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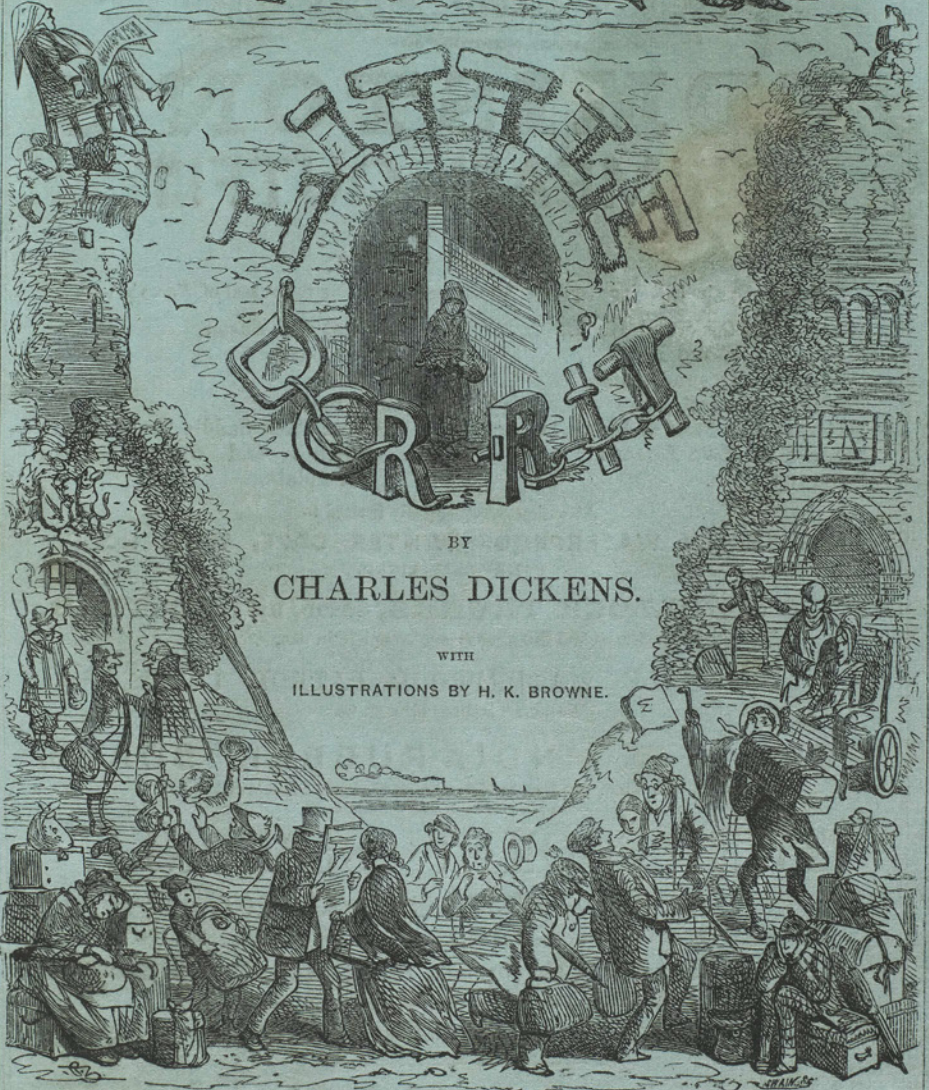
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BY
CHARLES DICKENS.

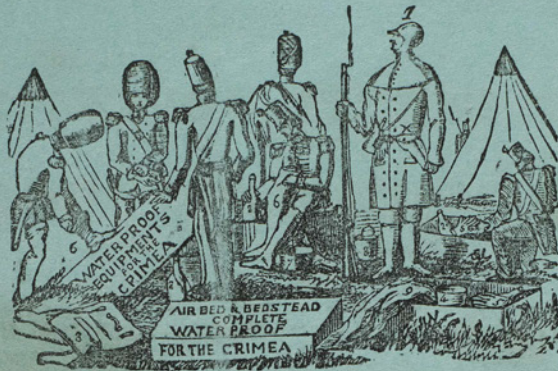
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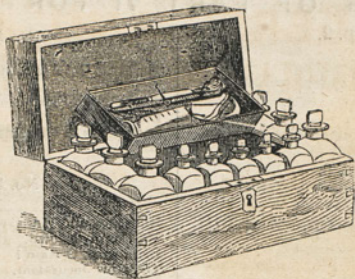
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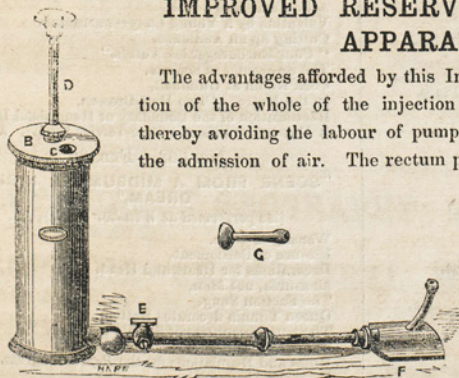
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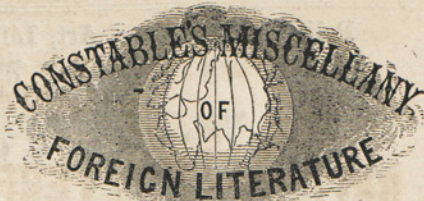
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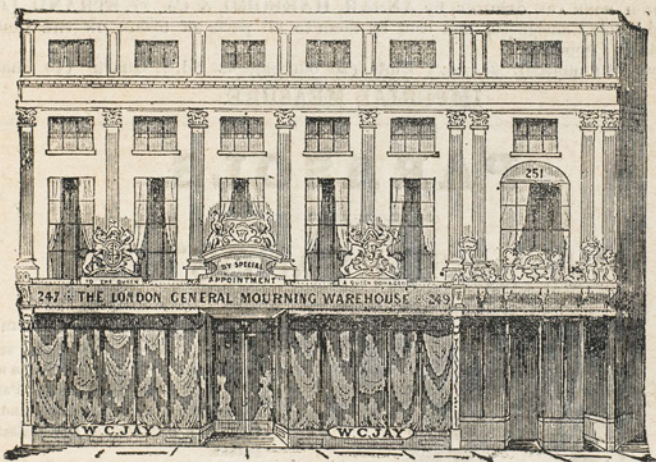
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Mr. F's Aunt is conducted into retirement.



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CHAPTER XII.

BLEEDING HEART YARD.

IN London itself, though in the old rustic road towards a suburb of note where in the days of William Shakespeare, author and stage-player, there were Royal hunting seats, howbeit no sport is left there now but for hunters of men, Bleeding Heart Yard was to be found. A place much changed in feature and in fortune, yet with some relish of ancient greatness about it. Two or three mighty stacks of chimneys, and a few large dark rooms which had escaped being walled and subdivided out of the recognition of their old proportions, gave the Yard a character. It was inhabited by poor people, who set up their rest among its faded glories, as Arabs of the desert pitch their tents among the fallen stones of the Pyramids; but there was a family sentimental feeling prevalent in the Yard, that it had a character.

As if the aspiring city had become puffed up in the very ground on which it stood, the ground had so risen about Bleeding Heart Yard that you got into it down a flight of steps which formed no part of the original approach, and got out of it by a low gateway into a maze of shabby streets, which went about and about, tortuously ascending to the level again. At this end of the Yard and over the gateway, was the factory of Daniel Doyce, often heavily beating like a bleeding heart of iron, with the clink of metal upon metal.

The opinion of the Yard was divided respecting the derivation of its name. The more practical of its inmates abided by the tradition of a murder; the gentler and more imaginative inhabitants, including the whole of the tender sex, were loyal to the legend of a young lady of former times closely imprisoned in her chamber by a cruel father for remaining true to her own true love, and refusing to marry the suitor he chose for her. The legend related how that the young lady used to be seen up at her window behind the bars, murmuring a love-lorn song, of which the burden was, "Bleeding Heart, Bleeding Heart, bleeding away," until she died. It was objected by the murderous party that this Refrain was notoriously the invention of a tambour-worker, a spinster and romantic, still lodging in the Yard. But, forasmuch as all favorite legends must be associated with the affections, and as many more people fall in love than commit murder—which it may be hoped, howsoever bad we are, will continue unto the end of the world to be the dispensation under which we shall live—the Bleeding Heart, Bleeding Heart, bleeding away story, carried the day by a great majority. Neither party would listen to the antiquaries who delivered learned lectures in the neighbourhood, showing the Bleeding Heart to have been the heraldic cognizance of the old family to whom the property had once belonged. And, considering that the hour-glass they turned from year to year was filled with the earthiest and coarsest sand, the

Bleeding Heart Yarders had reason enough for objecting to be despoiled of the one little golden grain of poetry that sparkled in it.

Down into the Yard, by way of the steps, came Daniel Doyce, Mr. Meagles, and Clennam. Passing along the Yard, and between the open doors on either hand, all abundantly garnished with light children nursing heavy ones, they arrived at its opposite boundary, the gateway. Here Arthur Clennam stopped to look about him for the domicile of Plornish, plasterer: whose name, according to the custom of Londoners, Daniel Doyce had never seen or heard of to that hour.

It was plain enough, nevertheless, as Little Dorrit had said; over a lime-splashed gateway in the corner, within which Plornish kept a ladder and a barrel or two. The last house in Bleeding Heart Yard which she had described as his place of habitation, was a large house, let off to various tenants; but Plornish ingeniously hinted that he lived in the parlor, by means of a painted hand under his name, the forefinger of which hand (on which the artist had depicted a ring and a most elaborate nail of the genteelest form), referred all enquirers to that apartment.

Parting from his companions, after arranging another meeting with Mr. Meagles, Clennam went alone into the entry, and knocked with his knuckles at the parlor-door. It was opened presently by a woman with a child in her arms, whose unoccupied hand was hastily re-arranging the upper part of her dress. This was Mrs. Plornish, and this maternal action was the action of Mrs. Plornish during a large part of her waking existence.

Was Mr. Plornish at home? "Well, sir," said Mrs. Plornish, a civil woman, "not to deceive you, he's gone to look for a job."

Not to deceive you, was a method of speech with Mrs. Plornish. She would deceive you, under any circumstances, as little as might be; but she had a trick of answering in this provisional form.

"Do you think he will be back soon, if I wait for him?"

"I have been expecting him," said Mrs. Plornish, "this half-an-hour, at any minute of time. Walk in, sir."

Arthur entered the rather dark and close parlor (though it was lofty too), and sat down in the chair she placed for him.

"Not to deceive you, sir, I notice it," said Mrs. Plornish, "and I take it kind of you."

He was at a loss to understand what she meant; and by expressing as much in his looks, elicited her explanation.

"It an't many that comes into a poor place, that deems it worth their while to move their hats," said Mrs. Plornish. "But people think more of it than people think."

Clennam returned, with an uncomfortable feeling in so very slight a courtesy being unusual, Was that all! And stooping down to pinch the cheek of another young child who was sitting on the floor, staring at him, asked Mrs. Plornish how old that fine boy was?

"Four year just turned, sir," said Mrs. Plornish. "He *is* a fine little fellow, an't he, sir? But this one is rather sickly." She tenderly hushed the baby in her arms, as she said it. "You wouldn't mind my asking if it happened to be a job as you was come about, sir, would you?" added Mrs. Plornish, wistfully.

She asked it so anxiously, that if he had been in possession of any

kind of tenement, he would have had it plastered a foot deep, rather than answer, No. But he was obliged to answer No; and he saw a shade of disappointment on her face, as she checked a sigh, and looked at the low fire. Then he saw, also, that Mrs. Plornish was a young woman, made somewhat slatternly in herself and her belongings by poverty; and so dragged at by poverty and the children together, that their united forces had already dragged her face into wrinkles.

"All such things as jobs," said Mrs. Plornish, "seems to me to have gone under ground, they do indeed." (Herein Mrs. Plornish limited her remark to the plastering trade, and spoke without reference to the Circumlocution Office and the Barnacle Family.)

"Is it so difficult to get work?" asked Arthur Clennam.

"Plornish finds it so," she returned. "He is quite unfortunate. Really he is."

Really he was. He was one of those many wayfarers on the road of life, who seem to be afflicted with supernatural corns, rendering it impossible for them to keep up even with their lame competitors. A willing, working, soft-hearted, not hard-headed fellow, Plornish took his fortune as smoothly as could be expected; but it was a rough one. It so rarely happened that anybody seemed to want him, it was such an exceptional case when his powers were in any request, that his misty mind could not make out how it happened. He took it as it came, therefore; he tumbled into all kinds of difficulties, and tumbled out of them; and, by tumbling through life, got himself considerably bruised.

"It's not for want of looking after jobs, I am sure," said Mrs. Plornish, lifting up her eyebrows, and searching for a solution of the problem between the bars of the grate; "nor yet for want of working at them, when they are to be got. No one ever heard my husband complain of work."

Somehow or other, this was the general misfortune of Bleeding Heart Yard. From time to time there were public complaints, pathetically going about, of labor being scarce—which certain people seemed to take extraordinarily ill, as though they had an absolute right to it on their own terms—but Bleeding Heart Yard, though as willing a Yard as any in Britain, was never the better for the demand. That high old family, the Barnacles, had long been too busy with their great principle to look into the matter; and indeed the matter had nothing to do with their watchfulness in out-generalizing all other high old families except the Stiltstalkings.

While Mrs. Plornish spoke in these words of her absent lord, her lord returned. A smooth-cheeked, fresh-colored, sandy-whiskered man of thirty. Long in the legs, yielding at the knees, foolish in the face, flannel-jacketed, lime-whitened. "This is Plornish, sir."

"I came," said Clennam, rising, "to beg the favor of a little conversation with you, on the subject of the Dorrit family."

Plornish became suspicious. Seemed to scent a creditor. Said, "Ah, Yes. Well. He didn't know what satisfaction *he* could give any gentleman respecting that family. What might it be about, now?"

"I know you better," said Clennam, smiling, "than you suppose."

Plornish observed, not smiling in return, And yet he hadn't the pleasure of being acquainted with the gentleman, neither.

"No," said Arthur, "I know of your kind offices at second hand, but on the best authority. Through Little Dorrit.—I mean," he explained, "Miss Dorrit."

"Mr. Clennam, is it? Oh! I've heard of you, sir."

"And I of you," said Arthur.

"Please to sit down again, sir, and consider yourself welcome.—Why, yes," said Plornish, taking a chair, and lifting the elder child upon his knee, that he might have the moral support of speaking to a stranger over his head, "I have been on the wrong side of the Lock myself, and in that way we come to know Miss Dorrit. Me and my wife, we are well acquainted with Miss Dorrit."

"Intimate!" cried Mrs. Plornish. Indeed, she was so proud of the acquaintance, that she had awakened some bitterness of spirit in the Yard, by magnifying to an enormous amount the sum for which Miss Dorrit's father had become insolvent. The Bleeding Hearts resented her claiming to know people of such distinction.

"It was her father that I got acquainted with first. And through getting acquainted with him, you see—why—I got acquainted with her," said Plornish tautologically.

"I see."

"Ah! And there's manners! There's polish! There's a gentleman to have run to seed in the Marshalsea Jail! Why, perhaps you are not aware," said Plornish, lowering his voice, and speaking with a perverse admiration of what he ought to have pitied or despised, "not aware that Miss Dorrit and her sister dursn't let him know that they work for a living. No!" said Plornish, looking with a ridiculous triumph first at his wife, and then all round the room. "Dursn't let him know it, they dursn't!"

"Without admiring him for that," Clennam quietly observed, "I am very sorry for him." The remark appeared to suggest to Plornish, for the first time, that it might not be a very fine trait of character after all. He pondered about it for a moment, and gave it up.

"As to me," he resumed, "certainly Mr. Dorrit is as affable with me, I am sure, as I can possibly expect. Considering the differences and distances betwixt us, more so. But it's Miss Dorrit that we were speaking of."

"True. Pray how did you introduce her at my mother's?"

Mr. Plornish picked a bit of lime out of his whisker, put it between his lips, turned it with his tongue like a sugar-plum, considered, found himself unequal to the task of lucid explanation, and appealing to his wife, said, "Sally, *you* may as well mention how it was, old woman."

"Miss Dorrit," said Sally, hushing the baby from side to side, and laying her chin upon the little hand as it tried to disarrange the gown again, "came here one afternoon with a bit of writing, telling that how she wished for needlework, and asked if it would be considered any ill-convenience in case she was to give her address here." (Plornish repeated, her address here, in a low voice, as if he were making responses at church.) "Me and Plornish says, No, Miss Dorrit, no ill-convenience," (Plornish repeated, no ill-convenience,) "and she wrote it in, according. Which then me and Plornish says, Ho Miss Dorrit!" (Plornish repeated,

Ho Miss Dorrit.) "Have you thought of copying it three or four times, as the way to make it known in more places than one? No, says Miss Dorrit, I have not, but I will. She copied it out according, on this table, in a sweet writing, and Plornish, he took it where he worked, having a job just then," (Plornish repeated, job just then,) "and likeways to the landlord of the Yard; through which it was that Mrs. Clennam first happened to employ Miss Dorrit." Plornish repeated, employ Miss Dorrit; and Mrs. Plornish having come to an end, feigned to bite the fingers of the little hand as she kissed it.

"The landlord of the Yard," said Arthur Clennam, "is——"

"He is Mr. Casby, by name, he is," said Plornish, "and Pancks, he collects the rents. That," added Mr. Plornish, dwelling on the subject, with a slow thoughtfulness that appeared to have no connexion with any specific object, and to lead him nowhere, "that is about what *they* are, you may believe me or not, as you think proper."

"Ay?" returned Clennam, thoughtful in his turn. "Mr. Casby, too! An old acquaintance of mine, long ago!"

Mr. Plornish did not see his road to any comment on this fact, and made none. As there truly was no reason why he should have the least interest in it, Arthur Clennam went on to the present purport of his visit; namely, to make Plornish the instrument of effecting Tip's release, with as little detriment as possible to the self-reliance and self-helpfulness of the young man, supposing him to possess any remnant of those qualities: without doubt a very wide stretch of supposition. Plornish, having been made acquainted with the cause of action from the Defendant's own mouth, gave Arthur to understand that the Plaintiff was "a Chaunter"—meaning, not a singer of anthems, but a seller of horses—and that he (Plornish) considered that ten shillings in the pound "would settle handsome," and that more would be a waste of money. The Principal and instrument soon drove off together to a stable-yard in High Holborn, where a remarkably fine grey gelding, worth, at the lowest figure, seventy-five guineas (not taking into account the value of the shot he had been made to swallow, for the improvement of his form), was to be parted with for a twenty-pound note, in consequence of his having run away last week with Mrs. Captain Barbary of Cheltenham, who wasn't up to a horse of his courage, and who, in mere spite, insisted on selling him for that ridiculous sum: or, in other words, on giving him away. Plornish, going up this yard alone and leaving his Principal outside, found a gentleman with tight drab legs, a rather old hat, a little hooked stick, and a blue neckerchief (Captain Maroon of Gloucestershire, a private friend of Captain Barbary); who happened to be there, in a friendly way, to mention these little circumstances concerning the remarkably fine grey gelding, to any real judge of a horse and quick snapper-up of a good thing, who might look in at that address as per advertisement. This gentleman, happening also to be the Plaintiff in the Tip case, referred Mr. Plornish to his solicitor, and declined to treat with Mr. Plornish, or even to endure his presence in the yard, unless he appeared there with a twenty-pound note: in which case only, the gentleman would augur from appearances that he meant business, and might be induced to talk to him. On this hint, Mr. Plornish retired to communicate with his Principal, and presently came

back with the required credentials. Then said Captain Maroon, "Now, how much time do you want to make up the other twenty in? Now, I'll give you a month." Then said Captain Maroon, when that wouldn't suit, "Now, I'll tell what I'll do with you. You shall get me a good bill at four months, made payable at a banking-house, for the other twenty!" Then said Captain Maroon, when *that* wouldn't suit, "Now, come! Here's the last I've got to say to you. You shall give me another ten down, and I'll run my pen clean through it." Then said Captain Maroon, when *that* wouldn't suit, "Now, I'll tell you what it is, and this shuts it up; he has used me bad, but I'll let him off for another five down and a bottle of wine; and if you mean done, say done, and if you don't like it, leave it." Finally said Captain Maroon, when *that* wouldn't suit either, "Hand over, then!"—And in consideration of the first offer, gave a receipt in full and discharged the prisoner.

"Mr. Plornish," said Arthur, "I trust to you, if you please, to keep my secret. If you will undertake to let the young man know that he is free, and to tell him that you were employed to compound for the debt by some one whom you are not at liberty to name, you will not only do me a service, but may do him one, and his sister also."

"The last reason, sir," said Plornish, "would be quite sufficient. Your wishes shall be attended to."

"A Friend has obtained his discharge, you can say if you please. A Friend who hopes that for his sister's sake, if for no one else's, he will make good use of his liberty."

"Your wishes, sir, shall be attended to."

"And if you will be so good, in your better knowledge of the family, as to communicate freely with me, and to point out to me any means by which you think I may be delicately and really useful to Little Dorrit, I shall feel under an obligation to you."

"Don't name it, sir," returned Plornish, "it'll be ekally a pleasure and a—it'll be ekally a pleasure and a—." Finding himself unable to balance his sentence after two efforts, Mr. Plornish wisely dropped it. He took Clennam's card, and appropriate pecuniary compliment.

He was earnest to finish his commission at once, and his Principal was in the same mind. So, his Principal offered to set him down at the Marshalsea Gate, and they drove in that direction over Blackfriars Bridge. On the way, Arthur elicited from his new friend, a confused summary of the interior life of Bleeding Heart Yard. They was all hard up there, Mr. Plornish said, uncommon hard up, to-be-sure. Well, he couldn't say how it was; he didn't know as anybody *could* say how it was; all he know'd was, that so it was. When a man felt, on his own back and in his own belly, that he was poor, that man (Mr. Plornish gave it as his decided belief) know'd well that poor he was somehow or another, and you couldn't talk it out of him, no more than you could talk Beef into him. Then you see, some people as was better off said, and a good many such people lived pretty close up to the mark themselves if not beyond it so he'd heerd, that they was "improvident" (that was the favourite word) down the Yard. For instance, if they see a man with his wife and children going to Hampton Court in a Wan, perhaps once in a year, they says, "Hallo! I thought you was poor, my improvident friend!" Why, Lord, how hard it was upon a man! What was a man

to do? He couldn't go mollancholly mad, and even if he did, you wouldn't be the better for it. In Mr. Plornish's judgment, you would be the worse for it. Yet you seemed to want to make a man mollancholly mad. You was always at it—if not with your right hand, with your left. What was they a doing in the Yard? Why, take a look at 'em and see. There was the girls and their mothers a working at their sewing, or their shoe-binding, or their trimming, or their waistcoat making, day and night and night and day, and not more than able to keep body and soul together after all—often not so much. There was people of pretty well all sorts of trades you could name, all wanting to work, and yet not able to get it. There was old people, after working all their lives, going and being shut up in the Workhouse, much worse fed and lodged and treated altogether, than—Mr. Plornish said manufacturers, but appeared to mean malefactors. Why, a man didn't know where to turn himself, for a crumb of comfort. As to who was to blame for it, Mr. Plornish didn't know who was to blame for it. He could tell you who suffered, but he couldn't tell you whose fault it was. It wasn't *his* place to find out, and who'd mind what he said, if he did find out? He only know'd that it wasn't put right by them what undertook that line of business, and that it didn't come right of itself. And in brief his illogical opinion was, that if you couldn't do nothing for him, you had better take nothing from him for doing of it; so far as he could make out, that was about what it come to. Thus, in a prolix, gently-growling, foolish way, did Plornish turn the tangled skein of his estate about and about, like a blind man who was trying to find some beginning or end to it; until they reached the prison gate. There, he left his Principal alone; to wonder, as he rode away, how many thousand Plornishes there might be within a day or two's journey of the Circumlocution Office, playing sundry curious variations on the same tune, which were not known by ear in that glorious institution.

CHAPTER XIII.

PATRIARCHAL.

THE mention of Mr. Casby again revived, in Clennam's memory, the smouldering embers of curiosity and interest which Mrs. Flintwinch had fanned on the night of his arrival. Flora Casby had been the beloved of his boyhood; and Flora was the daughter and only child of wooden-headed old Christopher (so he was still occasionally spoken of by some irreverent spirits who had had dealings with him, and in whom familiarity had bred its proverbial result perhaps), who was reputed to be rich in weekly tenants, and to get a good quantity of blood out of the stones of several unpromising courts and alleys.

After some days of enquiry and research, Arthur Clennam became convinced that the case of the Father of the Marshalsea was indeed a hopeless one, and sorrowfully resigned the idea of helping him to freedom again. He had no hopeful enquiry to make, at present, concerning

Little Dorrit either; but he argued with himself that it might, for anything he knew it might be serviceable to the poor child, if he renewed this acquaintance. It is hardly necessary to add, that beyond all doubt he would have presented himself at Mr. Casby's door, if there had been no Little Dorrit in existence; for we all know how we all deceive ourselves—that is to say, how people in general, our profounder selves excepted, deceive themselves—as to motives of action.

With a comfortable impression upon him, and quite an honest one in its way, that he was still patronising Little Dorrit in doing what had no reference to her, he found himself one afternoon at the corner of Mr. Casby's street. Mr. Casby lived in a street in the Gray's Inn Road, which had set off from that thoroughfare with the intention of running at one heat down into the valley, and up again to the top of Pentonville Hill; but which had run itself out of breath in twenty yards, and had stood still ever since. There is no such place in that part now; but it remained there for many years, looking with a baulked countenance at the wilderness patched with unfruitful gardens and pimped with eruptive summer-houses, that it had meant to run over in no time.

"The house," thought Clennam, as he crossed to the door, "is as little changed as my mother's, and looks almost as gloomy. But the likeness ends outside. I know its staid repose within. The smell of its jars of old rose-leaves and lavender seems to come upon me even here."

When his knock, at the bright brass knocker of obsolete shape, brought a woman-servant to the door, those faded scents in truth saluted him like wintry breath that had a faint remembrance in it of the bygone spring. He stepped into the sober, silent, air-tight house—one might have fancied it to have been stifled by Mutes in the Eastern manner—and the door, closing again, seemed to shut out sound and motion. The furniture was formal, grave, and quaker-like, but well-kept; and had as prepossessing an aspect, as anything, from a human creature to a wooden stool, that is meant for much use and is preserved for little, can ever wear. There was a grave clock, ticking somewhere up the staircase; and there was a songless bird in the same direction, pecking at his cage as if he were ticking too. The parlor-fire ticked in the grate. There was only one person on the parlor-hearth, and the loud watch in his pocket ticked audibly.

The servant-maid had ticked the two words "Mr. Clennam" so softly that she had not been heard; and he consequently stood, within the door she had closed, unnoticed. The figure of a man advanced in life, whose smooth grey eyebrows seemed to move to the ticking as the fire-light flickered on them, sat in an arm-chair, with his list shoes on the rug, and his thumbs slowly revolving over one another. This was old Christopher Casby—recognisable at a glance—as unchanged in twenty years and upwards, as his own solid furniture—as little touched by the influence of the varying seasons, as the old rose-leaves and old lavender in his porcelain jars.

Perhaps there never was a man, in this troublesome world, so troublesome for the imagination to picture as a boy. And yet he had changed very little in his progress through life. Confronting him, in the room in which he sat, was a boy's portrait, which anybody seeing him would have identified as Master Christopher Casby, aged ten: though disguised with a haymaking rake, for which he had had, at any time, as much

taste or use as for a diving-bell; and sitting (on one of his own legs) upon a bank of violets, moved to precocious contemplation by the spire of a village church. There was the same smooth face and forehead, the same calm blue eye, the same placid air. The shining bald head, which looked so very large because it shone so much; and the long grey hair at its sides and back, like floss silk or spun glass, which looked so very benevolent because it was never cut; were not, of course, to be seen in the boy as in the old man. Nevertheless, in the Seraphic creature with the haymaking rake, were clearly to be discerned the rudiments of the Patriarch with the list shoes.

Patriarch was the name which many people delighted to give him. Various old ladies in the neighbourhood spoke of him as The Last of the Patriarchs. So grey, so slow, so quiet, so impassioned, so very bumpy in the head, Patriarch was the word for him. He had been accosted in the streets, and respectfully solicited to become a Patriarch for painters and for sculptors: with so much importunity, in sooth, that it would appear to be beyond the Fine Arts to remember the points of a Patriarch, or to invent one. Philanthropists of both sexes had asked who he was, and on being informed, "Old Christopher Casby, formerly Town-agent to Lord Decimus Tite Barnacle," had cried in a rapture of disappointment, "Oh! why, with that head, is he not a benefactor to his species! Oh! why, with that head, is he not a father to the orphan and a friend to the friendless!" With that head, however, he remained old Christopher Casby, proclaimed by common report rich in house property; and with that head, he now sat in his silent parlor. Indeed it would be the height of unreason to expect him to be sitting there without that head.

Arthur Clennam moved to attract his attention, and the grey eyebrows turned towards him.

"I beg your pardon," said Clennam, "I fear you did not hear me announced?"

"No, sir, I did not. Did you wish to see me, sir?"

"I wished to pay my respects."

Mr. Casby seemed a feather's weight disappointed by the last words, having perhaps prepared himself for the visitor's wishing to pay something else. "Have I the pleasure, sir," he proceeded—"take a chair, if you please—have I the pleasure of knowing—? Ah! truly, yes, I think I have! I believe I am not mistaken in supposing that I am acquainted with those features? I think I address a gentleman of whose return to this country I was informed by Mr. Flintwinch?"

"That is your present visitor."

"Really! Mr. Clennam?"

"No other, Mr. Casby."

"Mr. Clennam, I am glad to see you. How have you been since we met?"

Without thinking it worth while to explain that in the course of some quarter of a century he had experienced occasional slight fluctuations in his health and spirits, Clennam answered generally that he had never been better, or something equally to the purpose; and shook hands with the possessor of "that head," as it shed its patriarchal light upon him.

"We are older, Mr. Clennam," said Christopher Casby.

"We are—not younger," said Clennam. After this wise remark he

felt that he was scarcely shining with brilliancy, and became aware that he was nervous.

"And your respected father," said Mr. Casby, "is no more! I was grieved to hear it, Mr. Clennam, I was grieved."

Arthur implied in the usual way that he felt infinitely obliged to him.

"There was a time," said Mr. Casby, "when your parents and myself were not on friendly terms. There was a little family misunderstanding among us. Your respected mother was rather jealous of her son, maybe; when I say her son, I mean your worthy self, your worthy self."

His smooth face had a bloom upon it, like ripe wall-fruit. What with his blooming face, and that head, and his blue eyes, he seemed to be delivering sentiments of rare wisdom and virtue. In like manner, his physiognomical expression seemed to teem with benignity. Nobody could have said where the wisdom was, or where the virtue was, or where the benignity was; but they all seemed to be somewhere about him.

"Those times, however," pursued Mr. Casby, "are past and gone, past and gone. I do myself the pleasure of making a visit to your respected mother occasionally, and of admiring the fortitude and strength of mind with which she bears her trials, bears her trials."

When he made one of these little repetitions, sitting with his hands crossed before him, he did it with his head on one side and a gentle smile, as if he had something in his thoughts too sweetly profound to be put into words. As if he denied himself the pleasure of uttering it, lest he should soar too high; and his meekness therefore preferred to be unmeaning.

"I have heard that you were kind enough on one of those occasions," said Arthur, catching at the opportunity as it drifted past him, "to mention Little Dorrit to my mother."

"Little—? Dorrit? That's the seamstress who was mentioned to me by a small tenant of mine? Yes, yes. Dorrit? That's the name. Ah, yes, yes! You call her Little Dorrit?"

No road in that direction. Nothing came of the cross-cut. It led no further.

"My daughter Flora," said Mr. Casby, "as you may have heard probably, Mr. Clennam, was married and established in life, several years ago. She had the misfortune to lose her husband when she had been married a few months. She resides with me again. She will be glad to see you, if you will permit me to let her know that you are here."

"By all means," returned Clennam. "I should have preferred the request, if your kindness had not anticipated me."

Upon this, Mr. Casby rose up in his list shoes, and with a slow, heavy step (he was of an elephantine build), made for the door. He had a long wide-skirted bottle-green coat on, and a bottle-green pair of trowsers, and a bottle-green waistcoat. The Patriarchs were not dressed in bottle-green broadcloth, and yet his clothes looked patriarchal.

He had scarcely left the room, and allowed the ticking to become audible again, when a quick hand turned a latchkey in the house-door, opened it, and shut it. Immediately afterwards, a quick and eager short dark man came into the room with so much way upon him, that he was within a foot of Clennam before he could stop.

"Halloa!" he said.

Clennam saw no reason why he should not say "Halloa!" too.

"What's the matter?" said the short dark man.

"I have not heard that anything is the matter," returned Clennam.

"Where's Mr. Casby?" asked the short dark man, looking about.

"He will be here directly, if you want him."

"I want him?" said the short dark man. "Don't you?"

This elicited a word or two of explanation from Clennam, during the delivery of which the short dark man held his breath and looked at him. He was dressed in black, and rusty iron grey; had jet black beads of eyes; a scrubby little black chin; wiry black hair striking out from his head in prongs, like forks or hair-pins; and a complexion that was very dingy by nature, or very dirty by art, or a compound of nature and art. He had dirty hands and dirty broken nails, and looked as if he had been in the coals; he was in a perspiration, and snorted and sniffed and puffed and blew, like a little laboring steam-engine.

"Oh!" said he, when Arthur had told him how he came to be there. "Very well. That's right. If he should ask for Pancks, will you be so good as to say that Pancks is come in?" And so, with a snort and a puff, he worked out by another door.

Now, in the old days at home, certain audacious doubts respecting the last of the Patriarchs, which were afloat in the air, had, by some forgotten means, come in contact with Arthur's sensorium. He was aware of motes and specks of suspicion, in the atmosphere of that time; seen through which medium, Christopher Casby was a mere Inn signpost without any Inn — an invitation to rest and be thankful, when there was no place to put up at, and nothing whatever to be thankful for. He knew that some of these specks even represented Christopher as capable of harboring designs in "that head," and as being a crafty impostor. Other motes there were which showed him as a heavy, selfish, drifting Booby, who, having stumbled, in the course of his unwieldy jostlings against other men, on the discovery that to get through life with ease and credit, he had but to hold his tongue, keep the bald part of his head well polished, and leave his hair alone, had had just cunning enough to seize the idea and stick to it. It was said that his being town-agent to Lord Decimus Tite Barnacle was referable, not to his having the least business capacity, but to his looking so supremely benignant that nobody could suppose the property serewed or jobbed under such a man; also, that for similar reasons he now got more money out of his own wretched lettings, unquestioned, than anybody with a less knobby and less shining crown could possibly have done. In a word, it was represented (Clennam called to mind, alone in the ticking parlor) that many people select their models, much as the painters, just now mentioned, select theirs; and that, whereas in the Royal Academy some evil old ruffian of a Dogstealer will annually be found embodying all the cardinal virtues, on account of his eyelashes, or his chin, or his legs (thereby planting thorns of confusion in the breasts of the more observant students of nature), so, in the great social Exhibition, accessories are often accepted in lieu of the internal character.

Calling these things to mind, and ranging Mr. Pancks in a row with them, Arthur Clennam leaned this day to the opinion, without quite deciding on it, that the last of the Patriarchs was the drifting Booby

aforesaid, with the one idea of keeping the bald part of his head highly polished: and that, much as an unwieldy ship in the Thames river may sometimes be seen heavily driving with the tide, broadside on, stern first, in its own way and in the way of everything else, though making a great show of navigation, when all of a sudden, a little coaly steam-tug will bear down upon it, take it in tow, and bustle off with it; similarly, the cumbrous Patriarch had been taken in tow by the snorting Pancks, and was now following in the wake of that dingy little craft.

The return of Mr. Casby, with his daughter Flora, put an end to these meditations. Clennam's eyes no sooner fell upon the object of his old passion, than it shivered and broke to pieces.

Most men will be found sufficiently true to themselves to be true to an old idea. It is no proof of an inconstant mind, but exactly the opposite, when the idea will not bear close comparison with the reality, and the contrast is a fatal shock to it. Such was Clennam's case. In his youth he had ardently loved this woman, and had heaped upon her all the locked-up wealth of his affection and imagination. That wealth had been, in his desert home, like Robinson Crusoe's money; exchangeable with no one, lying idle in the dark to rust, until he poured it out for her. Ever since that memorable time, though he had, until the night of his arrival, as completely dismissed her from any association with his Present or Future as if she had been dead (which she might easily have been for anything he knew), he had kept the old fancy of the Past unchanged, in its old sacred place. And now, after all, the last of the Patriarchs coolly walked into the parlor, saying in effect, "Be good enough to throw it down and dance upon it. This is Flora."

Flora, always tall, had grown to be very broad too, and short of breath; but that was not much. Flora, whom he had left a lily, had become a peony; but that was not much. Flora, who had seemed enchanting in all she said and thought, was diffuse and silly. That was much. Flora, who had been spoiled and artless long ago, was determined to be spoiled and artless now. That was a fatal blow.

This is Flora!

"I am sure," giggled Flora, tossing her head with a caricature of her girlish manner, such as a mummer might have presented at her own funeral, if she had lived and died in classical antiquity, "I am ashamed to see Mr. Clennam, I am a mere fright, I know he'll find me fearfully changed, I am actually an old woman, it's shocking to be so found out, it's really shocking!"

He assured her that she was just what he had expected, and that time had not stood still with himself.

"Oh! But with a gentleman it's so different and really you look so amazingly well that you have no right to say anything of the kind, while, as to me you know—oh!" cried Flora with a little scream, "I am dreadful!"

The Patriarch, apparently not yet understanding his own part in the drama under representation, glowed with vacant serenity.

"But if we talk of not having changed," said Flora, who, whatever she said, never once came to a full stop, "look at Papa, is not Papa precisely what he was when you went away, isn't it cruel and unnatural of Papa to be such a reproach to his own child, if we go on in

this way much longer people who don't know us will begin to suppose that I am Papa's Mama!"

That must be a long time hence, Arthur considered.

"Oh Mr. Clennam you insincerest of creatures," said Flora, "I perceive already you have not lost your old way of paying compliments, your old way when you used to pretend to be so sentimentally struck you know—at least I don't mean that, I—oh I don't know what I mean!" Here Flora tittered confusedly, and gave him one of her old glances.

The Patriarch, as if he now began to perceive that his part in the piece was to get off the stage as soon as might be, rose, and went to the door by which Pancks had worked out, hailing that Tug by name. He received an answer from some little Dock beyond, and was towed out of sight directly.

"You mustn't think of going yet," said Flora—Arthur had looked at his hat, being in a ludicrous dismay, and not knowing what to do; "you could never be so unkind as to think of going, Arthur—I mean Mr. Arthur—or I suppose Mr. Clennam would be far more proper—but I am sure I don't know what I'm saying—without a word about the dear old days gone for ever, however when I come to think of it I dare say it would be much better not to speak of them and it's highly probable that you have some much more agreeable engagement and pray let Me be the last person in the world to interfere with it though there was a time, but I am running into nonsense again."

Was it possible that Flora could have been such a chatterer, in the days she referred to? Could there have been anything like her present disjointed volubility, in the fascinations that had captivated him?

"Indeed I have little doubt," said Flora, running on with astonishing speed, and pointing her conversation with nothing but commas, and very few of them, "that you are married to some Chinese lady, being in China so long and being in business and naturally desirous to settle and extend your connection nothing was more likely than that you should propose to a Chinese lady and nothing was more natural I am sure than that the Chinese lady should accept you and think herself very well off too, I only hope she's not a Pagodian dissenter."

"I am not," returned Arthur, smiling in spite of himself, "married to any lady, Flora."

"Oh good gracious me I hope you never kept yourself a bachelor so long on my account!" tittered Flora; "but of course you never did why should you, pray don't answer, I don't know where I'm running to, oh do tell me something about the Chinese ladies whether their eyes are really so long and narrow always putting me in mind of mother-of-pearl fish at cards and do they really wear tails down their back and plaited too or is it only the men, and when they pull their hair so very tight off their foreheads don't they hurt themselves, and why do they stick little bells all over their bridges and temples and hats and things or don't they really do it!" Flora gave him another of her old glances. Instantly she went on again, as if he had spoken in reply for some time.

"Then it's all true and they really do! good gracious Arthur!—pray excuse me—old habit—Mr. Clennam far more proper—what a country to live in for so long a time, and with so many lanterns and

umbrellas too how very dark and wet the climate ought to be and no doubt actually is, and the sums of money that must be made by those two trades where everybody carries them and hangs them everywhere, the little shoes too and the feet screwed back in infancy is quite surprising, what a traveller you are!"

In his ridiculous distress, Clennam received another of the old glances, without in the least knowing what to do with it.

"Dear dear," said Flora, "only to think of the changes at home Arthur—cannot overcome it, seems so natural, Mr. Clennam far more proper—since you became familiar with the Chinese customs and language which I am persuaded you speak like a Native if not better for you were always quick and clever though immensely difficult no doubt, I am sure the tea chests alone would kill *me* if I tried, such changes Arthur—I am doing it again, seems so natural, most improper—as no one could have believed, who could have ever imagined Mrs. Finching when I can't imagine it myself!"

"Is that your married name?" asked Arthur, struck, in the midst of all this, by a certain warmth of heart that expressed itself in her tone when she referred, however oddly, to the youthful relation in which they had stood to one another. "Finching?"

"Finching oh yes isn't it a dreadful name, but as Mr. F said when he proposed to me which he did seven times and handsomely consented I must say to be what he used to call on liking twelve months after all, he wasn't answerable for it and couldn't help it could he, Excellent man. not at all like you but excellent man!"

Flora had at last talked herself out of breath for one moment. One moment; for she recovered breath in the act of raising a minute corner of her pocket-handkerchief to her eye, as a tribute to the ghost of the departed Mr. F, and began again.

"No one could dispute, Arthur—Mr. Clennam—that it's quite right you should be formally friendly to me under the altered circumstances and indeed you couldn't be anything else, at least I suppose not you ought to know, but I can't help recalling that there *was* a time when things were very different."

"My dear Mrs. Finching," Arthur began, struck by the good tone again.

"Oh not that nasty ugly name, say Flora!"

"Flora. I assure you, Flora, I am happy in seeing you once more, and in finding that, like me, you have not forgotten the old foolish dreams, when we saw all before us in the light of our youth and hope."

"You don't seem so," pouted Flora, "you take it very coolly, but however I know you are disappointed in me, I suppose the Chinese ladies—Mandarinesses if you call them so—are the cause or perhaps I am the cause myself, it's just as likely."

"No, no," Clennam entreated, "don't say that."

"Oh I must you know," said Flora, in a positive tone, "what nonsense not to, I know I am not what you expected, I know that very well."

In the midst of her rapidity, she had found that out with the quick perception of a cleverer woman. The inconsistent and profoundly unreasonable way in which she instantly went on, nevertheless, to interweave their long-abandoned boy and girl relations with their present interview, made Clennam feel as if he were lightheaded.

"One remark," said Flora, giving their conversation, without the slightest notice and to the great terror of Clennam, the tone of a love-quarrel, "I wish to make, one explanation I wish to offer, when your Mama came and made a scene of it with my Papa and when I was called down into the little breakfast room where they were looking at one another with your Mama's parasol between them seated on two chairs like mad bulls what was I to do!"

"My dear Mrs. Finching," urged Clennam—"all so long ago and so long concluded, is it worth while seriously to——"

"I can't, Arthur," returned Flora, "be denounced as heartless by the whole society of China without setting myself right when I have the opportunity of doing so, and you must be very well aware that there was Paul and Virginia which had to be returned and which was returned without note or comment, not that I mean to say you could have written to me watched as I was but if it had only come back with a red wafer on the cover I should have known that it meant Come to Peking Nankeen and What's the third place, barefoot."

"My dear Mrs. Finching, you were not to blame, and I never blamed you. We were both too young, too dependent and helpless, to do anything but accept our separation.—Pray think how long ago," gently remonstrated Arthur.

"One more remark," proceeded Flora with unslackened volubility, "I wish to make, one more explanation I wish to offer, for five days I had a cold in the head from crying which I passed entirely in the back drawing-room—there is the back drawing-room still on the first floor and still at the back of the house to confirm my words—when that dreary period had passed a lull succeeded years rolled on and Mr. F became acquainted with us at a mutual friend's, he was all attention he called next day he soon began to call three evenings a week and to send in little things for supper, it was not love on Mr. F's part it was adoration, Mr. F proposed with the full approval of Papa and what could I do?"

"Nothing whatever," said Arthur, with the cheerfulest readiness, "but what you did. Let an old friend assure you of his full conviction that you did quite right."

"One last remark," proceeded Flora, rejecting common-place life with a wave of her hand, "I wish to make, one last explanation I wish to offer, there *was* a time ere Mr. F first paid attentions incapable of being mistaken, but that is past and was not to be, dear Mr. Clennam you no longer wear a golden chain you are free I trust you may be happy, here is Papa who is always tiresome and putting in his nose everywhere where he is not wanted."

With these words, and with a hasty gesture fraught with timid caution—such a gesture had Clennam's eyes been familiar with in the old time—poor Flora left herself, at eighteen years of age, a long long way behind again; and came to a full stop at last.

Or rather, she left about half of herself at eighteen years of age behind, and grafted the rest on to the relict of the late Mr. F; thus making a moral mermaid of herself, which her once boy-lover contemplated with feelings wherein his sense of the sorrowful and his sense of the comical were curiously blended.

For example. As if there were a secret understanding between herself and Clennam of the most thrilling nature; as if the first of a train of post-chaises and four, extending all the way to Scotland, were at that moment round the corner; and as if she couldn't (and wouldn't) have walked into the Parish Church with him, under the shade of the family umbrella, with the Patriarchal blessing on her head, and the perfect concurrence of all mankind; Flora comforted her soul with agonies of mysterious signalling, expressing dread of discovery. With the sensation of becoming more and more lightheaded every minute, Clennam saw the relict of the late Mr. F enjoying herself in the most wonderful manner, by putting herself and him in their old places, and going through all the old performances—now, when the stage was dusty, when the scenery was faded, when the youthful actors were dead, when the orchestra was empty, when the lights were out. And still, through all this grotesque revival of what he remembered as having once been prettily natural to her, he could not but feel that it revived at sight of him, and that there was a tender memory in it.

The Patriarch insisted on his staying to dinner, and Flora signalled "Yes!" Clennam so wished he could have done more than stay to dinner—so heartily wished he could have found the Flora that had been, or that never had been—that he thought the least atonement he could make for the disappointment he almost felt ashamed of, was to give himself up to the family desire. Therefore, he stayed to dinner.

Pancks dined with them. Pancks steamed out of his little dock at a quarter before six, and bore straight down for the Patriarch, who happened to be then driving, in an inane manner, through a stagnant account of Bleeding Heart Yard. Pancks instantly made fast to him and hauled him out.

"Bleeding Heart Yard?" said Pancks, with a puff and a snort. "It's a troublesome property. Don't pay you badly, but rents are very hard to get there. You have more trouble with that one place, than with all the places belonging to you."

Just as the big ship in tow gets the credit, with most spectators, of being the powerful object, so the Patriarch usually seemed to have said himself whatever Pancks said for him.

"Indeed?" returned Clennam, upon whom this impression was so efficiently made by a mere gleam of the polished head, that he spoke the ship instead of the Tug. "The people are so poor there?"

"You can't say, you know," snorted Pancks, taking one of his dirty hands out of his rusty iron-grey pockets to bite his nails, if he could find any, and turning his beads of eyes upon his employer, "whether they're poor or not. They say they are, but they all say that. When a man says he's rich, you're generally sure he isn't. Besides, if they are poor, you can't help it. You'd be poor yourself if you didn't get your rents."

"True enough," said Arthur.

"You're not going to keep open house for all the poor of London," pursued Pancks. "You're not going to lodge 'em for nothing. You're not going to open your gates wide and let 'em come free. Not if you know it, you an't."

Mr. Casby shook his head, in placid and benignant generality.

"If a man takes a room of you at half-a-crown a week, and when the week comes round hasn't got the half-crown, you say to that man, Why have you got the room, then? If you haven't got the one thing, why have you got the other? What have you been and done with your money? What do you mean by it? What are you up to? That's what *you* say to a man of that sort; and if you didn't say it, more shame for you!" Mr. Pancks here made a singular and startling noise, produced by a strong blowing effort in the region of the nose, unattended by any result but that acoustic one.

"You have some extent of such property about the east and north-east here, I believe?" said Clennam, doubtful which of the two to address.

"Oh pretty well," said Pancks. "You're not particular to east or north-east, any point of the compass will do for you. What you want is a good investment and a quick return. You take it where you can find it. You an't nice as to situation—not you."

There was a fourth and most original figure in the Patriarchal tent, who also appeared before dinner. This was an amazing little old woman, with a face like a staring wooden doll too cheap for expression, and a stiff yellow wig perched unevenly on the top of her head, as if the child who owned the doll had driven a tack through it anywhere, so that it only got fastened on. Another remarkable thing in this little old woman was, that the same child seemed to have damaged her face in two or three places with some blunt instrument in the nature of a spoon; her countenance, and particularly the tip of her nose, presenting the phenomena of several dints, generally answering to the bowl of that article. A further remarkable thing in this little old woman was, that she had no name but Mr. F's Aunt.

She broke upon the visitor's view under the following circumstances: Flora said, when the first dish was being put on table, perhaps Mr. Clennam might not have heard that Mr. F had left her a legacy? Clennam in return implied his hope that Mr. F had endowed the wife whom he adored, with the greater part of his worldly substance, if not with all. Flora said, oh yes, she didn't mean that, Mr. F had made a beautiful will, but he had left her as a separate legacy, his Aunt. She then went out of the room to fetch the legacy, and, on her return, rather triumphantly presented "Mr. F's Aunt."

The major characteristics discoverable by the stranger in Mr. F's Aunt, were extreme severity and grim taciturnity; sometimes interrupted by a propensity to offer remarks, in a deep warning voice, which, being totally uncalled for by anything said by anybody, and traceable to no association of ideas, confounded and terrified the mind. Mr. F's Aunt may have thrown in these observations on some system of her own, and it may have been ingenious, or even subtle; but the key to it was wanted.

The neatly-served and well-cooked dinner (for everything about the Patriarchal household promoted quiet digestion) began with some soup, some fried soles, a butter-boat of shrimp sauce, and a dish of potatoes. The conversation still turned on the receipt of rents. Mr. F's Aunt, after regarding the company for ten minutes with a malevolent gaze, delivered the following fearful remark.

"When we lived at Henley, Barnes's gander was stole by tinkers."
Mr. Pancks courageously nodded his head and said, "All right,

ma'am." But the effect of this mysterious communication upon Clennam, was absolutely to frighten him. And another circumstance invested this old lady with peculiar terrors. Though she was always staring, she never acknowledged that she saw any individual. The polite and attentive stranger would desire, say, to consult her inclinations on the subject of potatoes. His expressive action would be hopelessly lost upon her, and what could he do? No man could say, "Mr. F's Aunt, will you permit me?" Every man retired from the spoon, as Clennam did, cowed and baffled.

There was mutton, a steak, and an apple-pie—nothing in the remotest way connected with ganders—and the dinner went on like a disenchanted feast, as it truly was. Once upon a time Clennam had sat at that table taking no heed of anything but Flora; now the principal heed he took of Flora was, to observe, against his will, that she was very fond of porter, that she combined a great deal of sherry with sentiment, and that if she were a little overgrown, it was upon substantial grounds. The last of the Patriarchs had always been a mighty eater, and he disposed of an immense quantity of solid food with the benignity of a good soul who was feeding some one else. Mr. Pancks, who was always in a hurry, and who referred at intervals to a little dirty note-book which he kept beside him (perhaps containing the names of the defaulters he meant to look up by way of dessert), took in his victuals much as if he were coaling; with a good deal of noise, a good deal of dropping about, and a puff and a snort occasionally, as if he were nearly ready to steam away.

All through dinner, Flora combined her present appetite for eating and drinking, with her past appetite for romantic love, in a way that made Clennam afraid to lift his eyes from his plate; since he could not look towards her without receiving some glance of mysterious meaning or warning, as if they were engaged in a plot. Mr. F's Aunt sat silently defying him with an aspect of the greatest bitterness, until the removal of the cloth and the appearance of the decanters, when she originated another observation—struck into the conversation like a clock, without consulting anybody.

Flora had just said "Mr. Clennam, will you give me a glass of port for Mr. F's Aunt?"

"The Monument near London Bridge," that lady instantly proclaimed, "was put up arter the Great Fire of London; and the Great Fire of London was not the fire in which your uncle George's work-shops was burned down."

Mr. Pancks, with his former courage, said, "Indeed, ma'am? All right!" But appearing to be incensed by imaginary contradiction, or other ill-usage, Mr. F's Aunt, instead of relapsing into silence, made the following additional proclamation.

"I hate a fool!"

She imparted to this sentiment, in itself almost Solomonic, so extremely injurious and personal a character, by levelling it straight at the visitor's head, that it became necessary to lead Mr. F's Aunt from the room. This was quietly done by Flora; Mr. F's Aunt offering no resistance, but enquiring on her way out "What he come there for, then?" with implacable animosity.

When Flora returned, she explained that her legacy was a clever old lady, but was sometimes a little singular, and "took dislikes"—peculiarities of which Flora seemed to be proud rather than otherwise. As Flora's good nature shone in the case, Clennam had no fault to find with the old lady for eliciting it, now that he was relieved from the terrors of her presence; and they took a glass or two of wine in peace. Foreseeing then that the Pancks would shortly get under weigh, and that the Patriarch would go to sleep, he pleaded the necessity of visiting his mother, and asked Mr. Pancks in which direction he was going?

"Citywards, sir," said Pancks.

"Shall we walk together?" said Arthur.

"Quite agreeable," said Pancks.

Meanwhile Flora was murmuring in rapid snatches for his ear, that there *was* a time and that the past was a yawning gulf however and that a golden chain no longer bound him and that she revered the memory of the late Mr. F and that she should be at home to-morrow at half-past one and that the decrees of Fate were beyond recall and that she considered nothing so improbable as that he ever walked on the north-west side of Gray's-Inn Gardens at exactly four o'clock in the afternoon. He tried at parting to give his hand in frankness to the existing Flora—not the vanished Flora, or the Mermaid—but Flora wouldn't have it, couldn't have it, was wholly destitute of the power of separating herself and him from their bygone characters. He left the house miserably enough; and so much more lightheaded than ever, that if it had not been his good fortune to be towed away, he might, for the first quarter of an hour, have drifted anywhere.

When he began to come to himself, in the cooler air and the absence of Flora, he found Pancks at full speed, cropping such scanty pasturage of nails as he could find, and snorting at intervals. These, in conjunction with one hand in his pocket and his roughened hat hind side before, were evidently the conditions under which he reflected.

"A fresh night!" said Arthur.

"Yes, it's pretty fresh," assented Pancks. "As a stranger, you feel the climate more than I do, I dare say. Indeed I haven't got time to feel it."

"You lead such a busy life?"

"Yes, I have always some of 'em to look up, or something to look after. But I like business," said Pancks, getting on a little faster.

"What's a man made for?"

"For nothing else?" said Clennam.

Pancks put the counter question, "What else?" It packed up, in the smallest compass, a weight that had rested on Clennam's life; and he made no answer.

"That's what I ask our weekly tenants," said Pancks. "Some of 'em will pull long faces to me, and say, Poor as you see us, master, we're always grinding, drudging, toiling, every minute we're awake. I say to them, What else are you made for? It shuts them up. They haven't a word to answer. What else are you made for? That clinches it."

"Ah dear, dear, dear!" sighed Clennam.

"Here am I," said Pancks, pursuing his argument with the weekly tenant. "What else do you suppose I think I am made for? Nothing. Rattle me out of bed early, set me going, give me as short a time as

you like to bolt my meals in, and keep me at it. Keep me always at it, I'll keep you always at it, you keep somebody else always at it. There you are, with the Whole Duty of Man in a commercial country."

When they had walked a little further in silence, Clennam said: "Have you no taste for anything, Mr. Pancks?"

"What's taste?" dryly retorted Pancks.

"Let us say inclination."

"I have an inclination to get money, sir," said Pancks, "if you'll show me how." He blew off that sound again, and it occurred to his companion for the first time that it was his way of laughing. He was a singular man in all respects; he might not have been quite in earnest, but that the short, hard, rapid manner in which he shot out these cinders of principles, as if it were done by mechanical revolvency, seemed irreconcilable with banter.

"You are no great reader, I suppose?" said Clennam.

"Never read anything but letters and accounts. Never collect anything but advertisements relative to next of kin. If *that's* a taste, I have got that. You're not of the Clennams of Cornwall, Mr. Clennam."

"Not that I ever heard of."

"I know you're not. I asked your mother, sir. She has too much character to let a chance escape her."

"Supposing I had been of the Clennams of Cornwall?"

"You'd have heard of something to your advantage."

"Indeed! I have heard of little enough to my advantage, for some time."

"There's a Cornish property going a begging, sir, and not a Cornish Clennam to have it for the asking," said Pancks, taking his note-book from his breast pocket and putting it in again. "I turn off here. I wish you good night."

"Good night!" said Clennam. But the Tug suddenly lightened, and, untrammelled by having any weight in tow, was already puffing away into the distance.

They had crossed Smithfield together, and Clennam was left alone at the corner of Barbican. He had no intention of presenting himself in his mother's dismal room that night, and could not have felt more depressed and cast away if he had been in a wilderness. He turned slowly down Aldersgate Street, and was pondering his way along towards Saint Paul's, purposing to come into one of the great thoroughfares for the sake of their light and life, when a crowd of people flocked towards him on the same pavement, and he stood aside against a shop to let them pass. As they came up, he made out that they were gathered round a something that was carried on men's shoulders. He soon saw that it was a litter, hastily made of a shutter or some such thing; and a recumbent figure upon it, and the scraps of conversation in the crowd, and a muddy bundle carried by one man, and a muddy hat carried by another, informed him that an accident had occurred. The litter stopped under a lamp before it had passed him half a dozen paces, for some re-adjustment of the burden; and, the crowd stopping too, he found himself in the midst of the array.

"An accident going to the Hospital?" he asked an old man beside him, who stood shaking his head, inviting conversation.

"Yes," said the man, "along of them Mails. They ought to be prosecuted and fined, them Mails. They come a racing out of Lad Lane and Wood Street at twelve or fourteen mile a hour, them Mails do. The only wonder is, that people an't killed oftener by them Mails."

"This person is not killed, I hope?"

"I don't know!" said the man, "it an't for the want of a will in them Mails, if he an't." The speaker having folded his arms, and set in comfortably to address his depreciation of them Mails to any of the bystanders who would listen, several voices, out of pure sympathy with the sufferer, confirmed him; one voice saying to Clennam, "They're a public nuisance, them Mails, sir;" another, "*I* see one on 'em pull up within half a inch of a boy, last night;" another, "*I* see one on 'em go over a cat, sir—and it might have been your own mother;" and all representing, by implication, that if he happened to possess any public influence, he could not use it better than against them Mails.

"Why, a native Englishman is put to it every night of his life, to save his life from them Mails," argued the first old man; "and *he* knows when they're a coming round the corner, to tear him limb from limb. What can you expect from a poor foreigner who don't know nothing about 'em!"

"Is this a foreigner?" said Clennam, leaning forward to look.

In the midst of such replies as "Frenchman, sir," "Porteghee, sir," "Dutchman, sir," "Prooshan, sir," and other conflicting testimony, he now heard a feeble voice asking, both in Italian and in French, for water. A general remark going round, in reply, of "Ah, poor fellow, he says he'll never get over it; and no wonder!" Clennam begged to be allowed to pass, as he understood the poor creature. He was immediately handed to the front, to speak to him.

"First, he wants some water," said he, looking round. (A dozen good fellows dispersed to get it.) "Are you badly hurt, my friend?" he asked the man on the litter, in Italian.

"Yes, sir; yes, yes, yes. It's my leg, it's my leg. But it pleases me to hear the old music, though I am very bad."

"You are a traveller? Stay! See the water! Let me give you some."

They had rested the litter on a pile of paving stones. It was at a convenient height from the ground, and by stooping he could lightly raise the head with one hand, and hold the glass to the lips with the other. A little, muscular, brown man, with black hair and white teeth. A lively face, apparently. Ear-rings in his ears.

"That's well. You are a traveller?"

"Surely, sir."

"A stranger in this city?"

"Surely, surely, altogether. I am arrived this unhappy evening."

"From what country?"

"Marseilles."

"Why, see there! I also! Almost as much a stranger here as you, though born here, I came from Marseilles a little while ago. Don't be cast down." The face looked up at him imploringly, as he rose from wiping it, and gently replaced the coat that covered the writhing figure. "I won't leave you, till you shall be well taken care of. Courage! You will be very much better, half-an-hour hence."

"Ah! Altro, Altro!" cried the poor little man, in a faintly incredulous tone; and as they took him up, hung out his right hand to give the forefinger a back-handed shake in the air.

Arthur Clennam turned; and walking beside the litter, and saying an encouraging word now and then, accompanied it to the neighbouring hospital of Saint Bartholomew. None of the crowd but the bearers and he being admitted, the disabled man was soon laid on a table in a cool, methodical way, and carefully examined by a surgeon: who was as near at hand, and as ready to appear, as Calamity herself. "He hardly knows an English word," said Clennam; "is he badly hurt?" "Let us know all about it first," said the surgeon, continuing his examination with a business-like delight in it, "before we pronounce."

After trying the leg with a finger and two fingers, and one hand and two hands, and over and under, and up and down, and in this direction and in that, and approvingly remarking on the points of interest to another gentleman who joined him, the surgeon at last clapped the patient on the shoulder, and said, "He won't hurt. He'll do very well. It's difficult enough, but we shall not want him to part with his leg this time." Which Clennam interpreted to the patient, who was full of gratitude, and, in his demonstrative way, kissed both the interpreter's hand and the surgeon's, several times.

"It's a serious injury, I suppose?" said Clennam.

"Ye-es," replied the surgeon, with the thoughtful pleasure of an artist, contemplating the work upon his easel. "Yes, it's enough. There's a compound fracture above the knee, and a dislocation below. They are both of a beautiful kind." He gave the patient a friendly clap on the shoulder again, as if he really felt that he was a very good fellow indeed, and worthy of all commendation for having broken his leg in a manner interesting to science.

"He speaks French?" said the surgeon.

"Oh yes, he speaks French."

"He'll be at no loss here, then.—You have only to bear a little pain like a brave fellow, my friend, and to be thankful that all goes as well as it does," he added, in that tongue, "and you'll walk again to a marvel. Now, let us see whether there's anything else the matter, and how our ribs are."

There was nothing else the matter, and our ribs were sound. Clennam remained until everything possible to be done had been skilfully and promptly done—the poor belated wanderer in a strange land movingly besought that favor of him—and lingered by the bed to which he was in due time removed, until he had fallen into a doze. Even then he wrote a few words for him on his card, with a promise to return to-morrow, and left it to be given to him when he should awake.

All these proceedings occupied so long, that it struck eleven o'clock at night as he came out at the Hospital Gate. He had hired a lodging for the present in Covent Garden, and he took the nearest way to that quarter, by Snow Hill and Holborn.

Left to himself again, after the solicitude and compassion of his last adventure, he was naturally in a thoughtful mood. As naturally, he could not walk on thinking for ten minutes, without recalling Flora. She necessarily recalled to him his life, with all its misdirection and little happiness.

When he got to his lodging, he sat down before the dying fire, as he had stood at the window of his old room looking out upon the blackened forest of chimneys, and turned his gaze back upon the gloomy vista by which he had come to that stage in his existence. So long, so bare, so blank. No childhood; no youth, except for one remembrance; the one remembrance proved, only that day, to be a piece of folly.

It was a misfortune to him, trifle as it might have been to another. For, while all that was hard and stern in his recollection, remained Reality on being proved—was obdurate to the sight and touch, and relaxed nothing of its old indomitable grimness—the one tender recollection of his experience would not bear the same test, and melted away. He had foreseen this, on the former night, when he had dreamed with waking eyes; but he had not felt it then; and he had now.

He was a dreamer in such wise, because he was a man who had deep-rooted in his nature, a belief in all the gentle and good things his life had been without. Bred in meanness and hard dealing, this had rescued him to be a man of honorable mind and open hand. Bred in coldness and severity, this had rescued him to have a warm and sympathetic heart. Bred in a creed too darkly audacious to pursue, through its process of reversing the making of man in the image of his Creator to the making of his Creator in the image of an erring man, this had rescued him to judge not, and in humility to be merciful, and have hope and charity.

And this saved him still from the whimpering weakness and cruel selfishness of holding that because such a happiness or such a virtue had not come into his little path, or worked well for him, therefore it was not in the great scheme, but was reducible, when found in appearance, to the basest elements. A disappointed mind he had, but a mind too firm and healthy for such unwholesome air. Leaving himself in the dark, it could rise into the light, seeing it shine on others and hailing it.

Therefore, he sat before his dying fire, sorrowful to think upon the way by which he had come to that night, yet not strewing poison on the way by which other men had come to it. That he should have missed so much, and at his time of life should look so far about him for any staff to bear him company upon his downward journey and cheer it, was a just regret. He looked at the fire from which the blaze departed, from which the after-glow subsided, in which the ashes turned grey, from which they dropped to dust, and thought, "How soon I too shall pass through such changes, and be gone!"

To review his life, was like descending a green tree in fruit and flower, and seeing all the branches wither and drop off one by one, as he came down towards them.

"From the unhappy suppression of my youngest days, through the rigid and unloving home that followed them, through my departure, my long exile, my return, my mother's welcome, my intercourse with her since, down to the afternoon of this day with poor Flora," said Arthur Clennam, "what have I found!"

His door was softly opened, and these spoken words startled him, and came as if they were an answer:

"Little Dorrit."

CHAPTER XIV.

LITTLE DORRIT'S PARTY.

ARTHUR CLENNAM rose hastily, and saw her standing at the door. This history must sometimes see with Little Dorrit's eyes, and shall begin that course by seeing him.

Little Dorrit looked into a dim room, which seemed a spacious one to her, and grandly furnished. Courtly ideas of Covent Garden, as a place with famous coffee-houses, where gentlemen wearing gold-laced coats and swords had quarrelled and fought duels; costly ideas of Covent Garden, as a place where there were flowers in winter at guineas a-piece, pine-apples at guineas a pound, and peas at guineas a pint; picturesque ideas of Covent Garden, as a place where there was a mighty theatre, showing wonderful and beautiful sights to richly-dressed ladies and gentlemen, and which was for ever far beyond the reach of poor Fanny or poor uncle; desolate ideas of Covent Garden, as having all those arches in it, where the miserable children in rags among whom she had just now passed, like young rats, slunk and hid, fed on offal, huddled together for warmth, and were hunted about (look to the rats young and old, all ye Barnacles, for before God they are eating away our foundations, and will bring the roofs on our heads!); teeming ideas of Covent Garden, as a place of past and present mystery, romance, abundance, want, beauty, ugliness, fair country gardens, and foul street-gutters, all confused together,—made the room dimmer than it was, in Little Dorrit's eyes, as they timidly saw it from the door.

At first in the chair before the gone-out fire, and then turned round wondering to see her, was the gentleman whom she sought. The brown, grave gentleman, who smiled so pleasantly, who was so frank and considerate in his manner, and yet in whose earnestness there was something that reminded her of his mother, with the great difference that she was earnest in asperity and he in gentleness. Now he regarded her with that attentive and enquiring look before which Little Dorrit's eyes had always fallen, and before which they fell still.

"My poor child! Here at midnight?"

"I said Little Dorrit, sir, on purpose to prepare you. I knew you must be very much surprised."

"Are you alone?"

"No, sir, I have got Maggy with me."

Considering her entrance sufficiently prepared for by this mention of her name, Maggy appeared from the landing outside, on the broad grin. She instantly suppressed that manifestation, however, and became fixedly solemn.

"And I have no fire," said Clennam. "And you are —" He was going to say so lightly clad, but stopped himself in what would have been a reference to her poverty, saying instead, "And it is so cold."

Putting the chair from which he had risen, nearer to the grate, he made her sit down in it; and hurriedly bringing wood and coal, heaped them together and got a blaze. "Your foot is like marble, my child;" he had happened to touch it, while stooping on one knee at his work of kindling the fire; "put it nearer the warmth." Little Dorrit thanked him hastily. It was quite warm, it was very warm! It smote upon his heart to feel that she hid her thin, worn shoe.

Little Dorrit was not ashamed of her poor shoes. He knew her story, and it was not that. Little Dorrit had a misgiving that he might blame her father, if he saw them; that he might think, "why did he dine to-day, and leave this little creature to the mercy of the cold stones!" She had no belief that it would have been a just reflection; she simply knew, by experience, that such delusions did sometimes present themselves to people. It was a part of her father's misfortunes that they did.

"Before I say anything else," Little Dorrit began, sitting before the pale fire, and raising her eyes again to the face which in its harmonious look of interest, and pity, and protection, she felt to be a mystery far above her in degree, and almost removed beyond her guessing at; "may I tell you something, sir?"

"Yes, my child."

A slight shade of distress fell upon her, at his so often calling her a child. She was surprised that he should see it, or think of such a slight thing; but he said directly:

"I wanted a tender word, and could think of no other. As you just now gave yourself the name they give you at my mother's, and as that is the name by which I always think of you, let me call you Little Dorrit."

"Thank you, sir, I should like it better than any name."

"Little Dorrit."

"Little mother," Maggy (who had been falling asleep) put in, as a correction.

"It's all the same, Maggy," returned Dorrit, "all the same."

"Is it all the same, mother?"

"Just the same."

Maggy laughed, and immediately snored. In Little Dorrit's eyes and ears, the uncouth figure and the uncouth sound were as pleasant as could be. There was a glow of pride in her big child, overspreading her face, when it again met the eyes of the grave brown gentleman. She wondered what he was thinking of, as he looked at Maggy and her. She thought what a good father he would be. How, with some such look, he would counsel and cherish his daughter.

"What I was going to tell you, sir," said Little Dorrit, "is, that my brother is at large."

Arthur was rejoiced to hear it, and hoped he would do well.

"And what I was going to tell you, sir," said Little Dorrit, trembling in all her little figure and in her voice, "is, that I am not to know whose generosity released him—am never to ask, and am never to be told, and am never to thank that gentleman with all my grateful heart!"

He would probably need no thanks, Clennam said. Very likely he would be thankful himself (and with reason), that he had had the means

and chance of doing a little service to her, who well deserved a great one.

"And what I was going to say, sir, is," said Little Dorrit, trembling more and more, "that if I knew him, and I might, I would tell him that he can never, never know how I feel his goodness, and how my good father would feel it. And what I was going to say, sir, is, that if I knew him, and I might—but I don't know him and I must not—I know that!—I would tell him that I shall never any more lie down to sleep, without having prayed to Heaven to bless him and reward him. And if I knew him, and I might, I would go down on my knees to him, and take his hand and kiss it, and ask him not to draw it away, but to leave it—O to leave it for a moment—and let my thankful tears fall on it, for I have no other thanks to give him!"

Little Dorrit had put his hand to her lips, and would have kneeled to him; but he gently prevented her, and replaced her in her chair. Her eyes, and the tones of her voice, had thanked him far better than she thought. He was not able to say, quite as composedly as usual, "There, Little Dorrit; there, there, there! We will suppose that you did know this person, and that you might do all this, and that it was all done. And now tell me, who am quite another person—who am nothing more than the friend who begged you to trust him—why you are out at midnight, and what it is that brings you so far through the streets at this late hour, my slight, delicate," child was on his lips again, "Little Dorrit!"

"Maggy and I have been to-night," she answered, subduing herself with the quiet effort that had long been natural to her, "to the theatre where my sister is engaged."

"And oh ain't it a 'Evn'ly place," suddenly interrupted Maggy, who seemed to have the power of going to sleep and waking up whenever she chose. "Almost as good as a hospital. Only there ain't no Chicking in it."

Here she shook herself, and fell asleep again.

"We went there," said Little Dorrit, glancing at her charge, "because I like sometimes to know, of my own knowledge, that my sister is doing well; and like to see her there, with my own eyes, when neither she nor Uncle is aware. It is very seldom indeed that I can do that, because when I am not out at work I am with my father, and even when I am out at work I hurry home to him. But I pretend to-night that I am at a party."

As she made the confession, timidly hesitating, she raised her eyes to the face, and read its expression so plainly that she answered it.

"Oh no, certainly! I never was at a party in my life."

She paused a little under his attentive look, and then said, "I hope there is no harm in it. I could never have been of any use, if I had not pretended a little."

She feared that he was blaming her in his mind, for so devising to contrive for them, think for them, and watch over them, without their knowledge or gratitude; perhaps even with their reproaches for supposed neglect. But what was really in his mind, was the weak figure with its strong purpose, the thin worn shoes, the insufficient dress, and the pretence of recreation and enjoyment. He asked where the suppositionary party was? At a place where she worked, answered Little Dorrit, blushing. She had said very little about it; only a few words

to make her father easy. Her father did not believe it to be a grand party—indeed he might suppose that. And she glanced for an instant at the shawl she wore.

"It is the first night," said Little Dorrit, "that I have ever been away from home. And London looks so large, so barren, and so wild." In Little Dorrit's eyes, its vastness under the black sky was awful; a tremor passed over her as she said the words.

"But this is not," she added, with the quiet effort again, "what I have come to trouble you with, sir. My sister's having found a friend, a lady she has told me of and made me rather anxious about, was the first cause of my coming away from home. And being away, and coming (on purpose) round by where you lived, and seeing a light in the window——"

Not for the first time. No, not for the first time. In Little Dorrit's eyes, the outside of that window had been a distant star, on other nights than this. She had toiled out of her way, tired and troubled, to look up at it, and wonder about the grave brown gentleman from so far off, who had spoken to her as a friend and protector.

"There were three things," said Little Dorrit, "that I thought I would like to say, if you were alone and I might come up-stairs. First, what I have tried to say, but never can—never shall——"

"Hush, hush! That is done with, and disposed of. Let us pass to the second," said Clennam, smiling her agitation away, making the blaze shine upon her, and putting wine and cake and fruit towards her on the table.

"I think," said Little Dorrit—"this is the second thing, sir—I think Mrs. Clennam must have found out my secret, and must know where I come from and where I go to. Where I live, I mean."

"Indeed?" returned Clennam, quickly. He asked her, after a short consideration, why she supposed so.

"I think," replied Little Dorrit, "that Mr. Flintwinch must have watched me."

And why, Clennam asked, as he turned his eyes upon the fire, bent his brows, and considered again; why did she suppose that?

"I have met him twice. Both times near home. Both times at night, when I was going back. Both times I thought (though that may easily be my mistake), that he hardly looked as if he had met me by accident."

"Did he say anything?"

"No; he only nodded and put his head on one side."

"The devil take his head!" mused Clennam, still looking at the fire; "it's always on one side."

He roused himself to persuade her to put some wine to her lips, and to touch something to eat—it was very difficult, she was so timid and shy—and then said, musing again:

"Is my mother at all changed to you?"

"Oh, not at all. She is just the same. I wondered whether I had better tell her my history. I wondered whether I might—I mean, whether you would like me to tell her. I wondered," said Little Dorrit, looking at him in a suppliant way, and gradually withdrawing her eyes as he looked at her, "whether you would advise me what I ought to do."

"Little Dorrit," said Clennam; and the phrase had already begun,

between those two, to stand for a hundred gentle phrases, according to the varying tone and connexion in which it was used; "do nothing. I will have some talk with my old friend, Mrs. Affery. Do nothing, Little Dorrit—except refresh yourself with such means as there are here. I entreat you to do that."

"Thank you, I am not hungry. Nor," said Little Dorrit, as he softly put her glass towards her, "nor thirsty.—I think Maggy might like something, perhaps."

"We will make her find pockets presently for all there is here," said Clennam; "but before we awake her, there was a third thing to say."

"Yes. You will not be offended, sir?"

"I promise that, unreservedly."

"It will sound strange. I hardly know how to say it. Don't think it unreasonable or ungrateful in me," said Little Dorrit, with returning and increasing agitation.

"No, no, no. I am sure it will be natural and right. I am not afraid that I shall put a wrong construction on it, whatever it is."

"Thank you. You are coming back to see my father again?"

"Yes."

"You have been so good and thoughtful as to write him a note, saying that you are coming to-morrow?"

"Oh, that was nothing! Yes."

"Can you guess," said Little Dorrit, folding her small hands tight in one another, and looking at him with all the earnestness of her soul looking steadily out of her eyes, "what I am going to ask you not to do?"

"I think I can. But I may be wrong."

"No, you are not wrong," said Little Dorrit, shaking her head. "If we should want it so very, very badly that we cannot do without it, let me ask you for it."

"I will,—I will."

"Don't encourage him to ask. Don't understand him, if he does ask. Don't give it to him. Save him and spare him that, and you will be able to think better of him!"

Clennam said—not very plainly, seeing those tears glistening in her anxious eyes—that her wish should be sacred with him.

"You don't know what he is," she said; "you don't know what he really is. How can you, seeing him there all at once, dear love, and not gradually, as I have done! You have been so good to us, so delicately and truly good, that I want him to be better in your eyes than in anybody's. And I cannot bear to think," cried Little Dorrit, covering her tears with her hands, "I cannot bear to think, that you of all the world should see him in his only moments of degradation!"

"Pray," said Clennam, "do not be so distressed. Pray, pray, Little Dorrit! This is quite understood now."

"Thank you, sir. Thank you! I have tried very much to keep myself from saying this; I have thought about it, days and nights; but when I knew for certain you were coming again, I made up my mind to speak to you. Not because I am ashamed of him," she dried her tears quickly, "but because I know him better than any one does, and love him, and am proud of him."

Relieved of this weight, Little Dorrit was nervously anxious to be gone. Maggy being broad awake, and in the act of distantly gloating over the fruit and cakes with chuckles of anticipation, Clennam made the best diversion in his power by pouring her out a glass of wine, which she drank in a series of loud smacks; putting her hand upon her windpipe after every one, and saying, breathless, with her eyes in a very prominent state, "Oh ain't it d'licious! Ain't it hospitably!" When she had finished the wine and these encomiums, he charged her to load her basket (she was never without her basket) with every eatable thing upon the table, and to take especial care to leave no scrap behind. Maggy's pleasure in doing this, and her little mother's pleasure in seeing Maggy pleased, was as good a turn as circumstances could have given to the late conversation.

"But the gates will have been locked long ago," said Clennam, suddenly remembering it. "Where are you going?"

"I am going to Maggy's lodging," answered Little Dorrit. "I shall be quite safe, quite well taken care of."

"I must accompany you there," said Clennam. "I cannot let you go alone."

"Yes, pray leave us to go there by ourselves. Pray do!" begged Little Dorrit.

She was so earnest in the petition, that Clennam felt a delicacy in obtruding himself upon her: the rather, because he could well understand that Maggy's lodging was of the obscurest sort. "Come, Maggy," said Little Dorrit, cheerily, "we shall do very well; we know the way, by this time, Maggy?"

"Yes, yes, little mother; we know the way," chuckled Maggy. And away they went. Little Dorrit turned at the door to say "God bless you!" She said it very softly, but perhaps she may have been as audible above—who knows!—as a whole cathedral choir.

Arthur Clennam suffered them to pass the corner of the street, before he followed at a distance; not with any idea of encroaching a second time on Little Dorrit's privacy, but to satisfy his mind by seeing her secure, in the neighbourhood to which she was accustomed. So diminutive she looked, so fragile and defenceless against the bleak damp weather, flitting along in the shuffling shadow of her charge, that he felt, in his compassion, and in his habit of considering her a child apart from the rest of the rough world, as if he would have been glad to take her up in his arms and carry her to her journey's end.

In course of time she came into the leading thoroughfare where the Marshalsea was, and then he saw them slacken their pace, and soon turn down a bye-street. He stopped, felt that he had no right to go further, and slowly left them. He had no suspicion that they ran any risk of being houseless until morning; had no idea of the truth, until long, long afterwards.

But, said Little Dorrit, when they stopped at a poor dwelling all in darkness, and heard no sound on listening at the door, "Now, this is a good lodging for you, Maggy, and we must not give offence. Consequently, we will only knock twice, and not very loud; and if we cannot wake them so, we must walk about till day."

Once, Little Dorrit knocked with a careful hand, and listened.

Twice, Little Dorrit knocked with a careful hand, and listened. All was close and still. "Maggy, we must do the best we can, my dear. We must be patient, and wait for day."

It was a chill dark night, with a damp wind blowing, when they came out into the leading street again, and heard the clocks strike half-past one. "In only five hours and a half," said Little Dorrit, "we shall be able to go home." To speak of home, and to go and look at it, it being so near, was a natural sequence. They went to the closed gate, and peeped through into the courtyard. "I hope he is sound asleep," said Little Dorrit, kissing one of the bars, "and does not miss me."

The gate was so familiar, and so like a companion, that they put down Maggy's basket in a corner to serve for a seat, and keeping close together, rested there for some time. While the street was empty and silent, Little Dorrit was not afraid; but when she heard a footstep at a distance, or saw a moving shadow among the street lamps, she was startled, and whispered, "Maggy, I see some one. Come away!" Maggy would then wake up more or less fretfully, and they would wander about a little, and come back again.

As long as eating was a novelty and an amusement, Maggy kept up pretty well. But, that period going by, she became querulous about the cold, and shivered and whimpered. "It will soon be over, dear," said Little Dorrit, patiently. "Oh it's all very fine for you, little mother," returned Maggy, "but I'm a poor thing, only ten years old." At last, in the dead of the night, when the street was very still indeed, Little Dorrit laid the heavy head upon her bosom, and soothed her to sleep. And thus she sat at the gate, as it were alone; looking up at the stars, and seeing the clouds pass over them in their wild flight—which was the dance at Little Dorrit's party.

"If it really was a party!" she thought once, as she sat there. "If it was light and warm and beautiful, and it was our house, and my poor dear was its master, and had never been inside these walls. And if Mr. Clennam was one of our visitors, and we were dancing to delightful music, and were all as gay and lighthearted as ever we could be! I wonder—" Such a vista of wonder opened out before her, that she sat looking up at the stars, quite lost; until Maggy was querulous again, and wanted to get up and walk.

Three o'clock, and half-past three, and they had passed over London Bridge. They had heard the rush of the tide against obstacles; had looked down, awed, through the dark vapor on the river; had seen little spots of lighted water where the bridge lamps were reflected, shining like demon eyes, with a terrible fascination in them for guilt and misery. They had shrunk past homeless people, lying coiled up in nooks. They had run from drunkards. They had started from slinking men, whistling and signing to one another at bye corners, or running away at full speed. Though everywhere the leader and the guide, Little Dorrit, happy for once in her youthful appearance, feigned to cling to and rely upon Maggy. And more than once some voice, from among a knot of brawling or prowling figures in their path, had called out to the rest, to "let the woman and the child go by!"

So, the woman and the child had gone by, and gone on, and five had

sounded from the steeples. They were walking slowly towards the east, already looking for the first pale streak of day, when a woman came after them.

"What are you doing with the child?" she said to Maggy.

She was young—far too young to be there, Heaven knows!—and neither ugly nor wicked-looking. She spoke coarsely, but with no naturally coarse voice; there was even something musical in its sound.

"What are you doing with yourself?" retorted Maggy, for want of a better answer.

"Can't you see, without my telling you?"

"I don't know as I can," said Maggy.

"Killing myself. Now I have answered you, answer me. What are you doing with the child?"

The supposed child kept her head drooped down, and kept her form close at Maggy's side.

"Poor thing!" said the woman. "Have you no feeling, that you keep her out in the cruel streets at such a time as this? Have you no eyes, that you don't see how delicate and slender she is? Have you no sense (you don't look as if you had much) that you don't take more pity on this cold and trembling little hand?"

She had stepped across to that side, and held the hand between her own two, chafing it. "Kiss a poor lost creature, dear," she said, bending her face, "and tell me where she's taking you."

Little Dorrit turned towards her.

"Why, my God!" she said, recoiling, "you're a woman!"

"Don't mind that!" said Little Dorrit, clasping one of the hands that had suddenly released hers. "I am not afraid of you."

"Then you had better be," she answered. "Have you no mother?"

"No."

"No father?"

"Yes, a very dear one."

"Go home to him, and be afraid of me. Let me go. Good night!"

"I must thank you first; let me speak to you as if I really was a child."

"You can't do it," said the woman. "You are kind and innocent; but you can't look at me out of a child's eyes. I never should have touched you, but that I thought you were a child." And with a strange, wild cry, she went away.

No day yet in the sky, but there was day in the resounding stones of the streets; in the waggons, carts, and coaches; in the workers going to various occupations; in the opening of early shops; in the traffic at markets; in the stir at the river-side. There was coming day in the flaring lights, with a feebler color in them than they would have had at another time; coming day in the increased sharpness of the air, and the ghastly dying of the night.

They went back again to the gate, intending to wait there now until it should be opened; but the air was so raw and cold, that Little Dorrit, leading Maggy about in her sleep, kept in motion. Going round by the church, she saw lights there, and the door open; and went up the steps and looked in.

"Who's that?" cried a stout old man, who was putting on a nightcap as if he were going to bed in a vault.

"It's no one particular, sir," said Little Dorrit.

"Stop!" cried the man. "Let's have a look at you!"

This caused her to turn back again, in the act of going out, and to present herself and her charge before him.

"I thought so!" said he. "I know *you*."

"We have often seen each other," said Little Dorrit, recognising the sexton, or the beadle, or the vergier, or whatever he was, "when I have been at church here."

"More than that, we've got your birth in our Register, you know; you're one of our curiosities."

"Indeed?" said Little Dorrit.

"To be sure. As the child of the—by the bye, how did you get out so early?"

"We were shut out last night, and are waiting to get in."

"You don't mean it? And there's another hour good yet! Come into the Vestry. You'll find a fire in the Vestry, on account of the painters. I'm waiting for the painters, or I shouldn't be here, you may depend upon it. One of our curiosities mustn't be cold, when we have it in our power to warm her up comfortable. Come along."

He was a very good old fellow, in his familiar way; and having stirred the Vestry fire, he looked round the shelves of registers for a particular volume. "Here you are, you see," he said, taking it down and turning the leaves. "Here you'll find yourself, as large as life. Amy, daughter of William and Fanny Dorrit. Born, Marshalsea Prison, Parish of Saint George. And we tell people that you have lived there, without so much as a day's or a night's absence, ever since. Is it true?"

"Quite true, till last night."

"Lord!" But his surveying her with an admiring gaze suggested something else to him, to wit: "I am sorry to see, though, that you are faint and tired. Stay a bit. I'll get some cushions out of the church, and you and your friend shall lie down before the fire. Don't be afraid of not going in to join your father when the gate opens. *I'll* call you."

He soon brought in the cushions, and strewed them on the ground.

"There you are, you see. Again as large as life. Oh, never mind thanking. I've daughters of my own. And though they weren't born in the Marshalsea Prison, they might have been, if I had been, in my ways of carrying on, of your father's breed. Stop a bit. I must put something under the cushion for your head. Here's a Burial volume. Just the thing! We have got Mrs. Bangham in this book. But what makes these books interesting to most people is—who's in 'em, but who isn't—who's coming, you know, and when. That's the interesting question."

Commendingly looking back at the pillow he had improvised, he left them to their hour's repose. Maggy was snoring already, and Little Dorrit was soon fast asleep, with her head resting on that sealed book of Fate, untroubled by its mysterious blank leaves.

This was Little Dorrit's party. The shame, desertion, wretchedness, and exposure, of the great capital; the wet, the cold, the slow hours, and the swift clouds, of the dismal night. This was the party from which Little Dorrit went home, jaded, in the first grey mist of a rainy morning.

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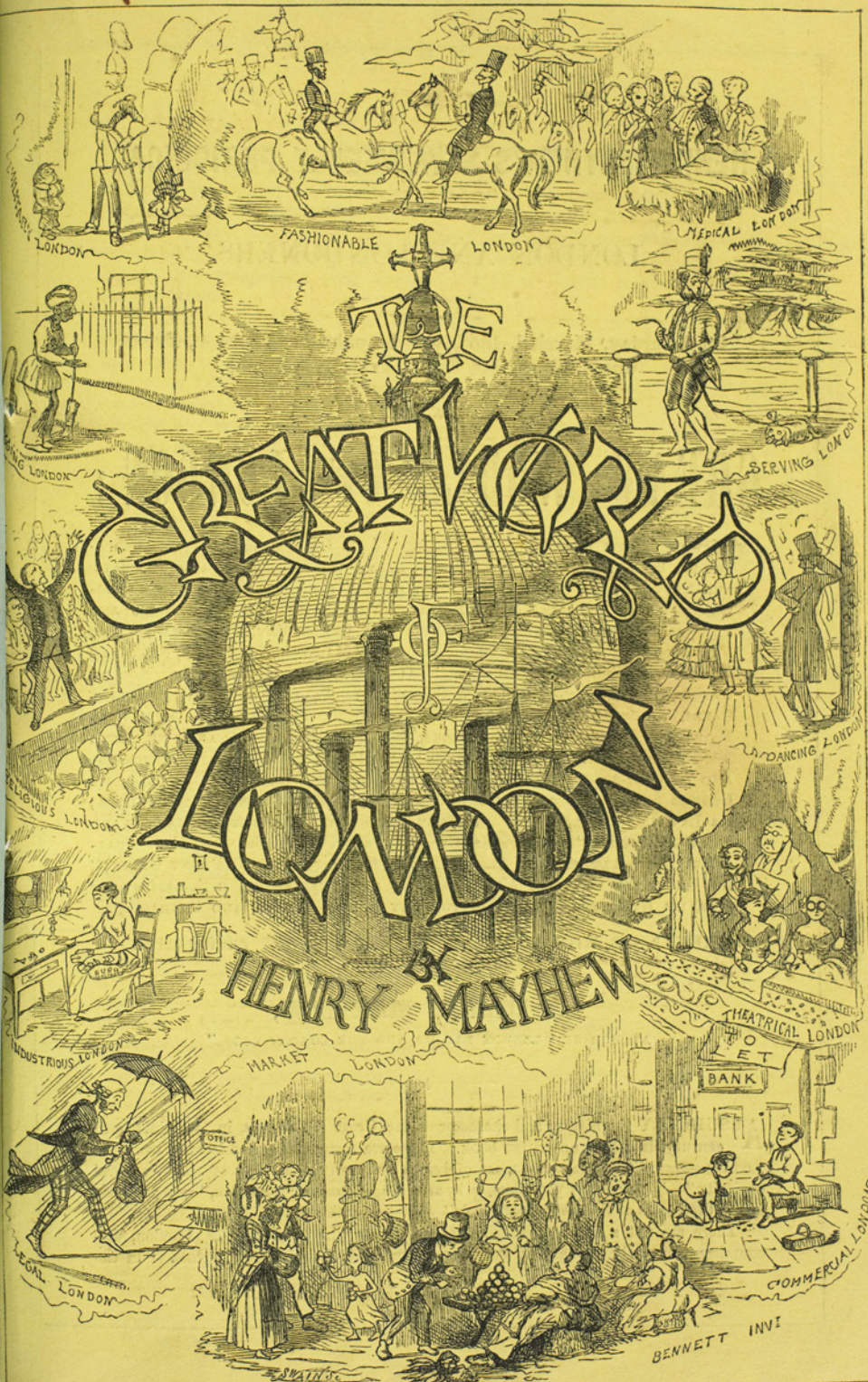
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There are not a few metropolitan topographers who treat of *Old London*, discoursing, pleasantly enough, of the time when "St. Giles's" really stood "in the


fields," when St. John's Wood could boast a *few* trees, and when bowls were played in Pall Mall; and telling us, too, how some great dead "lion" was formerly caged in this or that house, and how Watling Street, *in the time of the Romans*, was the high-road to the Provinces that are now reached by the North Western Railway.

Some London historians, on the other hand, are eminently learned concerning the climate and geology of the capital; whilst others, like Mr. McBlue-book, are intensely didactic and professorially prosy upon the subject of London Institutions and the London Census.

Of London Scenes, however, and London Society—of London contemplated *morally* rather than physically—as the great centre of human emotion—the scene of countless daily struggles, failures and successes, as well as of the wildest passions and the keenest misery; of London, where the very best and the very worst types of civilized society are found to prevail—with its prodigious wealth and enormous commerce—the choice learning, profound science, and high art of some of its people, existing in close companionship, as it were, with the most acute want, and ingrained vice, and brutal ignorance of others—the sweet Christian charity of many, raising palatial hospitals and asylums for the indigent and afflicted, and the bitter stony-heartedness of not a few, grinding, like the Ogre in the story, the bones of their work-people to make their bread;—these, as we have said, are phenomena hardly yet numbered among our literary records, but are matters the chronicles of which surely may be included among the "*desiderata*" of the Great Library of the British Museum.

It is the aspiration of the writer of the work here announced, that he may be able, in some measure, to supply the biblical deficiency, and present to the public such a word-picture of the Great Metropolis as it exists at the present time, that those who are familiar with the scenes and characters described may be pleased with the book for its mere truth, while those who have never visited the places and the people may yet have some ideal sense of them, and so find a picturesque charm in the very peculiarities of the subjects themselves.

What the author formerly attempted to do for a comparatively small and obscure portion of the community—viz., the London Street Folk—he will, in his new publication, endeavour to carry out for *all* classes. With this view, THE GREAT WORLD OF LONDON will be divided into a number of subordinate metropolitan spheres, such as LEGAL LONDON, MEDICAL LONDON, RELIGIOUS LONDON, &c., &c., as detailed in the annexed epitome of the contents of the entire series. In the present work, too, the writer purposes being less minute and elaborate, so as to be able, within a reasonable compass, to deal with almost every type of Metropolitan Society; still the same mode of treatment will be pursued as in "London Labour and the London Poor"—that is to say, there will be a strict adherence to facts, and a careful exclusion of the author's individual opinion concerning the subjects touched upon; whilst, as an earnest of the truthfulness of the narratives and descriptions, Engravings, from Daguerreotypes or Photographs, of the scenes and characters described, will accompany the literature,—literature in which the reader may rest assured that no rhetorical arts will be used to give a false or exaggerated interest to the matter.

 All Letters from persons volunteering Information will be regarded as strictly confidential; but they must be Prepaid, and accompanied with the Names and Addresses of the Writers.

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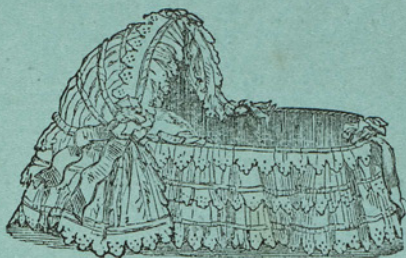
"THE GREAT WORLD OF LONDON"

Will be divided into, and described under the following Heads:—

- Legal London.**—Courts of Law and Equity; Bankruptcy, Insolvent, Ecclesiastical, County, and Police Courts; Appeals in the House of Lords; Judges, Barristers, and Magistrates; their Habits and Manners, and Average Incomes; Bedford and Russell Squares; Inns of Court; Keeping Terms; Chambers; Barristers' Clerks; Attorneys; Sharp and "Respectable" Practitioners; Chancery Lane and the Law Offices; Tricksters of Legal "Gents, one, &c.," Average Incomes; Attorneys' Clerks; Law Stationers; Sheriffs' Offices and Sponging Houses; Debtors' Prisons; Life in the Bench and Whitecross Street; Station-houses; Old Bailey Trials; Criminal Prisons and Reformatories; Prison Life; Statistics as to the Number of Individuals belonging to Legal London, and the Sum annually spent upon Law in the Metropolis.
- Medical London.**—Hospitals; Lectures and Operations; Fashionable Physicians and Apothecaries; Habits, and Manners, and Average Incomes of ditto; Medical Examinations; Dispensaries; Quacks and their Tricks; Medical Students; Life of Chemists and Chemists' Assistants; Sick Nurses; Monthly ditto; Medical Societies; Mad-Houses, and Mad-Doctors, and Keepers; Idiot Asylums, &c.; Statistics as to Average Gains of the several individuals connected with Medical London, and the Gross Sum spent annually upon Medical Advice and Medicine in London.
- Religious London.**—Churches and Chapels of Metropolis; Popular Preachers; "Pet Parsons"; Poor Curates; May Meetings; Peculiar Sects; Mormons, Southcottians, Swedenborgians, &c.; Tract Societies; Income, and Expenditure, and Influence of ditto; Visiting Societies; London Missions and Scripture Readers; Charity Dinners, Soup Kitchens, and Fancy Fairs; Philanthropic Institutions, and Asylums—Deaf and Dumb, and Blind, and Orphan, &c.; Weddings, and Funerals, and Cemeteries; Parish Meetings; Select Vestries; Sons of Clergy and other Societies; with Estimate as to Number and Average Incomes of the several Individuals connected with Religion in the Metropolis.
- Commercial London.**—Docks; Brokers, and Factors; Shipping and Custom-house Agents; Sufferance Wharves; Lloyd's; Royal Exchange; Stock ditto, and Habits and Manners of Members; Banks and Clearing-Houses; Bankers and Bankers' Clerks; Money Lenders, Bill Discounters, Pawnbrokers, and Dolly Shops; Amount of Capital, with Rate of Interest paid by various Classes; Warehouses; Merchants, and Merchants' Clerks; Estimate as to Gross Annual Extent of Metropolitan Commerce; City Companies and Halls, &c.; Average Incomes of Merchants, &c.; Travellers and Commission Agents.
- Shop London.**—Shops, Descriptions of, and peculiar quarters for distinct Trades; Average rate of Profit of various Trades; Tricks of Trade and Adulterations; Respectable Houses; "Pushing" Houses; Shopmen and Early-closing Associations; Statistics.
- Literary London.**—Newspapers and Periodicals; Costs of Producing and Profits; Daily Journals and Journalists; Influence of the Press; Rate of Remuneration for Contributions, and Habits and Incomes of the Press Writers and Reporters, and Penny-aliners; Paternoster-Row on Magazine-Day; Book-sellers and Authors; "Subscribing" a book; Advertisements and Advertising Agents; Printers and Pressmen, "Readers" and "Devils;" Newsvenders and News-boys, &c., with Statistics.
- Theatrical London.**—Theatres; Behind the Scenes, Green Room; Reading a Piece, Rehearsals, First Night, and Boxing Night; Actors, Scene Shifters, "Supers," Chorus, Ballet Dancers; Scene Painters, Costumiers, Property Men, and Machinists, &c.; Promenade Concerts and Masquerades; Theatrical Taverns; Salaries of Actors; Dramatists, and Prices paid for Pieces; with Statistics, &c.
- Fashionable London.**—Queen's Drawing-rooms and Levées; Balls, Almacks, Morning Fêtes, and Receptions; Rotten Row; Italian Opera; Kensington Gardens, Philharmonic Concerts; Belgravia and Tyburnia; Habits of Fashionable People; "Out of Town" &c.
- Political London.**—Houses of Lords and Commons; Reporters' Gallery; Opening Parliament; Government Offices and Clerks; Whitebait Dinners; Political Clubs—Reform, Conservative, &c.; Electioneering Agents; Chartist Meetings; Debating Societies; Cogers' Hall; Elections and Hustings, &c.; Municipal Government; Lord Mayor, and Aldermen, and Common Council, &c.
- "Genteel" London.**—Middle Class Life; ditto Parties; Suburbs of London—Clapham, Kensington, St. John's Wood, Camden Town, &c.; Domestic Meannesses and Displays; Poor Relations; Habits and Manners of "Stuck-up" People, &c.
- Military London.**—Horse Guards and Management of Army; London Barracks and Barrack Life; Officers' Messes; Promotion by Purchase and Interest; Soldiers in Park; Habits of Common Soldiers; Sweethearts of ditto; Chelsea Hospital; Hospitals for Wounded; Reviews, &c.
- Nautical London.**—East End of London; the Pool; Foreign Steamers; the Thames Above and Below Bridge; Sailors, and Sailors' Homes, and Lodging Houses, and Taverns; Emigration Agents and their Tricks; Crimps; Watermen; Penny and Twopenny Steamers; Aquatic Societies; Rowing Matches, &c.
- Market London.**—Markets and Market Houses; Billingsgate; its Salesmen, and "Roughs;" and Fish-houses; Green Markets—Covent Garden and Borough, &c.; Cattle Market; Meat Markets; Leadenhall; Hay Markets; Hide ditto; Licensed Porters, and Drivers, and Salesmen, &c.; with Estimate as to the Annual Amount of Provisions, &c. sent to London, and Value of ditto.
- Working London.**—Trades and Trade Societies, and Houses of Call and Benefit Clubs; Various Modes of Reducing Wages; Honourable and Dishonourable Masters; Workers in different Materials, and their Average Gains; Diseases of Trades; Average Duration of Life among Trades; Chemical Workers—as Dyers, Soap-Manufacturers, Bone-Boilers, Glue Manufacturers, &c., with Annual Income of London Workmen.
- Serving London.**—Different Classes of Servants, from Housekeepers to Maids of All-Work; Treatment of ditto by Mistresses; Habits and Tricks of Servants; Servants out of Place; Characters; False ditto; Servants' "Homes," and Offices for Hiring Servants; Provident Institutions for Servants, with Average Wages, and Gross Annual Sum Paid in London to Domestic.
- Locomotive London.**—"Busses" and Busmen; Cabs and Drivers; Coachmen and Grooms; "Glass Coaches" and "Flies;" Post-boys and Donkey-boys; Excursion Vans; Carmen and Porters; Railway Termini; Parcels Delivery Company, Post and Postmen, &c., with Statistics as to Sums Paid for Carriage of Individuals and Goods.
- Street London.**—Street People—Life of, and Different Classes of, with Income of each; Description of Streets; Traffic of ditto; Streets at different Times; London Streets at Early Morning; ditto by Night; ditto in Summer; ditto in Winter, &c.; Sewers of London; Water and Gas Pipes of ditto; Lighting of ditto; Cleansing and Paving of ditto; with Gross Cost of.
- Fast London.**—Fast Men; Casinos; Evans', Cyder Cellars; Saloons; Oyster and Supper Rooms; Dog Fights and Rat Killing; Pugilists' Taverns; Running Matches, Wrestling ditto, Gambling, and "Hells;" Betting Houses; London on Derby Day; Cricketing at Lord's, &c.
- Poor London.**—Honest Poor; Needle-women; Soldiers' Clothes Makers; Beggars and Beggars' Tricks; Beggars' Referees and Begging Letters; "Fake-ments" and "Slums;" Standing "Shallow," &c.
- Criminal London.**—Thieves—Different Classes of; Mobsmen, Magsmen, Burglars, Smashers, Fences; Petticoat Lane; Cant Language; Gypsies, Vagrants, &c.
- Exhibition London.**—Musical and Artistic London.—Eating and Drinking London.—Scholastic London.—Foreigners' London.—Refuge London.—Suburban London.—Ancient London.—General View of London, &c., &c.

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