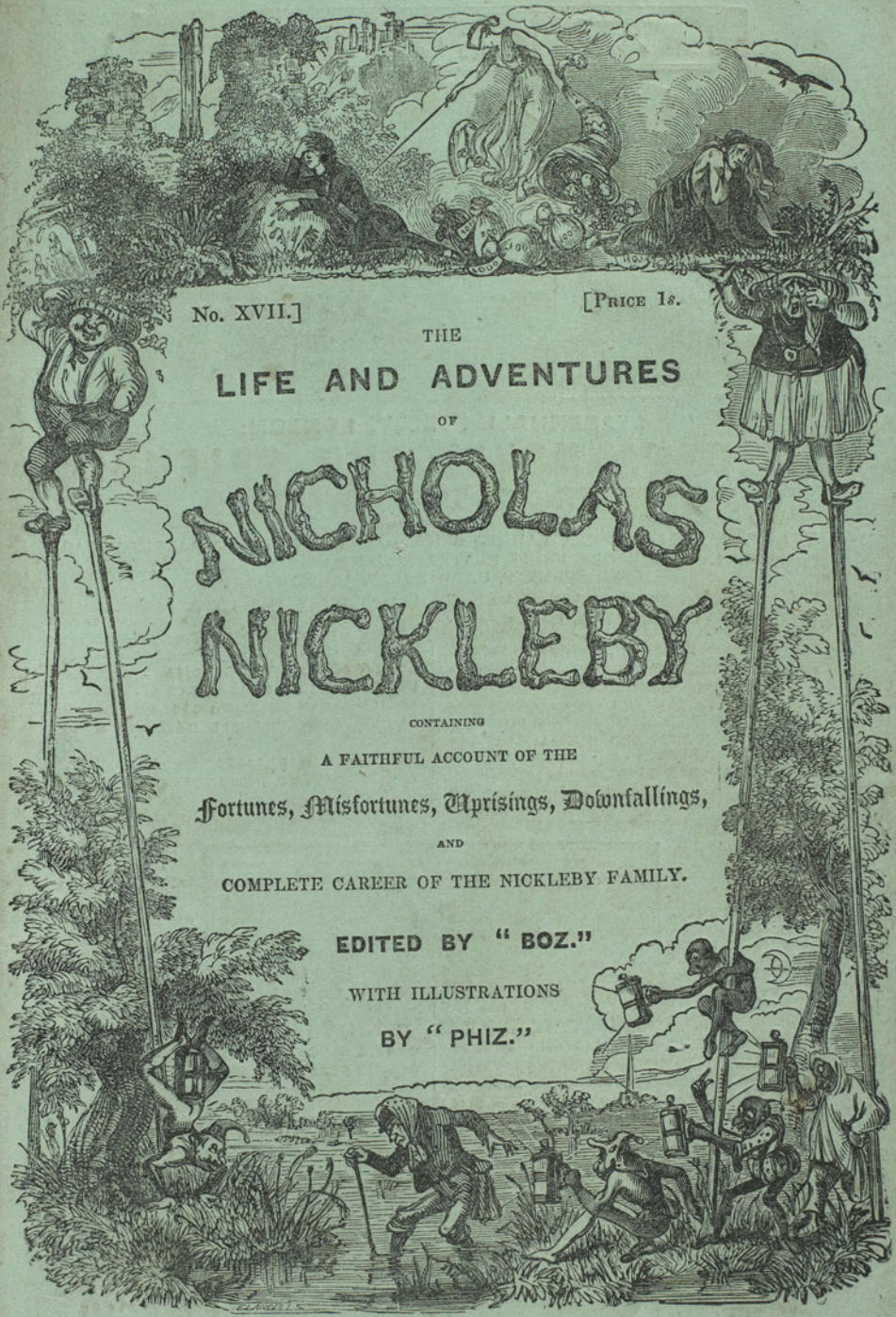

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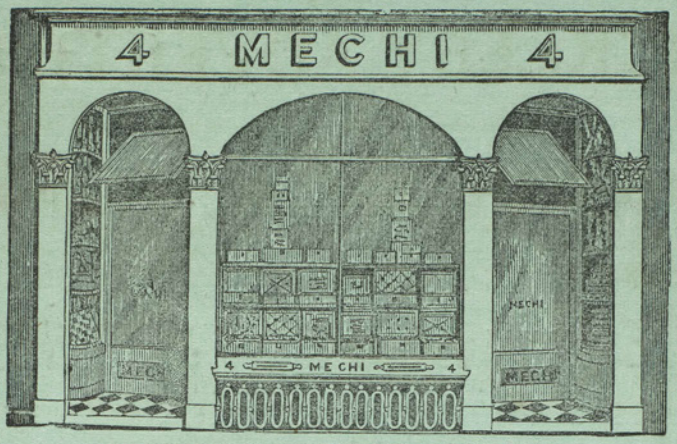

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No. 12, CHATHAM PLACE, BLACKFRIARS, LONDON.

CAPITAL, £500,000.

DIRECTORS.

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ADVANTAGES OFFERED BY THIS SOCIETY.

A couple paying a yearly premium, or a single sum, varying according to age (*e. g.*, supposing the wife 21, *8l.* 18*s.* 6*d.* annual payment, or 134*l.* 1*s.* 8*d.* in one sum, would secure to each of their future and existing Children, however numerous, 100*l.* on attaining 21 years, or any other sum in proportion.

Persons depending on income may, at a trifling cost, secure, at a given time, a sum sufficient to give all their Boys a Collegiate or Professional Education, and a Portion to each of their Girls.

Guardians, Trustees, &c., may thus provide for apprenticeship fees without diminishing the capital necessary to start their Wards in business.

All persons may on easy terms insure their lives at this office for the benefit of their families.

EXAMPLES OF LIFE ASSURANCE FOR £100.

Age.	30	40	50	60
Annual Premium	£2 4 7	£3 0 3	£4 4 9	£6 2 5

Annuities of all kinds are also granted by the Society. JOHN CAZENOVE, *Secretary*.

TO THE ESPECIAL NOTICE OF THE LADIES.

C. AND A. OLDRIDGE'S BALM OF COLUMBIA.

The peculiar virtues of this preparation completely remove the difficulty experienced by Ladies in preserving their ringlets after exercise; its use so invigorates the Hair, that tresses, previously the straightest and most destitute of curl, rapidly acquire a vigour, which maintains in permanent ringlets the head-dress of the most persevering votary of the Ball-room, the Ride, or the Promenade. After the Minerals and Vegetables of the Old World have been compounded in all imaginable ways in fruitless attempts to discover so important a desideratum, we are indebted to the Western Hemisphere for furnishing the basis of OLDRIDGE'S BALM OF COLUMBIA, the efficacy of which in preserving, strengthening, and renewing the Hair, has become a matter of notoriety among all civilized nations. Its restorative virtues are indeed a proverb, and the most satisfactory attestations to its infallibility in reproducing Hair upon persons otherwise hopelessly bald, may be examined at the Office of the Proprietors, No. 1, Wellington-street, Strand, where the Balm is sold; and by all respectable Perfumers and Medicine Venders. Price 3*s.* 6*d.*, 6*s.*, and 11*s.* per Bottle. No other prices are genuine.

N.B.—The Public are requested to be on their guard against Counterfeits.

Ask for OLDRIDGE'S BALM, 1, Wellington-street, Strand, London.

GOUT AND RHEUMATISM.

Important discovery by Dr. DAVIS, of a Safe and Effectual Remedy for the Cure of these painful and sometimes fatal diseases: affording immediate Relief, renovating the Health, and avoiding the baneful effects often produced by the indiscriminate use of Colchicum or Meadow Saffron, contained in several of the Gout specifics. This Invaluable Medicine is offered to the public solely on its own merits, having been used for several years by the above Eminent Practitioner, with invariable success; who, fully assured of its extraordinary Restorative Power, has been advised not to confine within the limits of his own practice a remedy of so much importance.

This Medicine is given in a liquid form for the express purpose of being instantly conveyed by the Absorbents into Circulation, and removing with proportionate rapidity, a peculiar Morbid Condition of the Blood, on which Gout is principally based, as described in the Observations and Instructions attached to each Bottle of the Medicine.

The Restorative is equally efficacious in Lumbago, Sciatica, and Neuralgic Affections.

Sold Wholesale and Retail by Edwards, 56, St. Paul's Churchyard; Sanger, 150, Oxford Street; William Shillitoe, 43, High Street, Birmingham; Thomas Shillitoe, High Street, Tottenham; and most Medicine Venders in the Kingdom.——Sold in Bottles at 2*s.* 9*d.* and 4*s.* 6*d.*, Stamp included.

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

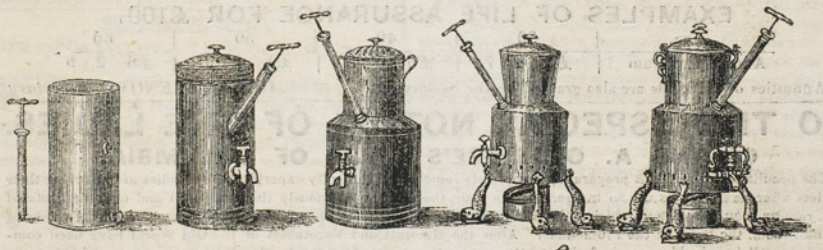
BY HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL LETTERS PATENT.

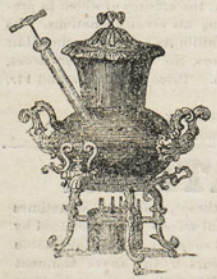
33, GERRARD STREET, SOHO.

G. MINTER begs to inform the Nobility, Gentry, &c., that he has invented an EASY CHAIR, that will recline and elevate, of itself, into an innumerable variety of positions, without the least trouble or difficulty to the occupier; and there being no machinery, rack, catch, or spring, it is only for persons sitting in the chair merely to wish to recline or elevate themselves, and the seat and back take any desired inclination, without requiring the least assistance or exertion whatever, owing to the weight on the seat acting as a counterbalance to the pressure against the back by the application of a self-adjusting leverage; and for which G. M. has obtained his Majesty's Letters Patent. G. M. particularly recommends this invention to Invalids, or to those who may have lost the use of their hands or legs, as they are by it enabled to vary their position without requiring the use of either to obtain that change of position, from its endless variety, so necessary for the relief and comfort of the afflicted.

The Chair is made by the Inventor only, at his Wholesale Cabinet and Upholstery Manufactory, 33, Gerrard-street, Soho. G. M. is confident an inspection only is required to be convinced of its superiority over all others.

Merlin, Bath, Brighton, and every other description of Garden Wheel Chairs, much improved by G. Minter, with his self-acting reclining backs, so as to enable an invalid to lie at full length. Spinal Carriages, Portable Carriage Chairs, Water Beds, and every article for the comfort of the invalid.





PALMER'S

IMPROVED PNEUMATIC

FILTERING MACHINES,

Of all sizes, for making and filtering Coffee

IN THE HIGHEST PERFECTION,

And for filtering quickly and without Waste,

WINES, LIQUEURS,

TINCTURES, ESSENCES, OILS, &c.

AND MAKE MOST VALUABLE AND RAPID

WATER FILTERS,

PRICES, 25*s*., 30*s*., 42*s*., and upwards.

Manufactured and Sold by E. PALMER,
Chemical and Philosophical Instrument Maker,
103, NEWGATE STREET, LONDON.

N.B. Electrical and Electro-Magnetic Machines, Improved Galvanic Batteries, Air Pumps, Pneumatic Apparatus, Single and Compound Microscopes, and all kinds of Chemical and Philosophical Instruments of superior workmanship at very moderate prices. PALMER'S NEW CATALOGUE, with 120 Engravings, 1*s*. each.

WORKING MODELS OF STEAM ENGINES, AND ALL KINDS OF MACHINERY, MADE TO ORDER.

NO. 28, BISHOPSGATE-STREET Within.—For ease, elegance, and comfort, COLLEY'S VENTILATING PERUKES stand pre-eminent. This extraordinary production is formed on a light elastic net, entirely open and porous, that freely admits the air to the skin, and allows the perspiration to evaporate. They are equally adapted to ladies' head dresses, fronts, and ornamental hair generally, and are particularly desirable to those who feel annoyed by either the heat or pressure of the old system. Their extreme lightness and durability, and the tenacity with which they adhere to the head, render detection difficult, if not impossible, to the most scrutinizing eye.

MIDSHIPMEN.

WANTED, in an INDIAMAN.—A Shipowner is desirous of receiving One or Two Young Gentlemen, either for the voyage or for a term, as MIDSHIPMEN, where they have an opportunity of learning the profession. For terms, as to Premium and Mess, apply from 11 till 3 to Messrs. Greenwood & West, General Passenger and Shipping Agents, 4, Birchin-lane, London. Letters to be post paid.

BRIDGENORTH HOUSE.

CARPET & FLOOR-CLOTH MANUFACTURERS.

THE Cheapest House in London! (for the best Quality.) A most splendid Assortment of Elegant and New Designs in Brussels, Kidderminster, Damask, and Venetian Carpets. Hearth Rugs, Floor Cloths, & General Furnishing Warehouse—At Element, Collins, and Knight's, 273, High Holborn, opposite Red Lion-street. Families furnishing, are particularly requested to inspect their immense stock.

DIET.

"Attend to diet, regulate your stomach, and that will regulate all the rest of the human frame"—*Abernethy.*

"Inglis's Digestive Bread is extremely easy of digestion, wholesome, and nutritious."—*Dr. Walker.*

"Inglis, New-street, Covent-garden, makes very good brown bread."

"It is well for those who live in town to know where to find it."—*Dr. Graham on Diet and Regimen.*

Upwards of 100 Medical Certificates may be seen on application.

C. SAUNDERS'S PATENT METALLIC TABLET STROP,

WITH FOUR SIDES OF PROGRESSIVE FINENESS.

To shave or not to shave, is not the question;
Whether 'tis better for a man to suffer
The pulls and scratches of a saw-tooth razor,
Or buy a tablet razor strop of Saunders's,
And thus to end them? That is the question.

To self-shaving gentlemen, the tablet is more simple in its use than the hone, and as effectual in removing the round edge which all strops produce, so that a gentleman sets his razor with the same certainty as he can mend a pen to suit his own hand. The superiority of this tablet has been fully proved by the undersigned cutlers:—G. Lowcock, 38, Cornhill; Millikin, 301, Strand; Coleman 4, Haymarket; and Thornhill, 144, New Bond-street; where they may be had wholesale and retail.

METCALFE'S NEW & ORIGINAL PATTERN OF TOOTH BRUSH,

MADE on the most scientific principle, and patronised by the most eminent of the faculty. This celebrated brush will search thoroughly into the divisions of the teeth, and will clean in the most effectual and extraordinary manner. Metcalfe's Tooth Brushes are famous for being made on a plan that the hairs never come loose in the mouth. An improved Clothes Brush, that cleans in a third part of the usual time, and incapable of injuring the finest nap. A newly-invented Brush for cleaning Velvet with quick and satisfactory effect. The much-approved Flesh Brushes, as recommended by the faculty. Penetrating Hair Brushes, with the durable unbleached Russian bristles, that do not soften in washing or use like common hair; and combs of all descriptions.—At Metcalfe's, 130, Oxford-st., nearly opposite Hanover-sq.

THE Nobility and Gentry are respectfully informed that BOURNE and SON, of 244, Regent Street, have a large and valuable stock of FURS, SABLES in particular, well worthy of the inspection of those who wish to make advantageous purchases; as B. and SON are resolved to clear their stock of Manufactured Furs off at reduced prices, to enable them to produce an entire new selection for the next season. N.B. Several very elegant Leopard-skin Rugs for the drawing-room or carriage.

ROE'S PATENT WATER-CLOSET.

No. 69, STRAND.

MR. HARDWICK begs to acquaint Mr. ROE, that he is quite satisfied with the Water-closets which have been fitted up at the New Schools in the Parish of St. Marylebone, with Mr. Roe's "Patent Water-closet Basin;" and that it is his intention to have them used in the Hotels erecting in Euston Grove, opposite the London and Birmingham Railway entrance.—Russell-square, March 8, 1839.

MONS. MALLAN and SON, SURGEON-DENTISTS, No. 32, Great Russell-street, Bloomsbury.—LOSS of TEETH SUPPLIED, LOOSE TEETH FASTENED, FILLING DECAYED TEETH with MINERAL SUCCEDANEUM.—Mons. MALLAN and SON HAVE REDUCED THEIR CHARGES TO THE FOLLOWING SCALE:—

A Single Artificial Tooth	£0 10 0
A Set	5 5 0
A Set of Natural Teeth	15 0 0
A Set of Mons. M.'s Incorrodible Teeth	20 0 0
Loose Teeth fastened	0 10 0
Filling a Decayed Tooth with Mineral Succeedaneum	0 5 0

All Teeth supplied by Mons. M. and Son are fixed without wires or clasps, or extraction of stumps. Mastication and Articulation guaranteed.—32, Great Russell-street, Bloomsbury.

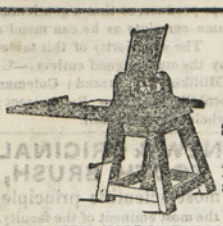
THE CHINA TEA COMPANY

offer the best possible guarantee for the excellence of their TEAS, by supplying only the TWO BEST SORTS; these they retail at prices with which no other establishment ventures to compete, viz.:—

BEST BLACK TEA imported, 4*s.* 10*d.* per lb. **DITTO HYSON,** 6*s.* per lb.

106, Newgate Street, corner of Christ's Hospital; West End Branch, 315, Oxford Street (South side), a few doors West of Regent Street.

One Agent will be appointed in every Provincial Town.—Direct post paid.



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The attention of ARTISTS, PUBLISHERS, ARCHITECTS, &c. is respectfully called to
STRAKER's Establishment, 3, George Yard, Lombard Street, London,
For the execution, either on ZINC or STONE, of every Description of
Landscapes, Portraits, Botanical, Mechanical, Anatomical, and other Drawings, Maps and Plans of Estates, Elevations, Fac Similes, Writings, Circular Letters, &c. &c.
With the utmost Dispatch, and on the most moderate Terms.

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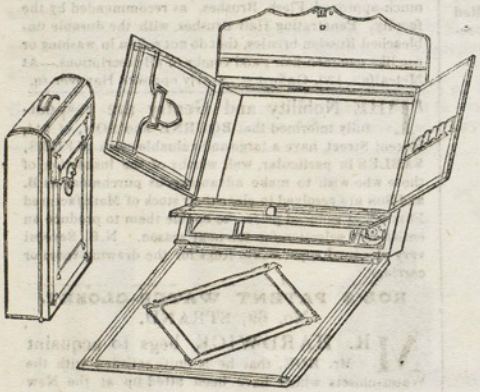
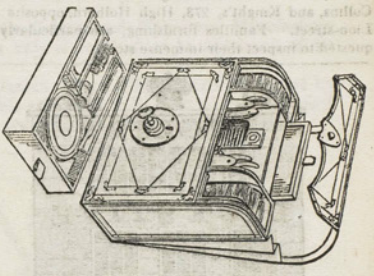
At the following greatly Reduced Prices for Cash: 8 in. by 14 £5 5*s.*; 14 in. by 18 £7 10*s.*; 18 in. by 23 £9 10*s*; 20 in. by 26 £12 12*s*. Larger sizes in like proportion.
ZINC PLATES, STONES, and EVERY MATERIAL REQUIRED IN THE ART, forwarded to all Parts of the World.
Country and Foreign Orders punctually executed.
Zinc Door and Window Plates of every description.

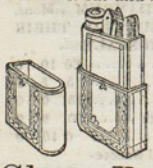
LEATHER TRAVELLING & DRESSING CASES.



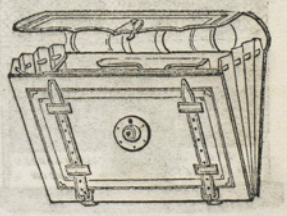
Fourteen inches wide,
Leather Travelling Case, Price 22s. 6d.
Forms, when open, a convenient sloping Writing Desk, fitted with screw Ink Glass, Pen Tray, and SECRET DRAWER, it will contain Foolscap Paper, and is deep enough to hold articles of dress, &c. contains instrument board and pocket for Letters; a superior tumbler lock with two keys, price 22*s.* 6*d.* or smaller sizes 18*s.* 6*d.* and 20*s.*



In Real Russia Leather,
Gentlemens' Dressing Case,
Fitted with superior Cutlery and Brushes, price ..... 50*s.*



In Russia Leather,
Pocket Shaving Case,
Fitted with Tooth, Nail, and Shaving Brushes, Razors, Strop, and Comb, complete ..... 12*s.* 6*d.*



Fourteen inches wide.
Leather Soufflet,
Fitted with Pen Case, Blotting Case, Ink Glass, &c. ..... £1. 5*s.*

Show Room for Desks, Dressing Cases, &c. at
THE BRITISH PAPER WAREHOUSE,
No. 46, CORNHILL, LONDON.

A CERTAIN CURE FOR CORNS AND BUNIONS.

ALLINGHAM'S ROTTERDAM SOLVENT, which gives relief upon the first application. The universally-acknowledged efficacy of this extraordinary, safe, and never-failing remedy for the speedy and certain cure of Corns and Bunions, however obstinate and long standing, induces the Proprietor of this highly-important chemical discovery, to caution the Public against base and spurious imitations, injurious in their effect, and most dangerous to those who, either through ignorance, or the fraudulent pretences of others, are induced to apply them. The proprietor has received testimonials of its beneficial effects from the most respectable families in the kingdom. The genuine has the signature of "J. A. Sharwood" on the outside wrapper. Sold at 55, Bishopsgate-without; and, by appointment, by Sanger, 150, and Chandler, 76, Oxford-street; and most medicine venders.

CHUBB'S NEW PATENT DETECTOR LOCKS give perfect security from false Keys, and also detect any attempt to open them. They are made of all sizes, and for every purpose to which Locks are applied: these Locks are strong, secure, simple, and durable. The Patent Combination Latches for Street Doors are simple in construction, low in price, and quite secure; the Keys of the Latches are particularly neat and portable. Chubb's Patent Fire-Proof Safes and Boxes form a complete preservation for Deeds, Plate, Books, &c. from fire and thieves. Cash Boxes, and Japan Boxes, of all sizes, fitted with the new Patent Locks.

A large assortment of the above are on sale by C. CHUBB, 57, St. Paul's Churchyard, London; C. CHUBB and Son, 3, St. Mary's-gate, Manchester; and C. CHUBB, Jun., Lord-street, Liverpool.

TO ANGLERS—GOLDEN PERCH.

THAMES ANGLING.—4-joint Hickory Roach and Barbel Rods, with two tops, for punt fishing, 15s.; 3-joint Bamboo Rods, 2s. each; 4-joint do. Walking-stick Rods, 4s.; 4-joint best plain Fly Rods, 11s.; 4-joint best Fly Rods, with two tops, winch fittings, socket, spear, landing-handle, and partition-bag, 20s.; 4-joint do. Salmon Rod, do. do. do., 18 feet long, 34s.; 6-joint do. General Rods, 5 tops, do. do. do. 30s.; Patent Taper Lines, 1d. per yard; the best London-made do., 20 yards, 3s.; do. 40 yards, 6s.; Town-made plain Winches from 1s. 6d.; do. multiplying do., from 4s.; Pocket Fishing Stools, 2s. 6d.; Eel line, 40 yards long, and 30 hooks, 1s.; Fly-cases, from 1s. 6d.; the best Flies that can be dressed on the Limerick bend hooks, 2s. per dozen, either selected from 300 gross, or dressed to pattern. Patent Taper Quill Floats for Rod fishing, from 6d. each. Catalogues of Prices of several hundred articles, with the Young Angler's Instructor, containing 14 Woodcuts, gratis, on application, or forwarded, in answer to a post-paid letter. Orders from the country, with a remittance, punctually attended to, and any article exchanged if not approved of.—J. CHEEK, Golden Perch, 52, Strand.

A LUXURY FOR THE HOT WEATHER

will be realised in the NEW SUMMER COATS. In appearance they are thoroughly respectable, wear well, are not expensive, much resemble the finest cloth, and so cool and light, that the wearer would scarcely know that he had a coat on. Also, made of the same material, the NEW WATERPROOF CODRINGTON FROCKS, which, while completely impervious to rain, ALLOW THE FREE ESCAPE OF PERSPIRATION. This desideratum in waterproofing was first introduced to the public by W. Berdoe, who is convinced that the process of the British Waterproofing company is the best. First-rate Clothing of every description made to order by

WALTER BERDOE, TAILOR, 69, CORNHILL.

PATENT PORTABLE WATER CLOSETS,

ON WISS'S PRINCIPLE.—Fifteen years' labour and experience have not only established their superiority, but the decided conviction that they cannot be improved. ROBERT WISS, the actual inventor and holder of the patent, feels justified in calling attention to the above, as the most simple and perfect article of the kind. Also WATER-CLOSETS for fixing, on the same principle, particularly recommended for the country and exportation, the machinery and cistern requiring no more room than is occupied by the seat. To be seen in great variety at the Manufactory. Plumber's work of every description executed in town and country.—Address No. 38, Charing-cross, near the Admiralty, London.

BUTLER'S TASTELESS SEIDLITZ POWDER. All the solid ingredients of the Seidlitz Spring, which are usually offered to the public in two separate portions, are here, by a process which prevents any spontaneous action upon each other, combined in one compound powder,—the effervescing solution of which in water is very nearly *tasteless*. Being inclosed in a bottle, it will, when kept securely corked, remain uninjured by humidity during the longest sea voyage or land journey. The solution, besides being more palatable, is made in much less time, and with infinitely less trouble, than that produced with the two powders prepared in the usual way.

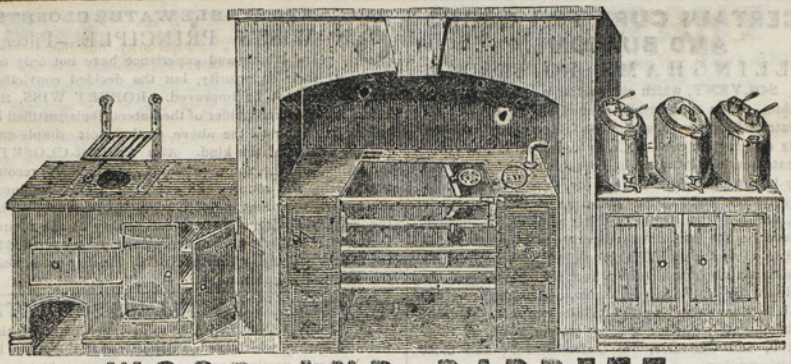
Sold in 2*s.* 6*d.* bottles, by the preparer, T. Butler, Chemist, 4, Cheapside, London, and 20, Waterloo-place, opposite the Post Office, Edinburgh, and (authenticated by his name and address in the attached label) may also be obtained of J. Sanger, 150, Oxford-street; or, by order, through any respectable Druggist or Medical Establishment in the United Kingdom.

BREWSTER'S EXTRACT OF LILIES.

FOR Improving and Beautifying the Complexion, the EXTRACT OF LILIES has been made by W. BREWSTER for a Lady of distinction for several years from the receipt of the family Physician, and now (by permission) offered to the public. Acting as a thorough cleanser of the skin, it removes sunburns, eradicates freckles, spots, and all cutaneous eruptions, allaying irritation caused by frost, cold winds, damp atmosphere, &c., and is the most innocent and efficacious article ever made for the skin. Brewster's Almond and Honey Soap, combining the emollient and balsamic properties of the honey with the finest Almond Oil Soap, in a perfection hitherto unattainable; it prevents chapped hands, &c. Asiatic Vegetable, or Extract of Cocoa-nut Oil, for dressing and promoting the growth of Hair; it invigorates the roots, strengthens the weak hair, and produces a luxuriant growth. Made only by Brewster, Perfumer to the Royal Family, 48, New Bond-street.

A NEW DISCOVERY.

MR. HOWARD, Surgeon-Dentist, 52, Fleet-street, begs to introduce an entirely NEW DESCRIPTION OF ARTIFICIAL TEETH, fixed without springs, wires, or ligatures, at STRICTLY MODERATE CHARGES. They so perfectly resemble the natural teeth as not to be distinguished from the originals by the closest observer; they will never change colour or decay; and will be found very superior to any teeth ever before used. This method does not require the extraction of roots, or any painful operation, and will give support and preserve teeth that are loose, and are guaranteed to restore articulation and mastication; and, in order that Mr. Howard's improvement may be within reach of the most economical, he has reduced his charges to the lowest scale possible. Tooth-ache instantly cured, and decayed teeth rendered sound and useful in mastication.—52, Fleet-street.



WOOD AND BARRETT,

247, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, NEAR OXFORD STREET,

Inform the Public that they confine themselves to the Manufacture of Kitchen Ranges, Hot Plates, Smoke Jacks, Hot Closets, Broiling Stoves, Stewing Stoves, Steam Tables, Steam Kettles, Warm Baths, Bell Hanging, Register Grates, Fender Grates, and Dr. Arnott's Thermometer Stoves, upon the best principle.

MOSLEY'S METALLIC PENS.

R. MOSLEY & CO. beg to call the attention of Mercantile Men, and the Public in general, to their superior Metallic Pens. They possess the highest degree of elasticity and flexibility, and are found perfectly free from all those inconveniences which have prevented so many persons making use of Metallic Pens.

Every description of writer may be suited, as these pens are manufactured of various qualities, degrees of hardness, &c. They may be had of all respectable Stationers throughout the kingdom.

Observe that every Pen is stamped, R. MOSLEY & CO. LONDON.

WHOLESALE AND FOR EXPORTATION.

V. R.

JOSEPH GILLOTT,

PATENT STEEL PEN MANUFACTURER,

59, NEWHALL STREET & GRAHAM STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

JOSEPH GILLOTT has been for nearly twenty years engaged in the manufacture of Steel Pens, and during that time has devoted his unceasing attention to the improving and perfecting this useful and necessary article: the result of his persevering efforts, and numerous experiments upon the properties of the metal used, has been the construction of a Pen upon a principle entirely new, combining all the advantages of the elasticity and fineness of the quill, with the durability of the metallic pen, and thus obviating the objections which have existed against the use of Steel Pens.

The Patentee is proud to acknowledge that a discerning public has paid the most gratifying tribute to his humble, though useful, labours, by a demand for his Pens far exceeding his highest expectations.—— The number of Steel Pens manufactured at Joseph Gillott's works, from October, 1837, to October, 1838,

was **35,808,452**
or **2,984,037** 2-3rds dozens
or **248,669** gross, **9** dozen and **8** Pens.

This statement will show the estimation in which these Pens are held, and it is presumed will be an inducement to those who desire to have a really good article, at least to make a trial of Joseph Gillott's Pen.

☞ The universal celebrity of these Pens has induced certain disreputable Makers to foist upon the Public a spurious article, bearing the mis-spelled name of the Patentee and Sole Manufacturer, thus "GILOTT," by omitting the L; and in some instances the omission of the final T is resorted to, in order to retain the same SOUND as GILLOTT: but observe,

☞ NONE ARE GENUINE BUT THOSE MARKED IN FULL **JOSEPH GILLOTT.**

Sold by all Stationers and other respectable Dealers in Steel Pens throughout the Kingdom.

COMFORT FOR TENDER FEET, &c.

WELLINGTON STREET,

STRAND, LONDON.

HALL & CO.

PATENTEES OF THE PANNUS CORIUM,

OR

Leather Cloth Boots & Shoes,

FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

These articles have borne the test and received the approbation of all who have worn them. Such as are troubled with Corns, Bunions, Gout, Chilblains, or Tenderness of Feet from any other cause, will find them the softest and most comfortable ever invented—they never draw the feet or get hard, are very durable, adapted for every Climate—they resemble the finest Leather, and are cleaned with common Blacking.

The Patent India-Rubber Goloshes

ARE LIGHT, DURABLE, ELASTIC, AND WATERPROOF;

They thoroughly protect the feet from damp or cold; are excellent preservatives against Gout, Chilblains, &c.; and when worn over a Boot or Shoe no sensible addition is felt to the weight.

Ladies and Gentlemen may be fitted with either of the above by sending a Boot or Shoe.

HALL & CO.'S PORTABLE WATER-PROOF DRESSES

FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

This desirable article claims the attention of all who are exposed to the wet.

Ladies' Cardinal Cloaks, with Hoods..... 18s.

Gentlemen's Dresses, comprising Cape, Overalls, & Hood.. 21s.

The whole can be carried with convenience in the Pocket.

A variety of Water-Proof Garments at proportionable Prices.

Wellington Street, Strand, London.

A. B. SAVORY and SONS, Goldsmiths,

No. 14, CORNHILL, opposite the Bank of England, LONDON.

PLATED CORNER DISHES, WITH SILVER EDGES AND SHIELDS FOR ENGRAVING.

THE GADROON PATTERN.

THE FLOWER PATTERN.

Four Dishes and Covers				
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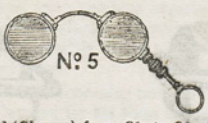

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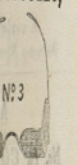

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Great excitement of Miss Kenwigs at the hair dressers shop.

Nicholas congratulates Arthur Gride on his Wedding Morning.

186, Strand.
August, 1839.

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CHAPTER LII.

NICHOLAS DESPAIRS OF RESCUING MADELINE BRAY, BUT PLUCKS UP HIS SPIRITS AGAIN, AND DETERMINES TO ATTEMPT IT. DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE OF THE KENWIGSES AND LILLYVICKS.

FINDING that Newman was determined to arrest his progress at any hazard, and apprehensive that some well-intentioned passenger attracted by the cry of "stop thief," might really lay violent hands upon his person, and place him in a disagreeable predicament from which he might have some difficulty in extricating himself, Nicholas soon slackened his pace, and suffered Newman Noggs to come up with him, which he did in so breathless a condition that it seemed impossible he could have held out for a minute longer.

"I will go straight to Bray's," said Nicholas. "I will see this man; and if there is one feeling of humanity lingering in his breast, one spark of consideration for his own child, motherless and friendless as she is, I will awaken it."

"You will not," replied Newman. "You will not, indeed."

"Then," said Nicholas, pressing onward, "I will act upon my first impulse, and go straight to Ralph Nickleby."

"By the time you reach his house he will be in bed," said Newman.

"I'll drag him from it," cried Nicholas, fiercely.

"Tut, tut," said Noggs. "Be yourself."

"You are the best of friends to me, Newman," rejoined Nicholas after a pause, and taking his hand as he spoke. "I have made head against many trials, but the misery of another, and such misery is involved in this one, that I declare to you I am rendered desperate, and know not how to act."

In truth, it did seem a hopeless case. It was impossible to make any use of such intelligence as Newman Noggs had gleaned when he lay concealed in the closet. The mere circumstance of the compact between Ralph Nickleby and Gride would not invalidate the marriage, or render Bray averse to it, who, if he did not actually know of the existence of some such understanding, doubtless suspected it. What had been hinted with reference to some fraud on Madeline, had been put with sufficient obscurity by Arthur Gride, but coming from Newman Noggs, and obscured still further by the smoke of his pocket pistol, it became wholly unintelligible and involved in utter darkness.

"There seems no ray of hope," said Nicholas.

"The greater necessity for coolness, for reason, for consideration, for thought," said Newman, pausing at every alternate word, to look anxiously in his friend's face. "Where are the brothers?"

"Both absent on urgent business, as they will be for a week to come."

"Is there no way of communicating with them? no way of getting one of them here by to-morrow night?"

"Impossible!" said Nicholas, "the sea is between us and them. With the fairest winds that ever blew, to go and return would take three days and nights."

"Their nephew—" said Newman, "their old clerk."

"What could either do that I cannot?" rejoined Nicholas. "With reference to them especially, I am enjoined to the strictest silence on this subject. What right have I to betray the confidence reposed in me, when nothing but a miracle can prevent this monstrous sacrifice?"

"Think," urged Newman. "Is there no way?"

"There is none," said Nicholas, in utter dejection. "Not one. The father urges—the daughter consents. These demons have her in their toils; legal right, might, power, money, and every influence are on their side. How can I hope to save her?"

"Hope to the last," said Newman, clapping him on the back. "Always hope, that's a dear boy. Never leave off hoping, it don't answer. Do you mind me, Nick? it don't answer. Don't leave a stone unturned. It's always something to know you've done the most you could. But don't leave off hoping, or it's of no use doing anything. Hope, hope, to the last!"

Nicholas needed encouragement, for the suddenness with which intelligence of the two usurers' plans had come upon him, the little time which remained for exertion, the probability, almost amounting to certainty itself, that a few hours would place Madeline Bray for ever beyond his reach, consign her to unspeakable misery, and perhaps to an untimely death: all this quite stunned and overwhelmed him. Every hope connected with her that he had suffered himself to form, or had entertained unconsciously, seemed to fall at his feet withered and dead. Every charm with which his memory or imagination had surrounded her, presented itself before him only to heighten his anguish and add new bitterness to his despair. Every feeling of sympathy for her forlorn condition, and of admiration for her heroism and fortitude, aggravated the indignation which shook him in every limb, and swelled his heart almost to bursting.

But if Nicholas's own heart embarrassed him, Newman's came to his relief. There was so much earnestness in his remonstrance, and such sincerity and fervour in his manner, odd and ludicrous as it always was, that it imparted to Nicholas new firmness, and enabled him to say, after he had walked on for some little way in silence,

"You read me a good lesson, Newman, and I will profit by it. One step at least I may take, am bound to take indeed, and to that I will apply myself to-morrow."

"What is that?" asked Noggs, wistfully. "Not to threaten Ralph? Not to see the father?"

"To see the daughter, Newman," replied Nicholas. "To do what after all is the utmost that the brothers could do if they were here, as Heaven send they were! To reason with her upon this hideous union, to point out to her all the horrors to which she is hastening; rashly, it

may be, and without due reflection. To entreat her at least to pause. She can have had no counsellor for her good; and perhaps even I may move her so far yet, though it is the eleventh hour, and she upon the very brink of ruin."

"Bravely spoken!" said Newman. "Well done, well done! Yes. Very good."

"And I do declare," cried Nicholas, with honest enthusiasm, "that in this effort I am influenced by no selfish or personal considerations, but by pity for her and detestation and abhorrence of this heartless scheme; and that I would do the same were there twenty rivals in the field, and I the last and least favoured of them all."

"You would, I believe," said Newman. "But where are you hurrying now?"

"Homewards," answered Nicholas. "Do you come with me, or shall I say good night?"

"I'll come a little way if you will but walk, not run," said Noggs.

"I cannot walk to-night, Newman," returned Nicholas, hurriedly. "I must move rapidly, or I could not draw my breath. I'll tell you what I've said and done to-morrow!"

Without waiting for a reply, he darted off at a rapid pace, and plunging into the crowds which thronged the street, was quickly lost to view.

"He's a violent youth at times," said Newman, looking after him; "and yet I like him for it. There's cause enough now, or the deuce is in it. Hope! I *said* hope, I think! Ralph Nickleby and Gride with their heads together—and hope for the opposite party! Ho! ho!"

It was with a very melancholy laugh that Newman Noggs concluded this soliloquy, and it was with a very melancholy shake of the head and a very rueful countenance, that he turned about, and went plodding on his way.

This, under ordinary circumstances, would have been to some small tavern or dram-shop, that being his way in more senses than one; but Newman was too much interested and too anxious to betake himself even to this resource, and so, with many desponding and dismal reflections, went straight home.

It had come to pass that afternoon, that Miss Morleena Kenwigs had received an invitation to repair next day per steamer from Westminster Bridge unto the Eel-pie Island at Twickenham, there to make merry upon a cold collation, bottled-beer, shrub, and shrimps, and to dance in the open air to the music of a locomotive band, conveyed thither for the purpose: the steamer being specially engaged by a dancing-master of extensive connection for the accommodation of his numerous pupils, and the pupils displaying their appreciation of the dancing-master's services by purchasing themselves, and inducing their friends to do the like, divers light-blue tickets entitling them to join the expedition. Of these light-blue tickets, one had been presented by an ambitious neighbour to Miss Morleena Kenwigs, with an invitation to join her daughters; and Mrs. Kenwigs, rightly deeming that the honour of the family was involved in Miss Morleena's making the most splendid

appearance possible on so short a notice, and testifying to the dancing-master that there were other dancing-masters besides him, and to all fathers and mothers present that other people's children could learn to be genteel besides theirs, had fainted away twice under the magnitude of her preparations, but upheld by a determination to sustain the family name or perish in the attempt, was still hard at work when Newman Noggs came home.

Now, between the italian-ironing of frills, the flouncing of trousers, the trimming of frocks, the faintings and the comings-to again incidental to the occasion, Mrs. Kenwigs had been so entirely occupied that she had not observed, until within half an hour before, that the flaxen tails of Miss Morleena's hair were in a manner run to seed; and that unless she were put under the hands of a skilful hair-dresser, she never could achieve that signal triumph over the daughters of all other people, anything less than which would be tantamount to defeat. This discovery drove Mrs. Kenwigs to despair, for the hair-dresser lived three streets and eight dangerous crossings off. Morleena could not be trusted to go there alone, even if such a proceeding were strictly proper, of which Mrs. Kenwigs had her doubts; Mr. Kenwigs had not returned from business; and there was nobody to take her. So Mrs. Kenwigs first slapped Miss Kenwigs for being the cause of her vexation, and then shed tears.

"You ungrateful child!" said Mrs. Kenwigs, "after I have gone through what I have this night for your good."

"I can't help it, ma," replied Morleena, also in tears; "my hair *will* grow."

"Don't talk to me, you naughty thing!" said Mrs. Kenwigs, "don't. Even if I was to trust you by yourself and you were to escape being run over, I know you'd run in to Laura Chopkins," who was the daughter of the ambitious neighbour, "and tell her what you're going to wear to-morrow, I know you would. You've no proper pride in yourself, and are not to be trusted out of sight for an instant."

Deploring the evil-mindedness of her eldest daughter in these terms, Mrs. Kenwigs distilled fresh drops of vexation from her eyes, and declared that she did believe there never was anybody so tried as she was. Thereupon Morleena Kenwigs wept afresh, and they bemoaned themselves together.

Matters were at this point as Newman Noggs was heard to limp past the door on his way up-stairs, when Mrs. Kenwigs, gaining new hope from the sound of his footsteps, hastily removed from her countenance as many traces of her late emotion as were effaceable on so short a notice; and presenting herself before him, and representing their dilemma, entreated that he would escort Morleena to the hair-dresser's shop.

"I wouldn't ask you, Mr. Noggs," said Mrs. Kenwigs, "if I didn't know what a good, kind-hearted creature you are—no, not for worlds. I am a weak constitution, Mr. Noggs, but my spirit would no more let me ask a favour where I thought there was a chance of its being

refused, than it would let me submit to see my children trampled down and trod upon by envy and lowness!"

Newman was too good-natured not to have consented, even without this avowal of confidence on the part of Mrs. Kenwigs. Accordingly, a very few minutes had elapsed when he and Miss Morleena were on their way to the hair-dresser's.

It was not exactly a hair-dresser's; that is to say, people of a coarse and vulgar turn of mind might have called it a barber's, for they not only cut and curled ladies elegantly and children carefully, but shaved gentlemen easily. Still it was a highly genteel establishment—quite first-rate in fact—and there were displayed in the window, besides other elegancies, waxen busts of a light lady and a dark gentleman which were the admiration of the whole neighbourhood. Indeed, some ladies had gone so far as to assert, that the dark gentleman was actually a portrait of the spirited young proprietor, and the great similarity between their head-dresses—both wore very glossy hair with a narrow walk straight down the middle, and a profusion of flat circular curls on both sides—encouraged the idea. The better informed among the sex, however, made light of this assertion, for however willing they were (and they were very willing) to do full justice to the handsome face and figure of the proprietor, they held the countenance of the dark gentleman in the window to be an exquisite and abstract idea of masculine beauty, realised sometimes perhaps among angels and military men, but very rarely embodied to gladden the eyes of mortals.

It was to this establishment that Newman Noggs led Miss Kenwigs in safety, and the proprietor knowing that Miss Kenwigs had three sisters, each with two flaxen tails, and all good for sixpence a-piece once a month at least, promptly deserted an old gentleman whom he had just lathered for shaving, and handing him over to the journeyman, (who was not very popular among the ladies, by reason of his obesity and middle age) waited on the young lady himself.

Just as this change had been effected, there presented himself for shaving, a big, burly, good-humoured coal-heaver with a pipe in his mouth, who drawing his hand across his chin, requested to know when a shaver would be disengaged.

The journeyman to whom this question was put looked doubtfully at the young proprietor, and the young proprietor looked scornfully at the coal-heaver, observing at the same time—

"You won't get shaved here, my man."

"Why not?" said the coal-heaver.

"We don't shave gentlemen in your line," remarked the young proprietor.

"Why, I see you a shaving of a baker when I was a looking through the winder, last week," said the coal-heaver.

"It's necessary to draw the line somewheres my fine feller," replied the principal. "We draw the line there. We can't go beyond bakers. If we was to get any lower than bakers our customers would desert us, and we might shut up shop. You must try some other establishment, sir. We couldn't do it here."

The applicant stared, grinned at Newman Noggs, who appeared highly entertained, looked slightly round the shop as if in depreciation of the pomatum pots and other articles of stock, took his pipe out of his mouth and gave a very loud whistle, and then put it in again, and walked out.

The old gentleman who had just been lathered, and who was sitting in a melancholy manner with his face turned towards the wall, appeared quite unconscious of this incident, and to be insensible to everything around him in the depth of a reverie—a very mournful one, to judge from the sighs he occasionally vented—in which he was absorbed. Affected by this example, the proprietor began to clip Miss Kenwigs, the journeyman to scrape the old gentleman, and Newman Noggs to read last Sunday's paper, all three in silence; when Miss Kenwigs uttered a shrill little scream, and Newman raising his eyes, saw that it had been elicited by the circumstance of the old gentleman turning his head, and disclosing the features of Mr. Lillyvick the collector.

The features of Mr. Lillyvick they were, but strangely altered. If ever an old gentleman had made a point of appearing in public, shaved close and clean, that old gentleman was Mr. Lillyvick. If ever a collector had borne himself like a collector, and assumed before all men a solemn and portentous dignity as if he had the world on his books and it was all two quarters in arrear, that collector was Mr. Lillyvick. And now, there he sat with the remains of a beard at least a week old encumbering his chin, a soiled and crumpled shirt-frill crouching as it were upon his breast instead of standing boldly out; a demeanour so abashed and drooping, so despondent, expressive of such humiliation, grief, and shame, that if the souls of forty unsubstantial housekeepers all of whom had had their water cut off for non-payment of the rate, could have been concentrated in one body, that one body could hardly have expressed such mortification and defeat as were now expressed in the person of Mr. Lillyvick the collector.

Newman Noggs uttered his name, and Mr. Lillyvick groaned, then coughed to hide it. But the groan was a full-sized groan, and the cough was but a wheeze.

"Is anything the matter?" said Newman Noggs.

"Matter, Sir!" cried Mr. Lillyvick. "The plug of life is dry, Sir, and but the mud is left."

This speech—the style of which Newman attributed to Mr. Lillyvick's recent association with theatrical characters—not being quite explanatory, Newman looked as if he were about to ask another question, when Mr. Lillyvick prevented him by shaking his hand mournfully, and then waving his own.

"Let me be shaved," said Mr. Lillyvick. "I shall be done before Morleena—it *is* Morleena, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Newman.

"Kenwigses have got a boy, haven't they?" inquired the collector.

Again Newman said "Yes."

"Is it a nice boy?" demanded the collector.

"It ain't a very nasty one," returned Newman, rather embarrassed by the question.

"Susan Kenwigs used to say," observed the collector, "that if ever she had another boy, she hoped it might be like me. Is this one like me, Mr. Noggs?"

This was a puzzling inquiry, but Newman evaded it by replying to Mr. Lillyvick, that he thought the baby might possibly come like him in time.

"I should be glad to have somebody like me, somehow," said Mr. Lillyvick, "before I die."

"You don't mean to do that yet awhile?" said Newman.

Unto which Mr. Lillyvick replied in a solemn voice, "Let me be shaved;" and again consigning himself to the hands of the journeyman, said no more.

This was remarkable behaviour, and so remarkable did it seem to Miss Morleena, that that young lady, at the imminent hazard of having her ear sliced off, had not been able to forbear looking round some score of times during the foregoing colloquy. Of her, however, Mr. Lillyvick took no notice, rather striving (so, at least, it seemed to Newman Noggs) to evade her observation, and to shrink into himself whenever he attracted her regards. Newman wondered very much what could have occasioned this altered behaviour on the part of the collector; but philosophically reflecting that he would most likely know sooner or later, and that he could perfectly afford to wait, he was very little disturbed by the singularity of the old gentleman's deportment.

The cutting and curling being at last concluded, the old gentleman, who had been some time waiting, rose to go, and walking out with Newman and his charge, took Newman's arm, and proceeded with them for some time without making any observation. Newman, who in power of taciturnity was excelled by few people, made no attempt to break silence, and so they went on until they had very nearly reached Miss Morleena's home, when Mr. Lillyvick said—

"Were the Kenwigses very much overpowered, Mr. Noggs, by that news?"

"What news?" returned Newman.

"That about—my—being——"

"Married?" suggested Newman.

"Ah!" replied Mr. Lillyvick, with another groan—this time not even disguised by a wheeze.

"It made ma cry when she knew it," interposed Miss Morleena, "but we kept it from her for a long time; and pa was very low in his spirits, but he is better now; and I was very ill, but I am better too."

"Would you give your great-uncle Lillyvick a kiss if he was to ask you, Morleena?" said the collector, with some hesitation.

"Yes,—uncle Lillyvick, I would," returned Miss Morleena, with the energy of both her parents combined; "but not aunt Lillyvick. She's not an aunt of mine, and I'll never call her one."

Immediately upon the utterance of these words, Mr. Lillyvick caught Miss Morleena up in his arms and kissed her, and being by this time at the door of the house where Mr. Kenwigs lodged (which, as has

been before-mentioned, usually stood wide open), he walked straight up into Mr. Kenwigs' sitting-room, and put Miss Morleena down in the midst. Mr. and Mrs. Kenwigs were at supper. At sight of their perjured relative, Mrs. Kenwigs turned faint and pale, and Mr. Kenwigs rose majestically.

"Kenwigs," said the collector, "shake hands."

"Sir," said Mr. Kenwigs, "the time has been when I was proud to shake hands with such a man as that man as now surweys me. The time has been, Sir," said Mr. Kenwigs, "when a wisit from that man has excited in me and my family's boozums sensations both nateral and awakening. But now I look upon that man with emotions totally surpassing everythink, and I ask myself where is his honour, where is his straight-for'ardness, and where is his human natur."

"Susan Kenwigs," said Mr. Lillyvick, turning humbly to his niece, "don't you say anything to me?"

"She is not equal to it, Sir," said Mr. Kenwigs, striking the table emphatically. "What with the nursing of a healthy babby, and the reflections upon your cruel conduct, four pints of malt liquor a day is hardly able to sustain her."

"I am glad," said the poor collector meekly, "that the baby is a healthy one. I am very glad of that."

This was touching the Kenwigses on their tenderest point. Mrs. Kenwigs instantly burst into tears, and Mr. Kenwigs evinced great emotion.

"My pleasantest feeling all the time that child was expected," said Mr. Kenwigs, mournfully, "was a thinking, 'if it's a boy, as I hope it may be, for I have heard it's uncle Lillyvick say again and again he would perfer our having a boy next—if it's a boy, what will his uncle Lillyvick say—what will he like him to be called—will he be Peter, or Alexander, or Pompey, or Diorgeenes, or what will he be?' and now when I look at him—a precious, unconscious, helpless infant, with no use in his little arms but to tear his little cap, and no use in his little legs but to kick his little self—when I see him a-lying on his mother's lap cooing and cooing, and in his innocent state almost a choking himself with his little fist—when I see him such a infant as he is, and think that that uncle Lillyvick, as was once a going to be so fond of him has withdrawed himself away, such a feeling of wengeance comes over me as no language can depicter, and I feel as if even that holy babe was a telling me to hate him."

This affecting picture moved Mrs. Kenwigs deeply. After several imperfect words which vainly attempted to struggle to the surface, but were drowned and washed away by the strong tide of her tears, she spake.

"Uncle," said Mrs. Kenwigs, "to think that you should have turned your back upon me and my dear children, and upon Kenwigs which is the author of their being—you who was once so kind and affectionate, and who, if anybody had told us such a thing of, we should have withered with scorn like lightning—you that little Lillyvick our first and earliest boy was named after at the very altar—oh gracious!"

"Was it money that we cared for?" said Mr. Kenwigs. "Was it property that we ever thought of?"

"No," cried Mrs. Kenwigs, "I scorn it."

"So do I," said Mr. Kenwigs, "and always did."

"My feelings have been lancerated," said Mrs. Kenwigs, "my heart has been torn asunder with anguish, I have been thrown back in my confinement, my unoffending infant has been rendered uncomfortable and fractious, Morleena has pined herself away to nothing; all this I forget and forgive, and with you, uncle, I never can quarrel. But never ask me to receive *her*—never do it, uncle. For I will not, I will not, I won't, I won't, I won't—"

"Susan, my dear," said Mr. Kenwigs, "consider your child."

"Yes," shrieked Mrs. Kenwigs, "I will consider my child! I will consider my child! my own child, that no uncles can deprive me of, my own hated, despised, deserted, cut-off little child." And here the emotions of Mrs. Kenwigs became so violent that Mr. Kenwigs was fain to administer hartshorn internally and vinegar externally, and to destroy a staylace, four petticoat strings, and several small buttons.

Newman had been a silent spectator of this scene, for Mr. Lillyvick had signed to him not to withdraw, and Mr. Kenwigs had further solicited his presence by a nod of invitation. When Mrs. Kenwigs had been in some degree restored, and Newman, as a person possessed of some influence with her, had remonstrated and begged her to compose herself, Mr. Lillyvick said in a faltering voice:

"I never shall ask anybody here to receive my——I needn't mention the word, you know what I mean. Kenwigs and Susan, yesterday was a week she eloped with a half-pay captain."

Mr. and Mrs. Kenwigs started together.

"Eloped with a half-pay captain," repeated Mr. Lillyvick, "basely and falsely eloped with a half-pay captain—with a bottle-nosed captain that any man might have considered himself safe from. It was in this room," said Mr. Lillyvick, looking sternly round, "that I first see Henrietta Petowker. It is in this room that I turn her off for ever."

This declaration completely changed the whole posture of affairs. Mrs. Kenwigs threw herself upon the old gentleman's neck, bitterly reproaching herself for her late harshness, and exclaiming if she had suffered, what must his sufferings have been! Mr. Kenwigs grasped his hand and vowed eternal friendship and remorse. Mrs. Kenwigs was horror-stricken to think that she should ever have nourished in her bosom such a snake, adder, viper, serpent, and base crocodile as Henrietta Petowker. Mr. Kenwigs argued that she must have been bad indeed not to have improved by so long a contemplation of Mrs. Kenwigs's virtue. Mrs. Kenwigs remembered that Mr. Kenwigs had often said that he was not quite satisfied of the propriety of Miss Petowker's conduct, and wondered how it was that she could have been blinded by such a wretch. Mr. Kenwigs remembered that he had had his suspicions, but did not wonder why Mrs. Kenwigs had not had hers, as she was all chastity, purity, and truth, and Henrietta all baseness, falsehood, and deceit. And Mr. and Mrs. Kenwigs both said with

strong feeling and tears of sympathy, that everything happened for the best, and conjured the good collector not to give way to unavailing grief, but to seek consolation in the society of those affectionate relations whose arms and hearts were ever open to him.

"Out of affection and regard for you, Susan and Kenwigs," said Mr. Lillyvick, "and not out of revenge and spite against her, for she is below it, I shall to-morrow morning settle upon your children, and make payable to the survivors of them when they come of age or marry, that money that I once meant to leave 'em in my will. The deed shall be executed to-morrow, and Mr. Noggs shall be one of the witnesses. He hears me promise this, and he shall see it done."

Overpowered by this noble and generous offer, Mr. Kenwigs, Mrs. Kenwigs, and Miss Morleena Kenwigs all began to sob together, and the noise of their sobbing communicating itself to the next room, where the children lay a-bed, and causing them to cry too, Mr. Kenwigs rushed wildly in and bringing them out in his arms by two and two, tumbled them down in their nightcaps and gowns at the feet of Mr. Lillyvick, and called upon them to thank and bless him.

"And now," said Mr. Lillyvick, when a heart-rending scene had ensued and the children were cleared away again, "Give me some supper. This took place twenty mile from town. I came up this morning, and have been lingering about all day without being able to make up my mind to come and see you. I humoured her in everything, she had her own way, she did just as she pleased, and now she has done this. There was twelve teaspoons and twenty-four pound in sovereigns—I missed them first—it's a trial—I feel I shall never be able to knock a double knock again when I go my rounds—don't say anything more about it, please—the spoons were worth—never mind—never mind!"

With such muttered outpourings as these, the old gentleman shed a few tears, but they got him into the elbow-chair and prevailed upon him, without much pressing, to make a hearty supper, and by the time he had finished his first pipe and disposed of half-a-dozen glasses out of a crown bowl of punch, ordered by Mr. Kenwigs in celebration of his return to the bosom of his family, he seemed, though still very humble, quite resigned to his fate, and rather relieved than otherwise by the flight of his wife.

"When I see that man," said Mr. Kenwigs, with one hand round Mrs. Kenwigs's waist, his other hand supporting his pipe (which made him wink and cough very much, for he was no smoker) and his eyes on Morleena, who sat upon her uncle's knee, "when I see that man a mingling once again in the spear which he adorns, and see his affections deweloping themselves in legitimate sitiwations, I feel that his natur is as elewated and expanded as his standing afore society as a public character is unimpeached, and the woices of my infant children purvided for in life, seem to whisper to me softly, 'This is an ewent at which Evins itself looks down!'"

CHAPTER LIII.

CONTAINING THE FURTHER PROGRESS OF THE PLOT CONTRIVED BY MR. RALPH NICKLEBY AND MR. ARTHUR GRIDE.

With that settled resolution and steadiness of purpose to which extreme circumstances so often give birth, acting upon far less excitable and more sluggish temperaments than that which was the lot of Madeline Bray's admirer, Nicholas started, at dawn of day, from the restless couch which no sleep had visited on the previous night, and prepared to make that last appeal by whose slight and fragile thread her only remaining hope of escape depended.

Although to restless and ardent minds, morning may be the fitting season for exertion and activity, it is not always at that time that hope is strongest or the spirit most sanguine and buoyant. In trying and doubtful positions, use, custom, a steady contemplation of the difficulties which surround us, and a familiarity with them, imperceptibly diminish our apprehensions and beget comparative indifference, if not a vague and reckless confidence in some relief, the means or nature of which we care not to foresee. But when we come fresh upon such things in the morning, with that dark and silent gap between us and yesterday, with every link in the brittle chain of hope to rivet afresh, our hot enthusiasm subdued, and cool calm reason substituted in its stead, doubt and misgiving revive. As the traveller sees farthest by day, and becomes aware of rugged mountains and trackless plains which the friendly darkness had shrouded from his sight and mind together, so the wayfarer in the toilsome path of human life sees with each returning sun some new obstacle to surmount, some new height to be attained; distances stretch out before him which last night were scarcely taken into account, and the light which gilds all nature with its cheerful beams, seems but to shine upon the weary obstacles which yet lie strewn between him and the grave.

So thought Nicholas, when, with the impatience natural to a situation like his, he softly left the house, and feeling as though to remain in bed were to lose most precious time, and to be up and stirring were in some way to promote the end he had in view, he wandered into London, although perfectly well knowing that for hours to come he could not obtain speech with Madeline, and could do nothing but wish the intervening time away.

And even now, as he paced the streets and listlessly looked round on the gradually increasing bustle and preparation for the day, everything appeared to yield him some new occasion for despondency. Last night the sacrifice of a young, affectionate, and beautiful creature to such a wretch and in such a cause, had seemed a thing too monstrous to succeed, and the warmer he grew the more confident he felt that some interposition must save her from his clutches. But now, when he

thought how regularly things went on from day to day in the same unvarying round—how youth and beauty died, and ugly griping age lived tottering on—how crafty avarice grew rich, and manly honest hearts were poor and sad—how few they were who tenanted the stately houses, and how many those who lay in noisome pens, or rose each day and laid them down at night, and lived and died, father and son, mother and child, race upon race, and generation upon generation, without a home to shelter them or the energies of one single man directed to their aid —how in seeking, not a luxurious and splendid life, but the bare means of a most wretched and inadequate subsistence, there were women and children in that one town, divided into classes, numbered and estimated as regularly as the noble families and folks of great degree, and reared from infancy to drive most criminal and dreadful trades—how ignorance was punished and never taught—how jail-door gaped and gallows loomed for thousands urged towards them by circumstances darkly curtaining their very cradles' heads, and but for which they might have earned their honest bread and lived in peace—how many died in soul, and had no chance of life—how many who could scarcely go astray, be they vicious as they would, turned haughtily from the crushed and stricken wretch who could scarce do otherwise, and who would have been a greater wonder had he or she done well, than even they, had they done ill—how much injustice, and misery, and wrong there was, and yet how the world rolled on from year to year, alike careless and indifferent, and no man seeking to remedy or redress it:—when he thought of all this, and selected from the mass the one slight case on which his thoughts were bent, he felt indeed that there was little ground for hope, and little cause or reason why it should not form an atom in the huge aggregate of distress and sorrow, and add one small and unimportant unit to swell the great amount.

But youth is not prone to contemplate the darkest side of a picture it can shift at will. By dint of reflecting on what he had to do and reviving the train of thought which night had interrupted, Nicholas gradually summoned up his utmost energy, and by the time the morning was sufficiently advanced for his purpose, had no thought but that of using it to the best advantage. A hasty breakfast taken, and such affairs of business as required prompt attention disposed of, he directed his steps to the residence of Madeline Bray, whither he lost no time in arriving.

It had occurred to him that very possibly the young lady might be denied, although to him she never had been; and he was still pondering upon the surest method of obtaining access to her in that case, when, coming to the door of the house, he found it had been left ajar—probably by the last person who had gone out. The occasion was not one upon which to observe the nicest ceremony; therefore, availing himself of this advantage, Nicholas walked gently up stairs and knocked at the door of the room into which he had been accustomed to be shown. Receiving permission to enter from some person on the other side, he opened the door and walked in.

Bray and his daughter were sitting there alone. It was nearly three

weeks since he had seen her last, but there was a change in the lovely girl before him which told Nicholas, in startling terms, what mental suffering had been compressed into that short time. There are no words which can express, nothing with which can be compared, the perfect pallor, the clear transparent cold ghastly whiteness, of the beautiful face which turned towards him when he entered. Her hair was a rich deep brown, but shading that face, and straying upon a neck that rivalled it in whiteness, it seemed by the strong contrast raven black. Something of wildness and restlessness there was in the dark eye, but there was the same patient look, the same expression of gentle mournfulness which he well remembered, and no trace of a single tear. Most beautiful—more beautiful perhaps in appearance than ever—there was something in her face which quite unmanned him, and appeared far more touching than the wildest agony of grief. It was not merely calm and composed, but fixed and rigid, as though the violent effort which had summoned that composure beneath her father's eye, while it mastered all other thoughts, had prevented even the momentary expression they had communicated to the features from subsiding, and had fastened it there as an evidence of its triumph.

The father sat opposite to her—not looking directly in her face, but glancing at her as he talked with a gay air which ill disguised the anxiety of his thoughts. The drawing materials were not on their accustomed table, nor were any of the other tokens of her usual occupations to be seen. The little vases which he had always seen filled with fresh flowers, were empty or supplied only with a few withered stalks and leaves. The bird was silent. The cloth that covered his cage at night was not removed. His mistress had forgotten him.

There are times when the mind being painfully alive to receive impressions, a great deal may be noted at a glance. This was one, for Nicholas had but glanced round him when he was recognised by Mr. Bray, who said impatiently,

"Now, Sir, what do you want? Name your errand here quickly if you please, for my daughter and I are busily engaged with other and more important matters than those you come about. Come, Sir, address yourself to your business at once."

Nicholas could very well discern that the irritability and impatience of this speech were assumed, and that Bray in his heart was rejoiced at any interruption which promised to engage the attention of his daughter. He bent his eyes involuntarily upon the father as he spoke, and marked his uneasiness, for he coloured directly and turned his head away.

The device, however, so far as it was a device for causing Madeline to interfere, was successful. She rose, and advancing towards Nicholas paused half way, and stretched out her hand as expecting a letter.

"Madeline," said her father impatiently, "my love, what are you doing?"

"Miss Bray expects an enclosure perhaps," said Nicholas, speaking very distinctly, and with an emphasis she could scarcely misunderstand. "My employer is absent from England, or I should have brought a

letter with me. I hope she will give me time—a little time—I ask a very little time."

"If that is all you come about, Sir," said Mr. Bray, "you may make yourself easy on that head. Madeline, my dear, I didn't know this person was in your debt?"

"A—a trifle I believe," returned Madeline, faintly.

"I suppose you think now," said Bray, wheeling his chair round and confronting Nicholas, "that but for such pitiful sums as you bring here because my daughter has chosen to employ her time as she has, we should starve?"

"I have not thought about it," returned Nicholas.

"You have not thought about it!" sneered the invalid. "You know you have thought about it, and have thought that and think so every time you come here. Do you suppose, young man, that I don't know what little purse-proud tradesmen are, when through some fortunate circumstances they get the upper hand for a brief day—or think they get the upper hand—of a gentleman?"

"My business," said Nicholas respectfully, "is with a lady."

"With a gentleman's daughter, Sir," returned the sick man, "and the pettifogging spirit is the same. But perhaps you bring *orders* eh? Have you any fresh *orders* for my daughter, Sir?"

Nicholas understood the tone of triumph and the sneer in which this interrogatory was put, but remembering the necessity of supporting his assumed character, produced a scrap of paper purporting to contain a list of some subjects for drawings which his employer desired to have executed; and with which he had prepared himself in case of any such contingency.

"Oh!" said Mr. Bray. "These are the orders, are they?"

"Since you insist upon the term, Sir—yes," replied Nicholas.

"Then you may tell your master," said Bray, tossing the paper back again with an exulting smile, "that my daughter—Miss Madeline Bray—condescends to employ herself no longer in such labours as these; that she is not at his beck and call as he supposes her to be; that we don't live upon his money as he flatters himself we do; that he may give whatever he owes us to the first beggar that passes his shop, or add it to his own profits next time he calculates them; and that he may go to the devil, for me. That's my acknowledgment of his orders, Sir!"

"And this is the independence of a man who sells his daughter as he has sold that weeping girl!" thought Nicholas indignantly.

The father was too much absorbed with his own exultation to mark the look of scorn which for an instant Nicholas would not have suppressed had he been upon the rack. "There," he continued, after a short silence, "you have your message and can retire—unless you have any further—ha!—any further orders."

"I have none," said Nicholas sternly; "neither in consideration of the station you once held, have I used that or any other word which, however harmless in itself, could be supposed to imply authority on my part or dependence on yours. I have no orders, but I have

fears—fears that I will express, chafe as you may—fears that you may be consigning that young lady to something worse than supporting you by the labour of her hands, had she worked herself dead. These are my fears, and these fears I found upon your own demeanour. Your conscience will tell you, Sir, whether I construe it well or not."

"For Heaven's sake!" cried Madeline, interposing in alarm between them. "Remember, Sir, he is ill."

"Ill!" cried the invalid, gasping and catching for breath. "Ill! Ill! I am bearded and bullied by a shop-boy, and she beseeches him to pity me and remember I am ill!"

He fell into a paroxysm of his disorder, so violent that for a few moments Nicholas was alarmed for his life; but finding that he began to recover, he withdrew, after signifying by a gesture to the young lady that he had something important to communicate, and would wait for her outside the room. He could hear that the sick man came gradually but slowly to himself, and that without any reference to what had just occurred, as though he had no distinct recollection of it as yet, he requested to be left alone.

"Oh!" thought Nicholas, "that this slender chance might not be lost, and that I might prevail if it were but for one week's time and re-consideration!"

"You are charged with some commission to me, Sir," said Madeline, presenting herself in great agitation. "Do not press it now, I beg and pray you. The day after to-morrow—come here then."

"It will be too late—too late for what I have to say," rejoined Nicholas, "and you will not be here. Oh, Madam, if you have but one thought of him who sent me here, but one last lingering care for your own peace of mind and heart, I do for God's sake urge you to give me a hearing."

She attempted to pass him, but Nicholas gently detained her.

"A hearing," said Nicholas. "I ask you but to hear me—not me alone, but him for whom I speak, who is far away and does not know your danger. In the name of Heaven hear me."

The poor attendant with her eyes swollen and red with weeping stood by, and to her Nicholas appealed in such passionate terms that she opened a side-door, and supporting her mistress into an adjoining room beckoned Nicholas to follow them.

"Leave me, Sir, pray," said the young lady.

"I cannot, will not leave you thus," returned Nicholas. "I have a duty to discharge, and either here or in the room from which we have just now come, at whatever risk or hazard to Mr. Bray, I must beseech you to contemplate again the fearful course to which you have been impelled."

"What course is this you speak of, and impelled by whom, Sir?" demanded the young lady, with an effort to speak proudly.

"I speak of this marriage," returned Nicholas, "of this marriage, fixed for to-morrow by one who never faltered in a bad purpose, or lent his aid to any good design; of this marriage, the history of which

is known to me, better, far better, than it is to you. I know what web is wound about you. I know what men they are from whom these schemes have come. You are betrayed, and sold for money—for gold, whose every coin is rusted with tears, if not red with the blood of ruined men, who have fallen desperately by their own mad hands."

"You say you have a duty to discharge," said Madeline, firmly, "and so have I. And with the help of Heaven I will perform it."

"Say rather with the help of devils," replied Nicholas, "with the help of men, one of them your destined husband, who are——"

"I must not hear this," cried the young lady, striving to repress a shudder, occasioned, as it seemed, even by this slight allusion to Arthur Gride. "This evil, if evil it is, has been of my own seeking. I am impelled to this course by no one, but follow it of my own free will. You see I am not constrained or forced by menace and intimidation. Report this," said Madeline, "to my dear friend and benefactor, and taking with you my prayers and thanks for him and for yourself, leave me for ever."

"Not until I have besought you, with all the earnestness and fervour by which I am animated," cried Nicholas, "to postpone this marriage for one short week. Not until I have besought you to think more deeply than you can have done, influenced as you are, upon the step you are about to take. Although you cannot be fully conscious of the villany of this man to whom you are about to give your hand, some of his deeds you know. You have heard him speak, and looked upon his face—reflect, reflect before it is too late, on the mockery of plighting to him at the altar, faith in which your heart can have no share—of uttering solemn words, against which nature and reason must rebel—of the degradation of yourself in your own esteem, which must ensue, and must be aggravated every day as his detested character opens upon you more and more. Shrink from the loathsome companionship of this foul wretch as you would from corruption and disease. Suffer toil and labour if you will, but shun him, shun him, and be happy. For, believe me, that I speak the truth, the most abject poverty, the most wretched condition of human life, with a pure and upright mind, would be happiness to that which you must undergo as the wife of such a man as this!"

Long before Nicholas ceased to speak, the young lady buried her face in her hands, and gave her tears free way. In a voice at first inarticulate with emotion, but gradually recovering strength as she proceeded, she answered him,

"I will not disguise from you, Sir—though perhaps I ought—that I have undergone great pain of mind, and have been nearly broken-hearted since I saw you last. I do *not* love this gentleman; the difference between our ages, tastes, and habits, forbids it. This he knows, and knowing, still offers me his hand. By accepting it, and by that step alone, I can release my father who is dying in this place, prolong his life, perhaps, for many years, restore him to comfort—I may almost call it affluence—and relieve a generous man from the burden of assisting one by whom, I grieve to say, his noble heart is little understood.

Do not think so poorly of me as to believe that I feign a love I do not feel. Do not report so ill of me, for *that* I could not bear. If I cannot in reason or in nature love the man who pays this price for my poor hand, I can discharge the duties of a wife: I can be all he seeks in me, and will. He is content to take me as I am. I have passed my word, and should rejoice, not weep, that it is so—I do. The interest you take in one so friendless and forlorn as I, the delicacy with which you have discharged your trust, the faith you have kept with me, have my warmest thanks, and while I make this last feeble acknowledgment, move me to tears, as you see. But I do not repent, nor am I unhappy. I am happy in the prospect of all I can achieve so easily, and shall be more so when I look back upon it, and all is done, I know."

"Your tears fall faster as you talk of happiness," said Nicholas, "and you shun the contemplation of that dark future which must come laden with so much misery to you. Defer this marriage for a week—for but one week."

"He was talking, when you came upon us just now, with such smiles as I remember to have seen of old, and have not seen for many and many a day, of the freedom that was to come to-morrow," said Madeline, with momentary firmness, "of the welcome change, the fresh air; all the new scenes and objects that would bring fresh life to his exhausted frame. His eye grew bright, and his face lightened at the thought. I will not defer it for an hour."

"These are but tricks and wiles to urge you on," cried Nicholas.

"I'll hear no more," said Madeline, hurriedly, "I have heard too much—more than I should—already. What I have said to you, Sir, I have said as to that dear friend to whom I trust in you honourably to repeat it. Some time hence when I am more composed and reconciled to my new mode of life, if I should live so long, I will write to him. Meantime, all holy angels shower their blessings on his head, and prosper and preserve him."

She was hurrying past Nicholas, when he threw himself before her, and implored her to think but once again upon the fate to which she was precipitately hastening.

"There is no retreat," said Nicholas, in an agony of supplication, "no withdrawing; all regret will be unavailing, and deep and bitter it must be. What can I say that will induce you to pause at this last moment! What can I do to save you!"

"Nothing," she incoherently replied. "This is the hardest trial I have had. Have mercy on me, Sir, I beseech, and do not pierce my heart with such appeals as these. I—I hear him calling; I—I—must not, will not, remain here for another instant."

"If this were a plot," said Nicholas, with the same violent rapidity with which she spoke, "a plot, not yet laid bare by me, but which, with time, I might unravel, if you were (not knowing it) entitled to fortune of your own, which being recovered, would do all that this marriage can accomplish, would you not retract?"

"No, no, no!—it is impossible; it is a child's tale, time would bring his death. He is calling again."

"It may be the last time we shall ever meet on earth," said Nicholas, "it may be better for me that we should never meet more."

"For both—for both," replied Madeline, not heeding what she said. "The time will come when to recal the memory of this one interview might drive me mad. Be sure to tell them that you left me calm and happy. And God be with you, Sir, and my grateful heart and blessing!"

She was gone, and Nicholas, staggering from the house, thought of the hurried scene which had just closed upon him, as if it were the phantom of some wild, unquiet dream. The day wore on; at night, having been enabled in some measure to collect his thoughts, he issued forth again.

That night, being the last of Arthur Gride's bachelorship, found him in tip-top spirits and great glee. The bottle-green suit had been brushed ready for the morrow. Peg Sliderskew had rendered the accounts of her past housekeeping; the eighteenpence had been rigidly accounted for (she was never trusted with a larger sum at once, and the accounts were not usually balanced more than twice a-day), every preparation had been made for the coming festival, and Arthur might have sat down and contemplated his approaching happiness, but that he preferred sitting down and contemplating the entries in a dirty old vellum-book with rusty clasps.

"Well-a-day!" he chuckled, as sinking on his knees before a strong chest screwed down to the floor, he thrust in his arm nearly up to the shoulder, and slowly drew forth this greasy volume, "Well-a-day now, this is all my library, but it's one of the most entertaining books that were ever written; it's a delightful book, and all true and real—that's the best of it—true as the Bank of England, and real as its gold and silver. Written by Arthur Gride—he, he, he! None of your story-book writers will ever make as good a book as this, I warrant me. It's composed for private circulation—for my own particular reading, and nobody else's. He, he!"

Muttering this soliloquy, Arthur carried his precious volume to the table, and adjusting it upon a dusty desk, put on his spectacles, and began to pore among the leaves.

"It's a large sum to Mr. Nickleby," he said, in a dolorous voice. "Debt to be paid in full, nine hundred and seventy-five, four, three, Additional sum as per bond five hundred pound. One thousand, four hundred and seventy-five pounds, four shillings, and threepence, to-morrow at twelve o'clock. On the other side though, there's the *per contra* by means of this pretty chick. But again there's the question whether I mightn't have brought all this about myself. 'Faint heart never won fair lady.' Why was my heart so faint? Why didn't I boldly open it to Bray myself, and save one thousand four hundred and seventy-five, four, three!"

These reflections depressed the old usurer so much as to wring a feeble groan or two from his breast, and cause him to declare with uplifted hands that he would die in a workhouse. Remembering on further cogitation, however, that under any circumstances he

must have paid, or handsomely compounded for, Ralph's debt, and being by no means confident that he would have succeeded had he undertaken his enterprise alone, he regained his equanimity, and chattered and mowed over more satisfactory items until the entrance of Peg Sliderskew interrupted him.

"Aha, Peg!" said Arthur, "what is it? What is it now, Peg?"

"It's the fowl," replied Peg, holding up a plate containing a little—a very little one—quite a phenomenon of a fowl—so very small and skinny.

"A beautiful bird!" said Arthur, after inquiring the price, and finding it proportionate to the size. "With a rasher of ham, and an egg made into sauce, and potatoes, and greens, and an apple-pudding, Peg, and a little bit of cheese, we shall have a dinner for an emperor. There'll only be she and me—and you, Peg, when we've done—nobody else."

"Don't you complain of the expense afterwards," said Mrs. Sliderskew, sulkily.

"I'm afraid we must live expensively for the first week," returned Arthur, with a groan, "and then we must make up for it. I won't eat more than I can help, and I know you love your old master too much to eat more than *you* can help, don't you, Peg?"

"Don't I what?" said Peg.

"Love your old master too much—"

"No, not a bit too much," said Peg.

"Oh dear, I wish the devil had this woman!" cried Arthur—"love him too much to eat more than you can help at his expense."

"At his what?" said Peg.

"Oh dear! she can never hear the most important word, and hears all the others!" whined Gride. "At his expense—you catamaran."

The last-mentioned tribute to the charms of Mrs. Sliderskew being uttered in a whisper, that lady assented to the general proposition by a harsh growl, which was accompanied by a ring at the street-door.

"There's the bell," said Arthur.

"Ay, ay; I know that," rejoined Peg.

"Then why don't you go?" bawled Arthur.

"Go where?" retorted Peg. "I ain't doing any harm here, am I?"

Arthur Gride in reply repeated the word "bell" as loud as he could roar, and his meaning being rendered further intelligible to Mrs. Sliderskew's dull sense of hearing by pantomime expressive of ringing at a street-door, Peg hobbled out, after sharply demanding why he hadn't said there was a ring before, instead of talking about all manner of things that had nothing to do with it, and keeping her half-pint of beer waiting on the steps.

"There's a change come over you, Mrs. Peg," said Arthur, following her out with his eyes. "What it means I don't quite know, but if it lasts we shan't agree together long, I see. You are turning crazy, I think, and if you are you must take yourself off, Mrs. Peg—or be taken off. All's one to me." Turning over the leaves of his book as he muttered this, he soon lighted upon something which attracted his

attention, and forgot Peg Sliderskew and everything else in the engrossing interest of its pages.

The room had no other light than that which it derived from a dim and dirt-clogged lamp, whose lazy wick, being still further obscured by a dark shade, cast its feeble rays over a very little space, and left all beyond in heavy shadow. This, the money-lender had drawn so close to him, that there was only room between it and himself for the book over which he bent; and as he sat with his elbows on the desk, and his sharp cheek-bones resting on his hands, it only served to bring out his hideous features in strong relief, together with the little table at which he sat, and to shroud all the rest of the chamber in a deep sullen gloom. Raising his eyes and looking vacantly into this gloom as he made some mental calculation, Arthur Gride suddenly met the fixed gaze of a man.

"Thieves! thieves!" shrieked the usurer, starting up and folding his book to his breast, "robbers! murder!"

"What is the matter?" said the form, advancing.

"Keep off!" cried the trembling wretch. "Is it a man or a—a—"

"For what do you take me, if not for a man?" was the disdainful inquiry.

"Yes, yes," cried Arthur Gride, shading his eyes with his hand, "it is a man, and not a spirit. It is a man. Robbers! robbers!"

"For what are these cries raised—unless indeed you know me, and have some purpose in your brain?" said the stranger, coming close up to him. "I am no thief, fellow."

"What then, and how come you here?" cried Gride, somewhat reassured, but still retreating from his visitor, "what is your name, and what do you want?"

"My name you need not know," was the reply. "I came here because I was shown the way by your servant. I have addressed you twice or thrice, but you were too profoundly engaged with your book to hear me, and I have been silently waiting until you should be less abstracted. What I want I will tell you, when you can summon up courage enough to hear and understand me."

Arthur Gride venturing to regard his visitor more attentively, and perceiving that he was a young man of good mien and bearing, returned to his seat, and muttering that there were bad characters about, and that this, with former attempts upon his house, had made him nervous, requested his visitor to sit down. This however he declined.

"Good God! I don't stand up to have you at an advantage," said Nicholas (for Nicholas it was), as he observed a gesture of alarm on the part of Gride. "Listen to me. You are to be married to-morrow morning."

"N—n—no," rejoined Gride. "Who said I was? How do you know that?"

"No matter how," replied Nicholas, "I know it. The young lady who is to give you her hand hates and despises you. Her blood runs cold at the mention of your name—the vulture and the lamb, the rat and the dove, could not be worse matched than you and she. You see I know her."

Gride looked at him as if he were petrified with astonishment, but did not speak, perhaps lacking the power.

"You and another man, Ralph Nickleby by name, have hatched this plot between you," pursued Nicholas, "you pay him for his share in bringing about this sale of Madeline Bray. You do. A lie is trembling on your lips, I see."

He paused, but Arthur making no reply, resumed again.

"You pay yourself by defrauding her. How or by what means—for I scorn to sully her cause by falsehood or deceit—I do not know; at present I do not know, but I am not alone or single-handed in this business. If the energy of man can compass the discovery of your fraud and treachery before your death—if wealth, revenge, and just hatred can hunt and track you through your windings—you will yet be called to a dear account for this. We are on the scent already—judge you, that know what we do not, when we shall have you down."

He paused again, and still Arthur Gride glared upon him in silence.

"If you were a man to whom I could appeal with any hope of touching his compassion or humanity," said Nicholas, "I would urge upon you to remember the helplessness, the innocence, the youth of this lady, her worth and beauty, her filial excellence, and last, and more than all as concerning you more nearly, the appeal she has made to your mercy and your manly feeling. But I take the only ground that can be taken with men like you, and ask what money will buy you off. Remember the danger to which you are exposed. You see I know enough to know much more with very little help. Bate some expected gain, for the risk you save, and say what is your price."

Old Arthur Gride moved his lips, but they only formed an ugly smile and were motionless again.

"You think," said Nicholas, "that the price would not be paid. Miss Bray has wealthy friends who would coin their hearts to save her in such a strait as this. Name your price, defer these nuptials for but a few days, and see whether those I speak of shrink from the payment. Do you hear me?"

When Nicholas began, Arthur Gride's impression was that Ralph Nickleby had betrayed him; but as he proceeded he felt convinced that however he had come by the knowledge he possessed, the part he acted was a genuine one, and that with Ralph he had no concern. All he seemed to know for certain was, that he, Gride, paid Ralph's debt, but that to anybody who knew the circumstances of Bray's detention—even to Bray himself on Ralph's own statement—must be perfectly notorious. As to the fraud on Madeline herself, his visitor knew so little about its nature or extent, that it might be a lucky guess or a hap-hazard accusation, and whether or no, he had clearly no key to the mystery, and could not hurt him who kept it close within his own breast. The allusion to friends and the offer of money Gride held to be mere empty vapouring for purposes of delay. "And even if money were to be had," thought Arthur Gride, as he glanced at Nicholas, and trembled with passion at his boldness and audacity,

"I'd have that dainty chick for my wife, and cheat *you* of her, young smooth-face."

Long habit of weighing and noting well what clients said, and nicely balancing chances in his mind and calculating odds to their faces, without the least appearance of being so engaged, had rendered Gride quick in forming conclusions and arriving, from puzzling, intricate, and often contradictory premises, at very cunning deductions. Hence it was that as Nicholas went on he followed him closely with his own constructions, and when he ceased to speak was as well prepared as if he had deliberated for a fortnight.

"I hear you," he cried, starting from his seat, casting back the fastenings of the window-shutters, and throwing up the sash. "Help here! Help! Help!"

"What are you doing!" said Nicholas, seizing him by the arm.

"I'll cry robbers, thieves, murder, alarm the neighbourhood, struggle with you, let loose some blood, and swear you came to rob me if you don't quit my house," replied Gride, drawing in his head with a frightful grin, "I will."

"Wretch!" cried Nicholas.

"*You'll* bring your threats here, will you?" said Gride, whom jealousy of Nicholas and a sense of his own triumph had converted into a perfect fiend. "You, the disappointed lover—oh dear! He! he! he!—but you shan't have her, nor she you. She's my wife, my fond doting little wife. Do you think she'll miss you? Do you think she'll weep? I shall like to see her weep—I shan't mind it. She looks prettier in tears."

"Villain!" said Nicholas, choking with his rage.

"One minute more," cried Arthur Gride, "and I'll rouse the street with such screams as, if they were raised by anybody else, should wake me even in the arms of pretty Madeline."

"You base hound!" said Nicholas, "if you were but a younger man——"

"Oh yes!" sneered Arthur Gride, "if I was but a younger man it wouldn't be so bad, but for me, so old and ugly—to be jilted by little Madeline for me!"

"Hear me," said Nicholas, "and be thankful I have enough command over myself not to fling you into the street, which no aid could prevent my doing if I once grappled with you. I have been no lover of this lady's. No contract or engagement, no word of love, has ever passed between us. She does not even know my name."

"I'll ask it for all that—I'll beg it of her with kisses," said Arthur Gride. "Yes, and she'll tell me, and pay them back, and we'll laugh together, and hug ourselves—and be very merry—when we think of the poor youth that wanted to have her, but couldn't, because she was bespoke by me."

This taunt brought such an expression into the face of Nicholas, that Arthur Gride plainly apprehended it to be the forerunner of his putting his threat of throwing him into the street in immediate execution, for he thrust his head out of the window, and holding tight on with both

hands, raised a pretty brisk alarm. Not thinking it necessary to abide the issue of the noise, Nicholas gave vent to an indignant defiance, and stalked from the room and from the house. Arthur Gride watched him across the street, and then drawing in his head, fastened the window as before, and sat down to take breath.

"If she ever turns pettish or ill-humoured, I'll taunt her with that spark," he said, when he had recovered. "She'll little think I know about him, and if I manage it well, I can break her spirit by this means and have her under my thumb. I'm glad nobody came. I didn't call too loud. The audacity to enter my house, and open upon me!—But I shall have a very good triumph to-morrow, and he'll be gnawing his fingers off, perhaps drown himself, or cut his throat! I shouldn't wonder! That would make it quite complete, that would—quite."

When he had become restored to his usual condition by these and other comments on his approaching triumph, Arthur Gride put away his book, and having locked up the chest with great caution, descended into the kitchen to warn Peg Sliderskew to bed, and to scold her for having afforded such ready admission to a stranger.

The unconscious Peg, however, not being able to comprehend the offence of which she had been guilty, he summoned her to hold the light while he made a tour of the fastenings, and secured the street-door with his own hands.

"Top bolt," muttered Arthur, fastening as he spoke, "bottom bolt—chain—bar—double-lock—and key out to put under my pillow—so if any more rejected admirers come, they may come through the keyhole. And now I'll go to sleep till half-past five, when I must get up to be married, Peg."

With that, he jocularly tapped Mrs. Sliderskew under the chin, and appeared, for the moment, inclined to celebrate the close of his bachelor days by imprinting a kiss on her shrivelled lips. Thinking better of it, however, he gave her chin another tap in lieu of that warmer familiarity, and stole away to bed.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE CRISIS OF THE PROJECT AND ITS RESULT.

THERE are not many men who lie abed too late or oversleep themselves on their wedding morning. A legend there is of somebody remarkable for absence of mind, who opened his eyes upon the day which was to give him a young wife, and forgetting all about the matter, rated his servants for providing him with such fine clothes as had been prepared for the festival. There is also a legend of a young gentleman who, not having before his eyes the fear of the canons of the

church for such cases made and provided, conceived a passion for his grandmama. Both cases are of a singular and special kind, and it is very doubtful whether either can be considered as a precedent likely to be extensively followed by succeeding generations.

Arthur Gride had enrobed himself in his marriage garments of bottle-green, a full hour before Mrs. Sliderskew, shaking off her more heavy slumbers, knocked at his chamber door; and he had hobbled down stairs in full array and smacked his lips over a scanty taste of his favourite cordial, ere that delicate piece of antiquity enlightened the kitchen with her presence.

"Faugh!" said Peg, grubbing, in the discharge of her domestic functions, among a scanty heap of ashes in the rusty grate, "Wedding indeed! A precious wedding! He wants somebody better than his old Peg to take care of him, does he? And what has he said to me many and many a time to keep me content with short food, small wages, and little fire? 'My will, Peg! my will!' says he, 'I'm a bachelor—no friends—no relations, Peg.' Lies! And now he's to bring home a new mistress, a baby-faced chit of a girl—if he wanted a wife, the fool, why couldn't he have one suitable to his age and that knew his ways? She won't come in my way, he says. No, that she won't, but you little think why, Arthur boy."

While Mrs. Sliderskew, influenced possibly by some lingering feelings of disappointment and personal slight occasioned by her old master's preference for another, was giving loose to these grumblings below-stairs, Arthur Gride was cogitating in the parlour upon what had taken place last night.

"I can't think how he can have picked up what he knows," said Arthur, "unless I have committed myself—let something drop at Bray's, for instance, which has been overheard. Perhaps I may. I shouldn't be surprised if that was it. Mr. Nickleby was often angry at my talking to him before we got outside the door. I mustn't tell him that part of the business, or he'll put me out of sorts and make me nervous for the day."

Ralph was universally looked up to and recognised among his fellows as a superior genius, but upon Arthur Gride his stern unyielding character and consummate art had made so deep an impression, that he was actually afraid of him. Cringing and cowardly to the core by nature, Arthur Gride humbled himself in the dust before Ralph Nickleby, and even when they had not this stake in common, would have licked his shoes and crawled upon the ground before him rather than venture to return him word for word, or retort upon him in any other spirit than that of the most slavish and abject sycophancy.

To Ralph Nickleby's, Arthur Gride now betook himself according to appointment, and to Ralph Nickleby he related how that last night some young blustering blade, whom he had never seen, forced his way into his house and tried to frighten him from the proposed nuptials:—told in short, what Nicholas had said and done, with the slight reservation upon which he had determined.

"Well, and what then?" said Ralph.

"Oh! nothing more," rejoined Gride.

"He tried to frighten you?" said Ralph, disdainfully, "and you *were* frightened I suppose, is that it?"

"I frightened him by crying thieves and murder," replied Gride. "Once I was in earnest, I tell you that, for I had more than half a mind to swear he uttered threats and demanded my life or my money."

"Oho!" said Ralph, eyeing him askew. "Jealous too!"

"Dear now, see that!" cried Arthur, rubbing his hands and affecting to laugh.

"Why do you make those grimaces, man?" said Ralph, harshly, "you *are* jealous—and with good cause I think."

"No, no, no,—not with good cause, hey? You don't think with good cause, do you?" cried Arthur, faltering, "Do you though—hey?"

"Why, how stands the fact?" returned Ralph. "Here is an old man about to be forced in marriage upon a girl, and to this old man there comes a handsome young fellow—you said he was handsome, didn't you?"

"No!" snarled Arthur Gride.

"Oh!" rejoined Ralph, "I thought you did. Well, handsome or not handsome, to this old man there comes a young fellow who casts all manner of fierce defiances in his teeth—gums I should rather say—and tells him in plain terms that his mistress hates him. What does he do that for? Philanthropy's sake?"

"Not for love of the lady," replied Gride, "for he said that no word of love—his very words—had ever passed between 'em."

"He said!" repeated Ralph, contemptuously. "But I like him for one thing, and that is his giving you this fair warning to keep your—what is it? Tit-tit or dainty chick—which?—under lock and key. Be careful, Gride, be careful. It's a triumph too to tear her away from a gallant young rival; a great triumph for an old man. It only remains to keep her safe when you have her—that's all."

"What a man it is!" cried Arthur Gride, affecting in the extremity of his torture to be highly amused. And then he added, anxiously, "Yes; to keep her safe, that's all. And that isn't much, is it?"

"Much!" said Ralph, with a sneer. "Why, everybody knows what easy things to understand and to control, women are. But come, it's very nearly time for you to be made happy. You'll pay the bond now I suppose, to save us trouble afterwards."

"Oh what a man you are!" croaked Arthur.

"Why not?" said Ralph. "Nobody will pay you interest for the money, I suppose, between this and twelve o'clock, will they?"

"But nobody would pay you interest for it either, you know," returned Arthur, leering at Ralph with all the cunning and slyness he could throw into his face.

"Besides which," said Ralph, suffering his lip to curl into a smile, "you haven't the money about you, and you weren't prepared for this or you'd have brought it with you, and there's nobody you'd so much

like to accommodate as me. I see. We trust each other in about an equal degree. Are you ready?"

Gride, who had done nothing but grin, and nod, and chatter, during this last speech of Ralph's, answered in the affirmative, and producing from his hat a couple of large white favours, pinned one on his breast, and with considerable difficulty induced his friend to do the like. Thus accoutred they got into a hired coach which Ralph had in waiting, and drove to the residence of the fair and most wretched bride.

Gride, whose spirits and courage had gradually failed him more and more as they approached nearer and nearer to the house, was utterly dismayed and cowed by the mournful silence which pervaded it. The face of the poor servant-girl, the only person they saw, was disfigured with tears and want of sleep. There was nobody to receive or welcome them; and they stole up stairs into the usual sitting-room more like two burglars than the bridegroom and his friend.

"One would think," said Ralph, speaking in spite of himself in a low and subdued voice, "that there was a funeral going on here, and not a wedding."

"He, he!" tittered his friend, "you are so—so very funny!"

"I need be," remarked Ralph, drily, "for this is rather dull and chilling. Look a little brisker, man, and not so hang-dog like."

"Yes, yes, I will," said Gride. "But—but—you don't think she's coming just yet, do you?"

"Why, I suppose she'll not come till she is obliged," returned Ralph, looking at his watch, "and she has a good half hour to spare yet. Curb your impatience."

"I—I—am not impatient," stammered Arthur. "I wouldn't be hard with her for the world. Oh dear, dear, not on any account. Let her take her time—her own time. Her time shall be ours by all means."

While Ralph bent upon his trembling friend a keen look, which showed that he perfectly understood the reason of this great consideration and regard, a footstep was heard upon the stairs, and Bray himself came into the room on tiptoe, and holding up his hand with a cautious gesture as if there were some sick person near who must not be disturbed.

"Hush!" he said in a low voice. "She was very ill last night. I thought she would have broken her heart. She is dressed, and crying bitterly in her own room; but she's better, and quite quiet—that's everything."

"She is ready, is she?" said Ralph.

"Quite ready," returned the father.

"And not likely to delay us by any young-lady weaknesses—fainting, or so forth?" said Ralph.

"She may be safely trusted now," returned Bray. "I have been talking to her this morning. Here—come a little this way."

He drew Ralph Nickleby to the further end of the room, and pointed towards Gride, who sat huddled together in a corner, fumbling nervously with the buttons of his coat, and exhibiting a face of which

every skulking and base expression was sharpened and aggravated to the utmost by his anxiety and trepidation.

"Look at that man," whispered Bray, emphatically. "This seems a cruel thing, after all."

"What seems a cruel thing?" inquired Ralph, with as much stolidity of face as if he really were in utter ignorance of the other's meaning.

"This marriage," answered Bray. "Don't ask me what. You know quite as well as I do."

Ralph shrugged his shoulders in silent deprecation of Bray's impatience, and elevated his eyebrows, and pursed his lips as men do when they are prepared with a sufficient answer to some remark, but wait for a more favourable opportunity of advancing it, or think it scarcely worth while to answer their adversary at all.

"Look at him. Does it not seem cruel?" said Bray.

"No!" replied Ralph boldly.

"I say it does," retorted Bray with a show of much irritation. "It is a cruel thing, by all that's bad and treacherous!"

When men are about to commit or to sanction the commission of some injustice, it is not at all uncommon for them to express pity for the object either of that or some parallel proceeding, and to feel themselves at the time quite virtuous and moral, and immensely superior to those who express no pity at all. This is a kind of upholding of faith above works, and is very comfortable. To do Ralph Nickleby justice, he seldom practised this sort of dissimulation; but he understood those who did, and therefore suffered Bray to say again and again with great vehemence that they were jointly doing a very cruel thing, before he again offered to interpose a word.

"You see what a dry, shrivelled, withered old chip it is," returned Ralph, when the other was at length silent. "If he were younger, it might be cruel, but as it is—hark'ee, Mr. Bray, he'll die soon, and leave her a rich young widow. Miss Madeline consults your taste this time; let her consult her own next."

"True, true," said Bray, biting his nails, and plainly very ill at ease. "I couldn't do anything better for her than advise her to accept these proposals, could I? Now, I ask you, Nickleby, as a man of the world—could I?"

"Surely not," answered Ralph. "I tell you what, Sir;—there are a hundred fathers within a circuit of five miles from this place, well off, good rich substantial men, who would gladly give their daughters and their own ears with them, to that very man yonder, ape and mummy as he looks."

"So there are!" exclaimed Bray, eagerly catching at anything which seemed a justification of himself. "And so I told her, both last night and to-day."

"You told her truth," said Ralph, "and did well to do so; though I must say, at the same time, that if I had a daughter, and my freedom, pleasure, nay, my very health and life, depended on her taking a husband whom I pointed out, I should hope it would not be necessary to advance any other arguments to induce her to consent to my wishes."

Bray looked at Ralph as if to see whether he spoke in earnest, and having nodded twice or thrice in unqualified assent to what had fallen from him, said,

"I must go up stairs for a few minutes to finish dressing, and when I come down, I'll bring Madeline with me. Do you know I had a very strange dream last night, which I have not remembered till this instant. I dreamt that it was this morning, and you and I had been talking, as we have been this minute; that I went up stairs, for the very purpose for which I am going now, and that as I stretched out my hand to take Madeline's, and lead her down, the floor sunk with me, and after falling from such an indescribable and tremendous height as the imagination scarcely conceives except in dreams, I alighted in a grave."

"And you awoke, and found you were lying on your back, or with your head hanging over the bedside, or suffering some pain from indigestion?" said Ralph. "Pshaw, Mr. Bray, do as I do (you will have the opportunity now that a constant round of pleasure and enjoyment opens upon you) and occupying yourself a little more by day, have no time to think of what you dream by night."

Ralph followed him with a steady look to the door, and turning to the bridegroom, when they were again alone, said,

"Mark my words, Gride, you won't have to pay *his* annuity very long. You have the devil's luck in bargains always. If he is not booked to make the long voyage before many months are past and gone, I wear an orange for a head."

To this prophecy, so agreeable to his ears, Arthur returned no answer than a cackle of great delight, and Ralph, throwing himself into a chair, they both sat waiting in profound silence. Ralph was thinking with a sneer upon his lips on the altered manner of Bray that day, and how soon their fellowship in a bad design had lowered his pride and established a familiarity between them, when his attentive ear caught the rustling of a female dress upon the stairs, and the footstep of a man.

"Wake up," he said, stamping his foot impatiently upon the ground, "and be something like life, man, will you? They are here. Urge those dry old bones of yours this way—quick, man, quick."

Gride shambled forward, and stood leering and bowing close by Ralph's side, when the door opened and there entered in haste—not Bray and his daughter, but Nicholas and his sister Kate.

If some tremendous apparition from the world of shadows had suddenly presented itself before him, Ralph Nickleby could not have been more thunder-stricken than he was by this surprise. His hands fell powerless by his side, he staggered back, and with open mouth, and a face of ashy paleness, stood gazing at them in speechless rage; his eyes so prominent, and his face so convulsed and changed by the passions which raged within him, that it would have been difficult to recognise in him the same stern, composed, hard-featured man he had been not a minute ago.

"The man that came to me last night," whispered Gride, plucking at his elbow. "The man that came to me last night."

"I see," muttered Ralph, "I know. I might have guessed as much

before. Across my every path, at every turn, go where I will, do what I may, he comes."

The absence of all colour from the face, the dilated nostril, the quivering of the lips which though set firmly against each other would not be still, showed what fierce emotions were struggling for the mastery with Nicholas. But he kept them down, and gently pressing Kate's arm to re-assure her, stood erect and undaunted front to front with his unworthy relative.

As the brother and sister stood side by side with a gallant bearing which became them well, a close likeness between them was apparent, which many, had they only seen them apart, might have failed to remark. The air, carriage, and very look and expression of the brother were all reflected in the sister, but softened and refined to the nicest limit of feminine delicacy and attraction. More striking still was some indefinable resemblance in the face of Ralph to both. While they had never looked more handsome nor he more ugly, while they had never held themselves more proudly, nor he shrunk half so low, there never had been a time when this resemblance was so perceptible, or when all the worst characteristics of a face rendered coarse and harsh by evil thoughts were half so manifest as now.

"Away!" was the first word he could utter as he literally gnashed his teeth. "Away! What brings you here—liar—scoundrel—dastard—thief."

"I come here," said Nicholas in a low deep voice, "to save your victim if I can. Liar and scoundrel you are in every action of your life, theft is your trade, and double dastard you must be or you were not here to-day. Hard words will not move me, nor would hard blows. Here I stand and will till I have done my errand."

"Girl!" said Ralph, "retire. "We can use force to him, but I would not hurt you if I could help it. Retire, you weak and silly wench, and leave this dog to be dealt with as he deserves."

"I will not retire," cried Kate, with flashing eyes and the red blood mantling in her cheeks. "You will do him no hurt that he will not repay. You may use force with me; I think you will, for I *am* a girl, and that would well become you. But if I have a girl's weakness, I have a woman's heart, and it is not you who in a cause like this can turn that from its purpose."

"And what may your purpose be, most lofty lady?" said Ralph.

"To offer to the unhappy subject of your treachery at this last moment," replied Nicholas, "a refuge and a home. If the near prospect of such a husband as you have provided will not prevail upon her, I hope she may be moved by the prayers and entreaties of one of her own sex. At all events they shall be tried, and I myself avowing to her father from whom I come and by whom I am commissioned, will render it an act of greater baseness, meanness, and cruelty in him if he still dares to force this marriage on. Here I wait to see him and his daughter. For this I came and brought my sister even into your vile presence. Our purpose is not to see or speak with you; therefore to you, we stoop to say no more."

"Indeed!" said Ralph. "You persist in remaining here, Ma'am, do you?"

His niece's bosom heaved with the indignant excitement into which he had lashed her, but she gave him no reply.

"Now, Gride, see here," said Ralph. "This fellow—I grieve to say my brother's son; a reprobate and profligate, stained with every mean and selfish crime—this fellow coming here to-day to disturb a solemn ceremony, and knowing that the consequence of his presenting himself in another man's house at such a time, and persisting in remaining there, must be his being kicked into the streets and dragged through them like the vagabond he is—this fellow, mark you, brings with him his sister as a protection, thinking we would not expose a silly girl to the degradation and indignity which is no novelty to him; and even after I have warned her of what must ensue, he still keeps her by him as you see, and clings to her apron-strings like a cowardly boy to his mother's. Is this a pretty fellow to talk as big as you have heard him now!"

"And as I heard him last night," said Arthur Gride, "as I heard him last night when he sneaked into my house, and—he! he! he!—very soon sneaked out again, when I nearly frightened him to death. And *he* wanting to marry Miss Madeline too! Oh, dear! Is there anything else he'd like—anything else we can do for him, besides giving her up? Would he like his debts paid and his house furnished, and a few bank notes for shaving paper if he shaves at all! He! he! he!"

"You will remain, girl, will you?" said Ralph, turning upon Kate again, "to be hauled down stairs like a drunken drab—as I swear you shall if you stop here? No answer! Thank your brother for what follows. Gride, call down Bray—and not his daughter. Let them keep her above."

"If you value your head," said Nicholas, taking up a position before the door, and speaking in the same low voice in which he had spoken before, and with no more outward passion than he had before displayed; "stay where you are."

"Mind me and not him, and call down Bray," said Ralph.

"Mind yourself rather than either of us, and stay where you are," said Nicholas.

"Will you call down Bray?" cried Ralph passionately.

"Remember that you come near me at your peril," said Nicholas.

Gride hesitated: Ralph being by this time as furious as a baffled tiger made for the door, and attempting to pass Kate clasped her arm roughly with his hand. Nicholas with his eyes darting fire seized him by the collar. At that moment a heavy body fell with great violence on the floor above, and an instant afterwards was heard a most appalling and terrific scream.

They all stood still and gazed upon each other. Scream succeeded scream; a heavy pattering of feet succeeded; and many shrill voices clamouring together were heard to cry, "He is dead!"

"Stand off!" cried Nicholas, letting loose all the violent passion he

had restrained till now, "if this is what I scarcely dare to hope it is, you are caught, villains, in your own toils."

He burst from the room, and darting up stairs to the quarter from whence the noise proceeded, forced his way through a crowd of persons who quite filled a small bedchamber, and found Bray lying on the floor quite dead, and his daughter clinging to the body.

"How did this happen?" he cried, looking wildly about him.

Several voices answered together that he had been observed through the half-opened door reclining in a strange and uneasy position upon a chair; that he had been spoken to several times, and not answering, was supposed to be asleep, until some person going in and shaking him by the arm, he fell heavily to the ground and was discovered to be dead.

"Who is the owner of this house?" said Nicholas, hastily.

An elderly woman was pointed out to him; and to her he said, as he knelt down and gently unwound Madeline's arms from the lifeless mass round which they were entwined: "I represent this lady's nearest friends as her servant here knows, and must remove her from this dreadful scene. This is my sister to whose charge you confide her. My name and address are upon that card, and you shall receive from me all necessary directions for the arrangements that must be made. Stand aside, every one of you, and give me room and air for God's sake."

The people fell back, scarce wondering more at what had just occurred, than at the excitement and impetuosity of him who spoke, and Nicholas, taking the insensible girl in his arms, bore her from the chamber and down stairs into the room he had just quitted, followed by his sister and the faithful servant, whom he charged to procure a coach directly, while he and Kate bent over their beautiful charge and endeavoured, but in vain, to restore her to animation. The girl performed her office with such expedition, that in a very few minutes the coach was ready.

Ralph Nickleby and Gride, stunned and paralysed by the awful event which had so suddenly overthrown their schemes (it would not otherwise, perhaps, have made much impression on them), and carried away by the extraordinary energy and precipitation of Nicholas, which bore down all before them, looked on at these proceedings like men in a dream or trance. It was not until every preparation was made for Madeline's immediate removal that Ralph broke silence by declaring she should not be taken away.

"Who says that?" cried Nicholas, starting from his knee and confronting them, but still retaining Madeline's lifeless hand in his.

"I!" answered Ralph, hoarsely.

"Hush, hush!" cried the terrified Gride, catching him by the arm again. "Hear what he says."

"Aye!" said Nicholas, extending his disengaged hand in the air, "hear what he says. That both your debts are paid in the one great debt of nature—that the bond due to-day at twelve is now waste paper—that your contemplated fraud shall be discovered yet—

that your schemes are known to man, and overthrown by Heaven—wretches, that he defies you both to do your worst."

"This man," said Ralph, in a voice scarcely intelligible, "this man claims his wife, and he shall have her."

"That man claims what is not his, and he should not have her if he were fifty men, with fifty more to back him," said Nicholas.

"Who shall prevent him?"

"I will."

"By what right I should like to know," said Ralph. "By what right I ask?"

"By this right—that, knowing what I do, you dare not tempt me further," said Nicholas, "and by this better right, that those I serve, and with whom you would have done me base wrong and injury, are her nearest and her dearest friends. In their name I bear her hence. Give way!"

"One word!" cried Ralph, foaming at the mouth.

"Not one," replied Nicholas, "I will not hear of one—save this. Look to yourself, and heed this warning that I give you. Your day is past, and night is coming on—"

"My curse, my bitter deadly curse, upon you, boy!"

"Whence will curses come at your command? or what avails a curse or blessing from a man like you? I warn you, that misfortune and discovery are thickening about your head; that the structures you have raised through all your ill-spent life are crumbling into dust; that your path is beset with spies; that this very day, ten thousand pounds of your hoarded wealth have gone in one great crash!"

"'Tis false!" cried Ralph, shrinking back.

"'Tis true, and you shall find it so. I have no more words to waste. Stand from the door. Kate, do you go first. Lay not a hand on her, or on that woman, or on me, or so much as brush their garments as they pass you by!—You let them pass and he blocks the door again!"

Arthur Gride happened to be in the doorway, but whether intentionally or from confusion was not quite apparent. Nicholas swung him away with such violence as to cause him to spin round the room until he was caught by a sharp angle of the wall and there knocked down; and then taking his beautiful burden in his arms rushed violently out. No one cared to stop him, if any were so disposed. Making his way through a mob of people, whom a report of the circumstances had attracted round the house, and carrying Madeline in his great excitement as easily as if she were an infant, he reached the coach in which Kate and the girl were already waiting, and confiding his charge to them, jumped up beside the coachman and bade him drive away.

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"I went my new journey, and was out five or six days."—*Page* 213.

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