home. Good by'e."

The cordial face she lifted up to his to kiss him, was his home, his life, his universe, and yet it was a portion of his punishment and grief; for in the cloud he saw upon it—though serene and calm as any radiant cloud at sunset—and in the constancy and devotion of her life, and in the sacrifice she had made of ease, enjoyment, and hope, he saw the bitter fruits of his old crime, for ever ripe and fresh.

She stood at the door looking after him, with her hands loosely clasped in each other, as he made his way over the frowzy and uneven patch of ground which lay before their house, which had once (and not long ago) been a pleasant meadow, and was now a very waste, with a disorderly crop of beginnings of mean houses, rising out of the rubbish, as if they had been unskillfully sown there. Whenever he looked back—as once or twice he did—her cordial face shone like a light upon his heart;

but when he plodded on his way, and saw her not, the tears were in her eyes as she stood watching him.

Her pensive form was not long idle at the door. There was daily duty to discharge, and daily work to do—for such common-place spirits that are not heroic, often work hard with their hands—and Harriet was soon busy with her household tasks. These discharged, and the poor house made quite neat and orderly, she counted her little stock of money, with an anxious face, and went out thoughtfully to buy some necessaries for their table, planning and contriving, as she went, how to save. So sordid are the lives of such low natures, who are not only not heroic to their valets and waiting-women, but have neither valets nor waiting-women to be heroic to withal!

While she was absent, and there was no one in the house, there approached it by a different way from that the brother had taken, a gentleman, a very little past his prime of life perhaps, but of a healthy florid hue, an upright presence, and a bright clear aspect, that was gracious and good-humoured. His eyebrows were still black, and so was much of his hair; the sprinkling of grey observable among the latter, graced the former very much, and showed his broad frank brow and honest eyes to great advantage.

After knocking once at the door, and obtaining no response, this gentleman sat down on a bench in the little porch to wait. A certain skilful action of his fingers as he hummed some bars, and beat time on the seat beside him, seemed to denote the musician; and the extraordinary satisfaction he derived from humming something very slow and long, which had no recognisable tune, seemed to denote that he was a scientific one.

The gentleman was still twirling a theme, which seemed to go round and round and round, and in and in and in, and to involve itself like a corkscrew twirled upon a table, without getting any nearer to anything, when Harriet appeared returning. He rose up as she advanced, and stood with his head uncovered.

“You are come again, Sir!” she said, faltering.

“I take that liberty,” he answered. “May I ask for five minutes of your leisure?”

After a moment’s hesitation, she opened the door, and gave him admission to the little parlour. The gentleman sat down there, drew his chair to the table over against her, and said, in a voice that perfectly corresponded to his appearance, and with a simplicity that was very engaging:

“Miss Harriet, you cannot be proud. You signified to me, when I called t’ other morning, that you were. Pardon me if I say that I looked into your face while you spoke, and that it contradicted you. I look into it again,” he added, laying his hand gently on her arm, for an instant, “and it contradicts you more and more.”

She was somewhat confused and agitated, and could make no ready answer.

“It is the mirror of truth,” said her visitor, “and gentleness. Excuse my trusting to it, and returning.”

His manner of saying these words, divested them entirely of the character of compliments. It was so plain, grave, unaffected, and sincere that

she bent her head, as if at once to thank him, and acknowledge his sincerity.

"The disparity between our ages," said the gentleman, "and the plainness of my purpose, empower me, I am glad to think, to speak my mind. That is my mind; and so you see me for the second time."

"There is a kind of pride, Sir," she returned, after a moment's silence, "or what may be supposed to be pride, which is mere duty. I hope I cherish no other."

"For yourself," he said.

"For myself."

"But—pardon me—" suggested the gentleman. "For your brother John?"

"Proud of his love, I am," said Harriet, looking full upon her visitor, and changing her manner on the instant—not that it was less composed and quiet, but that there was a deep impassioned earnestness in it that made the very tremble in her voice a part of her firmness, "and proud of him. Sir, you who strangely know the story of his life, and repeated it to me when you were here last—"

"Merely to make my way into your confidence," interposed the gentleman. "For Heaven's sake, don't suppose—"

"I am sure," she said, "you revived it, in my hearing, with a kind and good purpose. I am quite sure of it."

"I thank you," returned her visitor, pressing her hand hastily. "I am much obliged to you. You do me justice, I assure you. You were going to say, that I, who know the story of John Carker's life—"

"May think it pride in me," she continued, "when I say that I am proud of him. I am. You know the time was, when I was not—when I could not be—but that is past. The humility of many years, the uncomplaining expiation, the true repentance, the terrible regret, the pain I know he has even in my affection, which he thinks has cost me dear, though Heaven knows I am happy, but for his sorrow!—oh Sir, after what I have seen, let me conjure you, if you are in any place of power, and are ever wronged, never, for any wrong, inflict a punishment that cannot be recalled; while there is a GOD above us to work changes in the hearts He made."

"Your brother is an altered man," returned the gentleman, compassionately. "I assure you I don't doubt it."

"He was an altered man when he did wrong," said Harriet. "He is an altered man again, and is his true self now, believe me, Sir."

"But we go on," said her visitor, rubbing his forehead, in an absent manner, with his hand, and then drumming thoughtfully on the table, "we go on in our clock-work routine, from day to day, and can't make out, or follow, these changes. They—they're a metaphysical sort of thing. We—we haven't leisure for it. We—we haven't courage. They're not taught at schools or colleges, and we don't know how to set about it. In short, we are so d—d business-like," said the gentleman, walking to the window, and back, and sitting down again, in a state of extreme dissatisfaction and vexation.

"I am sure," said the gentleman, rubbing his forehead again; and drumming on the table as before, "I have good reason to believe that a



jog-trot life, the same from day to day, would reconcile one to anything. One don't see anything, one don't hear anything, one don't know anything; that's the fact. We go on taking everything for granted, and so we go on, until whatever we do, good, bad, or indifferent, we do from habit. Habit is all I shall have to report, when I am called upon to plead to my conscience, on my death-bed. 'Habit,' says I; 'I was deaf, dumb, blind, and paralytic, to a million things, from habit.' 'Very business-like indeed, Mr. What's-your-name,' says Conscience, 'but it won't do here!'"

The gentleman got up and walked to the window again, and back: seriously uneasy, though giving his uneasiness this peculiar expression.

"Miss Harriet," he said, resuming his chair, "I wish you would let me serve you. Look at me! I ought to look honest, for I know I am so, at present. Do I?"

"Yes," she answered with a smile.

"I believe every word you have said," he returned. "I am full of self-reproach that I might have known this and seen this, and known you and seen you, any time these dozen years, and that I never have. I hardly know how I ever got here—creature that I am, not only of my own habit, but of other people's! But having done so, let me do something. I ask it in all honour and respect. You inspire me with both, in the highest degree. Let me do something."

"We are contented, Sir."

"No, no, not quite," returned the gentleman. "I think not quite. There are some little comforts that might smooth your life, and his. And his!" he repeated, fancying that had made some impression on her. "I have been in the habit of thinking that there was nothing wanting to be done for him; that it was all settled and over; in short, of not thinking at all about it. I am different now. Let me do something for him. You too," said the visitor, with careful delicacy, "have need to watch your health closely, for his sake, and I fear it fails."

"Whoever you may be, Sir," answered Harriet, raising her eyes to his face, "I am deeply grateful to you. I feel certain that in all you say, you have no object in the world but kindness to us. But years have passed since we began this life; and to take from my brother any part of what has so endeared him to me, and so proved his better resolution—any fragment of the merit of his unassisted, obscure, and forgotten reparation—would be to diminish the comfort it will be to him and me, when that time comes to each of us, of which you spoke just now. I thank you better with these tears than any words. Believe it, pray."

The gentleman was moved, and put the hand she held out, to his lips, much as a tender father might kiss the hand of a dutiful child. But more reverently.

"If the day should ever come," said Harriet, "when he is restored, in part, to the position he lost——"

"Restored!" cried the gentleman, quickly. "How can that be hoped for? In whose hands does the power of any restoration lie? It is no mistake of mine, surely, to suppose that his having gained the priceless blessing of his life, is one cause of the animosity shown to him by his brother."

"You touch upon a subject that is never breathed between us; not even between us," said Harriet.

"I beg your forgiveness," said the visitor. "I should have known it. I entreat you to forget that I have done so, inadvertently. And now, as I dare urge no more—as I am not sure that I have a right to do so—though Heaven knows, even that doubt may be habit," said the gentleman, rubbing his head, as despondently as before, "let me; though a stranger, yet no stranger; ask two favours."

"What are they?" she inquired.

"The first, that if you should see cause to change your resolution, you will suffer me to be as your right hand. My name shall then be at your service; it is useless now, and always insignificant."

"Our choice of friends," she answered, smiling faintly, "is not so great, that I need any time for consideration. I can promise that."

"The second, that you will allow me sometimes, say every Monday morning, at nine o'clock—habit again—I must be business-like," said the gentleman, with a whimsical inclination to quarrel with himself on that head, "in walking past, to see you at the door or window. I don't ask to come in, as your brother will be gone out at that hour. I don't ask to speak to you. I merely ask to see, for the satisfaction of my own mind, that you are well, and without intrusion to remind you, by the sight of me, that you have a friend—an elderly friend, grey-haired already, and fast growing greyer—whom you may ever command."

The cordial face looked up in his; confided in it; and promised.

"I understand, as before," said the gentleman, rising, "that you purpose not to mention my visit to John Carker, lest he should be at all distressed by my acquaintance with his history. I am glad of it, for it is out of the ordinary course of things, and—habit again!" said the gentleman, checking himself impatiently, "as if there were no better course than the ordinary course!"

With that he turned to go, and walking, bare-headed, to the outside of the little porch, took leave of her with such a happy mixture of unconstrained respect and unaffected interest, as no breeding could have taught, no truth mistrusted, and nothing but a pure and single heart expressed.

Many half-forgotten emotions were awakened in the sister's mind by this visit. It was so very long since any other visitor had crossed their threshold; it was so very long since any voice of sympathy had made sad music in her ears; that the stranger's figure remained present to her, hours afterwards, when she sat at the window, plying her needle; and his words seemed newly spoken, again and again. He had touched the spring that opened her whole life; and if she lost him for a short space, it was only among the many shapes of the one great recollection of which that life was made.

Musing and working by turns; now constraining herself to be steady at her needle for a long time together, and now letting her work fall, unregarded, on her lap, and straying wheresoever her busier thoughts led, Harriet Carker found the hours glide by her, and the day steal on. The morning, which had been bright and clear, gradually became overcast; a sharp wind set in; the rain fell heavily; and a dark mist drooping over the distant town, hid it from the view.

She often looked with compassion, at such a time, upon the stragglers who came wandering into London, by the great highway hard-by, and who, foot-sore and weary, and gazing fearfully at the huge town before them, as if foreboding that their misery there would be but as a drop of water in the sea, or as a grain of sea-sand on the shore, went shrinking on, cowering before the angry weather, and looking as if the very elements rejected them. Day after day, such travellers crept past, but always, as she thought, in one direction—always towards the town. Swallowed up in one phase or other of its immensity, towards which they seemed impelled by a desperate fascination, they never returned. Food for the hospitals, the churchyards, the prisons, the river, fever, madness, vice, and death,—they passed on to the monster, roaring in the distance, and were lost.

The chill wind was howling, and the rain was falling, and the day was darkening moodily, when Harriet, raising her eyes from the work on which she had long since been engaged with unremitting constancy, saw one of these travellers approaching.

A woman. A solitary woman of some thirty years of age; tall; well-formed; handsome; miserably dressed; the soil of many country roads in varied weather—dust, chalk, clay, gravel—clotted on her grey cloak by the streaming wet; no bonnet on her head, nothing to defend her rich black hair from the rain, but a torn handkerchief; with the fluttering ends of which, and with her hair, the wind blinded her, so that she often stopped to push them back, and look upon the way she was going.

She was in the act of doing so, when Harriet observed her. As her hands, parting on her sun-burnt forehead, swept across her face, and threw aside the hindrances that encroached upon it, there was a reckless and regardless beauty in it: a dauntless and depraved indifference to more than weather: a carelessness of what was cast upon her bare head from Heaven or earth: that, coupled with her misery and loneliness, touched the heart of her fellow woman. She thought of all that was perverted and debased within her, no less than without: of modest graces of the mind, hardened and steeled, like these attractions of the person; of the many gifts of the Creator flung to the winds like the wild hair; of all the beautiful ruin upon which the storm was beating and the night was coming.

Thinking of this, she did not turn away with a delicate indignation—too many of her own compassionate and tender sex too often do—but pitied her.

Her fallen sister came on, looking far before her, trying with her eager eyes to pierce the mist in which the city was enshrouded, and glancing, now and then, from side to side, with the bewildered and uncertain aspect of a stranger. Though her tread was bold and courageous, she was fatigued, and after a moment of irresolution, sat down upon a heap of stones; seeking no shelter from the rain, but letting it rain on her as it would.

She was now opposite the house; raising her head after resting it for a moment on both hands, her eyes met those of Harriet.

In a moment, Harriet was at the door; and the other, rising from her seat at her beck, came slowly, and with no conciliatory look, towards her.

“Why do you rest in the rain?” said Harriet, gently.

“Because I have no other resting-place,” was the reply.

"But there are many places of shelter near here. This," referring to the little porch, "is better than where you were. You are very welcome to rest here."

The wanderer looked at her, in doubt and surprise, but without any expression of thankfulness; and sitting down, and taking off one of her worn shoes to beat out the fragments of stone and dust that were inside, showed that her foot was cut and bleeding.

Harriet uttering an expression of pity, the traveller looked up with a contemptuous and incredulous smile.

"Why, what's a torn foot to such as me?" she said. "And what's a torn foot in such as me, to such as you?"

"Come in and wash it," answered Harriet, mildly, "and let me give you something to bind it up."

The woman caught her arm, and drawing it before her own eyes, hid them against it, and wept. Not like a woman, but like a stern man surprised into that weakness; with a violent heaving of her breast, and struggle for recovery, that showed how unusual the emotion was with her.

She submitted to be led into the house, and, evidently more in gratitude than in any care for herself, washed and bound the injured place. Harriet then put before her the fragments of her own frugal dinner, and when she had eaten of them, though sparingly, besought her, before resuming her road (which she showed her anxiety to do), to dry her clothes before the fire. Again, more in gratitude than with any evidence of concern in her own behalf, she sat down in front of it, and unbinding the handkerchief about her head, and letting her thick wet hair fall down below her waist, sat drying it with the palms of her hands, and looking at the blaze.

"I dare say you are thinking," she said, lifting her head suddenly, "that I used to be handsome, once. I believe I was—I know I was. Look here!"

She held up her hair roughly with both hands; seizing it as if she would have torn it out; then, threw it down again, and flung it back as though it were a heap of serpents.

"Are you a stranger in this place?" asked Harriet.

"A stranger!" she returned, stopping between each short reply, and looking at the fire, "Yes. Ten or a dozen years a stranger. I have had no almanack where I have been. Ten or a dozen years. I don't know this part. It's much altered since I went away."

"Have you been far?"

"Very far. Months upon months over the sea, and far away even then. I have been where convicts go," she added, looking full upon her entertainer. "I have been one myself."

"Heaven help you and forgive you!" was the gentle answer.

"Ah! Heaven help me and forgive me!" she returned, nodding her head at the fire. "If man would help some of us a little more, God would forgive us all the sooner perhaps."

But she was softened by the earnest manner, and the cordial face so full of mildness and so free from judgment, of her, and said, less hardly:

"We may be about the same age, you and me. If I am older, it is not above a year or two. Oh think of that!"

She opened her arms, as though the exhibition of her outward form would show the moral wretch she was; and letting them drop at her sides, hung down her head.

"There is nothing we may not hope to repair; it is never too late to amend," said Harriet "You are penitent—"

"No," she answered. "I am not! I can't be. I am no such thing. Why should I be penitent, and all the world go free. They talk to me of my penitence. Who's penitent for the wrongs that have been done to me!"

She rose up, bound her handkerchief about her head, and turned to move away.

"Where are you going?" said Harriet.

"Yonder," she answered, pointing with her hand. "To London."

"Have you any home to go to?"

"I think I have a mother. She's as much a mother, as her dwelling is a home," she answered with a bitter laugh.

"Take this," cried Harriet, putting money in her hand. "Try to do well. It is very little, but for one day it may keep you from harm."

"Are you married?" said the other, faintly, as she took it.

"No. I live here with my brother. We have not much to spare, or I would give you more."

"Will you let me kiss you?"

Seeing no scorn or repugnance in her face, the object of her charity bent over her as she asked the question, and pressed her lips against her cheek. Once more she caught her arm, and covered her eyes with it; and then was gone.

Gone into the deepening night, and howling wind, and pelting rain; urging her way on, towards the mist-enshrouded city where the blurred lights gleamed; and with her black hair, and disordered head-gear, fluttering round her reckless face.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### ANOTHER MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

IN an ugly and dark room, an old woman, ugly and dark too, sat listening to the wind and rain, and crouching over a meagre fire. More constant to the last-named occupation than the first, she never changed her attitude, unless, when any stray drops of rain fell hissing on the smouldering embers, to raise her head with an awakened attention to the whistling and pattering outside, and gradually to let it fall again lower and lower and lower as she sunk into a brooding state of thought, in which the noises of the night were as indistinctly regarded as is the monotonous rolling of a sea by one who sits in contemplation on its shore.

There was no light in the room save that which the fire afforded. Glaring sullenly from time to time like the eye of a fierce beast half

asleep, it revealed no objects that needed to be jealous of a better display. A heap of rags, a heap of bones, a wretched bed, two or three mutilated chairs or stools, the black walls and blacker ceiling, were all its winking brightness shone upon. As the old woman, with a gigantic and distorted image of herself thrown half upon the wall behind her, half upon the roof above, sat bending over the few loose bricks within which it was pent, on the damp hearth of the chimney—for there was no stove—she looked as if she were watching at some witch's altar for a favourable token; and but that the movement of her chattering jaws and trembling chin was too frequent and too fast for the slow flickering of the fire, it would have seemed an illusion wrought by the light, as it came and went, upon a face as motionless as the form to which it belonged.

If Florence could have stood within the room and looked upon the original of the shadow thrown upon the wall and roof, as it cowered thus over the fire, a glance might have sufficed to recal the figure of good Mrs. Brown; notwithstanding that her childish recollection of that terrible old woman was as grotesque and exaggerated a presentment of the truth, perhaps, as the shadow on the wall. But Florence was not there to look on; and good Mrs. Brown remained unrecognised, and sat staring at her fire, unobserved.

Attracted by a louder sputtering than usual, as the rain came hissing down the chimney in a little stream, the old woman raised her head, impatiently, to listen afresh. And this time she did not drop it again; for there was a hand upon the door, and a footstep in the room.

"Who's that?" she said, looking over her shoulder.

"One who brings you news," was the answer, in a woman's voice.

"News? Where from?"

"From abroad."

"From beyond seas?" cried the old woman, starting up.

"Aye, from beyond seas."

The old woman raked the fire together, hurriedly, and going close to her visitor who had entered, and shut the door, and who now stood in the middle of the room, put her hand upon the drenched cloak, and turned the unresisting figure, so as to have it in the full light of the fire. She did not find what she had expected, whatever that might be; for she let the cloak go again, and uttered a querulous cry of disappointment and misery.

"What is the matter?" asked her visitor.

"Oho! Oho!" cried the old woman, turning her face upward, with a terrible howl.

"What is the matter?" asked the visitor again.

"It's not my gal!" cried the old woman, tossing up her arms, and clasping her hands above her head. "Where's my Alice? Where's my handsome daughter? They've been the death of her!"

"They have not been the death of her yet, if your name's Marwood," said the visitor.

"Have you seen my gal, then?" cried the old woman. "Has she wrote to me?"

"She said you couldn't read," returned the other.

"No more I can!" exclaimed the old woman, wringing her hands.

"Have you no light here?" said the other, looking round the room.

The old woman, mumbling and shaking her head, and muttering to herself about her handsome daughter, brought a candle from a cupboard in the corner, and thrusting it into the fire with a trembling hand, lighted it with some difficulty and set it on the table. Its dirty wick burnt dimly at first, being choked in its own grease; and when the bleared eyes and failing sight of the old woman could distinguish anything by its light, her visitor was sitting with her arms folded, her eyes turned downwards, and a handkerchief she had worn upon her head lying on the table by her side.

"She sent to me by word of mouth then, my gal, Alice?" mumbled the old woman, after waiting for some moments. "What did she say?"

"Look," returned the visitor.

The old woman repeated the word in a scared uncertain way; and, shading her eyes, looked at the speaker, round the room, and at the speaker once again.

"Alice said look again, mother;" and the speaker fixed her eyes upon her.

Again the old woman looked round the room, and at her visitor, and round the room once more. Hastily seizing the candle, and rising from her seat, she held it to the visitor's face, uttered a loud cry, set down the light, and fell upon her neck!

"It's my gal! It's my Alice! It's my handsome daughter, living and come back!" screamed the old woman, rocking herself to and fro upon the breast that coldly suffered her embrace. "It's my gal! It's my Alice! It's my handsome daughter, living and come back!" she screamed again, dropping on the floor before her, clasping her knees, laying her head against them, and still rocking herself to and fro with every frantic demonstration of which her vitality was capable.

"Yes, mother," returned Alice, stooping forward for a moment and kissing her, but endeavouring, even in the act, to disengage herself from her embrace. "I am here, at last. Let go, mother; let go. Get up, and sit in your chair. What good does this do?"

"She's come back harder than she went!" cried the mother, looking up in her face, and still holding to her knees. "She don't care for me! after all these years, and all the wretched life I've led!"

"Why, mother!" said Alice, shaking her ragged skirts to detach the old woman from them: "there are two sides to that. There have been years for me as well as you, and there has been wretchedness for me as well as you. Get up, get up!"

Her mother rose, and cried, and wrung her hands, and stood at a little distance gazing on her. Then, she took the candle again, and going round her, surveyed her from head to foot, making a low moaning all the time. Then she put the candle down, resumed her chair, and beating her hands together to a kind of weary tune, and rolling herself from side to side, continued moaning and wailing to herself.

Alice got up, took off her wet cloak, and laid it aside. That done, she sat down as before, and with her arms folded, and her eyes gazing at the fire, remained silently listening with a contemptuous face to her old mother's inarticulate complainings.

"Did you expect to see me return as youthful as I went away. mother?" she said at length, turning her eyes upon the old woman. "Did you think a foreign life, like mine, was good for good looks? One would believe so, to hear you!"

"It a'n't that!" cried the mother. "*She* knows it!"

"What is it then?" returned the daughter. "It had best be something that don't last, mother, or my way out is easier than my way in."

"Hear that!" exclaimed the mother. "After all these years she threatens to desert me in the moment of her coming back again!"

"I tell you, mother, for the second time, there have been years for me as well as you," said Alice. "Come back harder? Of course I have come back harder. What else did you expect?"

"Harder to me! To her own dear mother!" cried the old woman.

"I don't know who began to harden me, if my own dear mother didn't," she returned, sitting with her folded arms, and knitted brows, and compressed lips, as if she were bent on excluding, by force, every softer feeling from her breast. "Listen, mother, to a word or two. If we understand each other now, we shall not fall out any more, perhaps. I went away a girl, and have come back a woman. I went away undutiful enough, and have come back no better, you may swear. But have you been very dutiful to me?"

"I!" cried the old woman. "To my own gal! A mother dutiful to her own child!"

"It sounds unnatural, don't it?" returned the daughter, looking coldly on her with her stern, regardless, hardy, beautiful face; "but I have thought of it sometimes, in the course of *my* lone years, till I have got used to it. I have heard some talk about duty first and last; but it has always been of my duty to other people. I have wondered now and then—to pass away the time—whether no one ever owed any duty to me."

Her mother sat mowing, and mumbling, and shaking her head, but whether angrily, or remorsefully, or in denial, or only in her physical infirmity, did not appear.

"There was a child called Alice Marwood," said the daughter, with a laugh, and looking down at herself in terrible derision of herself, "born among poverty and neglect, and nursed in it. Nobody taught her, nobody stepped forward to help her, nobody cared for her."

"Nobody!" echoed the mother, pointing to herself, and striking her breast.

"The only care she knew," returned the daughter, "was to be beaten, and stinted, and abused sometimes; and she might have done better without that. She lived in homes like this, and in the streets, with a crowd of little wretches like herself; and yet she brought good looks out of this childhood. So much the worse for her. She had better have been hunted and worried to death for ugliness."

"Go on! go on!" exclaimed the mother.

"I am going on," returned the daughter. "There was a girl called Alice Marwood. She was handsome. She was taught too late, and taught all wrong. She was too well cared for, too well trained, too well helped on, too much looked after. You were very fond of her—you



were better off then. What came to that girl, comes to thousands every year. It was only ruin, and she was born to it."

"After all these years!" whined the old woman. "My gal begins with this."

"She'll soon have ended," said the daughter. "There was a criminal called Alice Marwood—a girl still, but deserted and an outcast. And she was tried, and she was sentenced. And lord, how the gentlemen in the court talked about it! and how grave the judge was, on her duty, and on her having perverted the gifts of nature—as if he didn't know better than anybody there, that they had been made curses to her!—and how he preached about the strong arm of the Law—so very strong to save her, when she was an innocent and helpless little wretch!—and how solemn and religious it all was! I have thought of that, many times since, to be sure!"

She folded her arms tightly on her breast, and laughed in a tone that made the howl of the old woman musical.

"So Alice Marwood was transported, mother," she pursued, "and was sent to learn her duty, where there was twenty times less duty, and more wickedness, and wrong, and infamy, than here. And Alice Marwood is come back a woman. Such a woman as she ought to be, after all this. In good time, there will be more solemnity, and more fine talk, and more strong arm, most likely, and there will be an end of her; but the gentlemen needn't be afraid of being thrown out of work. There's crowds of little wretches, boy and girl, growing up in any of the streets they live in, that'll keep them to it till they've made their fortunes."

The old woman leaned her elbows on the table, and resting her face upon her two hands, made a show of being in great distress—or really was, perhaps.

"There! I have done, mother," said the daughter, with a motion of her head, as if in dismissal of the subject. "I have said enough. Don't let you and I talk of being dutiful, whatever we do. Your childhood was like mine, I suppose. So much the worse for both of us. I don't want to blame you, or to defend myself; why should I? That's all over, long ago. But I am a woman—not a girl, now—and you and I needn't make a show of our history, like the gentlemen in the Court. *We* know all about it, well enough."

Lost and degraded as she was, there was a beauty in her, both of face and form, which, even in its worst expression, could not but be recognised as such by any one regarding her with the least attention. As she subsided into silence, and her face which had been harshly agitated, quieted down; while her dark eyes, fixed upon the fire, exchanged the reckless light that had animated them, for one that was softened by something like sorrow; there shone through all her wayworn misery and fatigue, a ray of the departed radiance of the fallen angel.

Her mother, after watching her for some time without speaking, ventured to steal her withered hand a little nearer to her across the table; and finding that she permitted this, to touch her face, and smooth her hair. With the feeling, as it seemed, that the old woman was at least sincere in this show of interest, Alice made no movement to check her; so, advancing

by degrees, she bound up her daughter's hair afresh, took off her wet shoes, as if they deserved the name, spread something dry upon her shoulders, and hovered humbly about her, muttering to herself, as she recognised her old features and expression more and more.

"You are very poor, mother, I see," said Alice, looking round, when she had sat thus for some time.

"Bitter poor, my deary," replied the old woman.

She admired her daughter, and was afraid of her. Perhaps her admiration, such as it was, had originated long ago, when she first found anything that was beautiful appearing in the midst of the squalid fight of her existence. Perhaps her fear was referable, in some sort, to the retrospect she had so lately heard. Be this as it might, she stood, submissively and deferentially, before her child, and inclined her head, as if in a pitiful entreaty to be spared any further reproach.

"How have you lived?"

"By begging, my deary."

"And pilfering, mother?"

"Sometimes, Ally—in a very small way. I am old and timid. I have taken trifles from children now and then, my deary, but not often. I have tramped about the country, pet, and I know what I know. I have watched."

"Watched?" returned the daughter, looking at her.

"I have hung about a family, my deary," said the mother, even more humbly and submissively than before.

"What family?"

"Hush, darling. Don't be angry with me. I did it for the love of you. In memory of my poor gal beyond seas." She put out her hand deprecatingly, and drawing it back again, laid it on her lips.

"Years ago, my deary," she pursued, glancing timidly at the attentive and stern face opposed to her, "I came across his little child, by chance."

"Whose child?"

"Not his, Alice deary; don't look at me like that; not his. How could it be his? You know he has none."

"Whose then?" returned the daughter. "You said his."

"Hush, Ally; you frighten me, deary. Mr. Dombey's—only Mr. Dombey's. Since then, darling, I have seen them often. I have seen *him*."

In uttering this last word, the old woman shrunk and recoiled, as if with a sudden fear that her daughter would strike her. But though the daughter's face was fixed upon her, and expressed the most vehement passion, she remained still: except that she clenched her arms tighter and tighter within each other, on her bosom, as if to restrain them by that means from doing an injury to herself, or some one else, in the blind fury of the wrath that suddenly possessed her.

"Little he thought who I was!" said the old woman, shaking her clenched hand.

"And little he cared!" muttered her daughter, between her teeth.

"But there we were," said the old woman, "face to face. I spoke to

him, and he spoke to me. I sat and watched him as he went away down a long grove of trees; and at every step he took I cursed him, soul and body."

"He will thrive in spite of that," returned the daughter disdainfully.

"Aye, he is thriving," said the mother.

She held her peace; for the face and form before her were unshaped by rage. It seemed as if the bosom would burst with the emotions that strove within it. The effort that constrained and held it pent up, was no less formidable than the rage itself: no less bespeaking the violent and dangerous character of the woman who made it. But it succeeded, and she asked, after a silence:

"Is he married?"

"No, deary," said the mother.

"Going to be?"

"Not that I know of, deary. But his master and friend is married. Oh, we may give him joy! We may give 'em all joy!" cried the old woman, hugging herself with her lean arms in her exultation. "Nothing but joy to us will come of that marriage. Mind me!"

The daughter looked at her for an explanation.

"But you are wet and tired; hungry and thirsty," said the old woman, hobbling to the cupboard; "and there's little here, and little—" diving down into her pocket, and jingling a few halfpence on the table—"little here. Have you any money, Alice, deary?"

The covetous, sharp, eager face, with which she asked the question and looked on, as her daughter took out of her bosom the little gift she had so lately received, told almost as much of the history of this parent and child as the child herself had told in words.

"Is that all?" said the mother.

"I have no more. I should not have this, but for charity."

"But for charity, eh, deary?" said the old woman, bending greedily over the table to look at the money, which she appeared distrustful of her daughter's still retaining in her hand, and gazing on. "Humph! six and six is twelve and six eighteen—so—we must make the most of it. I'll go buy something to eat and drink."

With greater alacrity than might have been expected in one of her appearance—for age and misery seemed to have made her as decrepit as ugly—she began to occupy her trembling hands in tying an old bonnet on her head, and folding a torn shawl about herself: still eyeing the money in her daughter's hand, with the same sharp desire.

"What joy is to come to us of this marriage, mother?" asked the daughter. "You have not told me that."

"The joy," she replied, attiring herself, with fumbling fingers, "of no love at all, and much pride and hate, my deary. The joy of confusion and strife among 'em, proud as they are, and of danger—danger, Alice!"

"What danger?"

"I have seen what I have seen. I know what I know!" chuckled the mother. "Let some look to it. Let some be upon their guard. My gal may keep good company yet!"

Then, seeing that in the wondering earnestness with which her

daughter regarded her, her hand involuntarily closed upon the money, the old woman made more speed to secure it, and hurriedly added, "but I'll go buy something; I'll go buy something."

As she stood with her hand stretched out before her daughter, her daughter, glancing again at the money, put it to her lips before parting with it.

"What, Ally! Do you kiss it?" chuckled the old woman. "That's like me—I often do. Oh, it's so good to us!" squeezing her own tarnished halfpence up to her bag of a throat, "so good to us in everything, but not coming in heaps!"

"I kiss it, mother," said the daughter, "or I did then—I don't know that I ever did before—for the giver's sake."

"The giver, eh, deary?" retorted the old woman, whose dimmed eyes glistened as she took it. "Aye! I'll kiss it for the giver's sake, too, when the giver can make it go farther. But I'll go spend it, deary. I'll be back directly."

"You seem to say you know a great deal, mother," said the daughter, following her to the door with her eyes. "You have grown very wise since we parted."

"Know!" croaked the old woman, coming back a step or two. "I know more than you think. I know more than *he* thinks, deary, as I'll tell you by and bye. I know all about him."

The daughter smiled incredulously.

"I know of his brother, Alice," said the old woman, stretching out her neck with a leer of malice absolutely frightful, "who might have been where you have been—for stealing money—and who lives with his sister, over yonder, by the north road out of London."

"Where?"

"By the north road out of London, deary. You shall see the house, if you like. It a'nt much to boast of, genteel as his own is. No, no, no," cried the old woman shaking her head, and laughing; for her daughter had started up, "not now; it's too far off; it's by the milestone, where the stones are heaped;—to-morrow deary, if it's fine, and you are in the humour. But I'll go spend—"

"Stop!" and the daughter flung herself upon her, with her former passion raging like a fire. "The sister is a fair-faced Devil, with brown hair?"

The old woman, amazed and terrified, nodded her head.

"I see the shadow of him in her face! It's a red house standing by itself. Before the door there is a small green porch."

Again the old woman nodded.

"In which I sat to-day! Give me back the money."

"Alice! Deary!"

"Give me back the money, or you'll be hurt."

She forced it from the old woman's hand as she spoke, and utterly indifferent to her complainings and entreaties, threw on the garments she had taken off, and hurried out, with headlong speed.

The mother followed, limping after her as she could, and expostulating with no more effect upon her than upon the wind and rain and darkness

that encompassed them. Obdurate and fierce in her own purpose, and indifferent to all besides, the daughter defied the weather and the distance, as if she had known no travel or fatigue, and made for the house where she had been relieved. After some quarter of an hour's walking, the old woman, spent and out of breath, ventured to hold by her skirts; but she ventured no more, and they travelled on in silence through the wet and gloom. If the mother now and then uttered a word of complaint, she stifled it lest her daughter should break away from her and leave her behind; and the daughter was dumb.

It was within an hour or so of midnight, when they left the regular streets behind them, and entered on the deeper gloom of that neutral ground where the house was situated. The town lay in the distance, lurid and lowering; the bleak wind howled over the open space; all around was black, wild, desolate.

"This is a fit place for me!" said the daughter, stopping to look back. "I thought so, when I was here before, to-day."

"Alice, my deary," cried the mother, pulling her gently by the skirt. "Alice!"

"What now, mother?"

"Don't give the money back, my darling; please don't. We can't afford it. We want supper, deary. Money is money, whoever gives it. Say what you will, but keep the money."

"See there!" was all the daughter's answer. "That is the house I mean. Is that it?"

The old woman nodded in the affirmative; and a few more paces brought them to the threshold. There was the light of fire and candle in the room where Alice had sat to dry her clothes; and on her knocking at the door, John Carker appeared from that room.

He was surprised to see such visitors at such an hour, and asked Alice what she wanted.

"I want your sister," she said. "The woman who gave me money to-day."

At the sound of her raised voice, Harriet came out.

"Oh!" said Alice. "You are here! Do you remember me?"

"Yes," she answered, wondering.

The face that had humbled itself before her, looked on her now with such invincible hatred and defiance; and the hand that had gently touched her arm, was clenched with such a show of evil purpose, as if it would gladly strangle her; that she drew close to her brother for protection.

"That I could speak with you, and not know you! That I could come near you, and not feel what blood was running in your veins, by the tingling of my own!" said Alice, with a menacing gesture.

"What do you mean? What have I done?"

"Done!" returned the other. "You have sat me by your fire; you have given me food and money; you have bestowed your compassion on me! You! whose name I spit upon!"

The old woman, with a malevolence that made her ugliness quite awful, shook her withered hand at the brother and sister in confirmation of her daughter, but plucked her by the skirts again, nevertheless, imploring her to keep the money.

"If I dropped a tear upon your hand, may it wither it up! If I spoke a gentle word in your hearing, may it deafen you! If I touched you with my lips, may the touch be poison to you! A curse upon this roof that gave me shelter! Sorrow and shame upon your head! Ruin upon all belonging to you!"

As she said the words, she threw the money down upon the ground, and spurned it with her foot.

"I tread it in the dust: I wouldn't take it if it paved my way to Heaven! I would the bleeding foot that brought me here to-day, had rotted off, before it led me to your house!"

Harriet, pale and trembling, restrained her brother, and suffered her to go on uninterrupted.

"It was well that I should be pitied and forgiven by you, or any one of your name, in the first hour of my return! It was well that you should act the kind good lady to me! I'll thank you when I die; I'll pray for you, and all your race, you may be sure!"

With a fierce action of her hand, as if she sprinkled hatred on the ground, and with it devoted those who were standing there to destruction, she looked up once at the black sky, and strode out into the wild night.

The mother, who had plucked at her skirts again and again in vain, and had eyed the money lying on the threshold with an absorbing greed that seemed to concentrate her faculties upon it, would have prowled about, until the house was dark, and then groped in the mire on the chance of repossessing herself of it. But the daughter drew her away, and they set forth, straight, on their return to their dwelling; the old woman whimpering and bemoaning their loss upon the road, and fretfully bewailing, as openly as she dared, the undutiful conduct of her handsome girl in depriving her of a supper, on the very first night of their re-union.

Supperless to bed she went, saying for a few coarse fragments; and those she sat mumbling and munching over a scrap of fire, long after her undutiful daughter lay asleep.

Were this miserable mother, and this miserable daughter, only the reduction to their lowest grade, of certain social vices sometimes prevailing higher up? In this round world of many circles within circles, do we make a weary journey from the high grade to the low, to find at last that they lie close together, that the two extremes touch, and that our journey's end is but our starting-place? Allowing for great difference of stuff and texture, was the pattern of this woof repeated among gentle blood at all?

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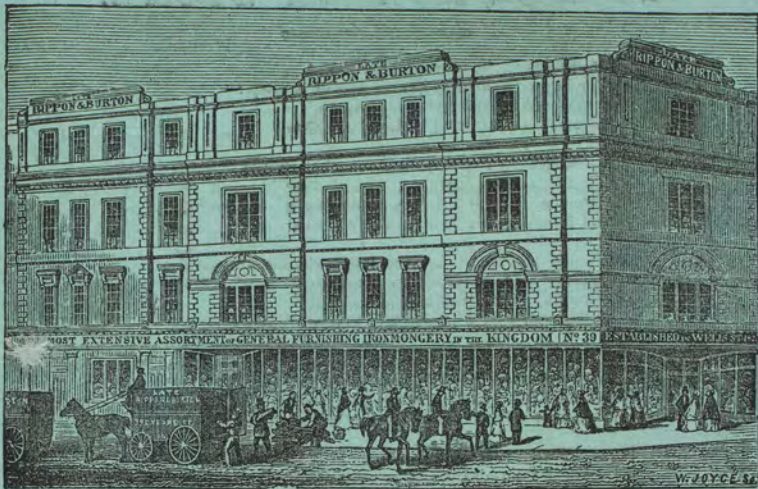
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