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Joe B is sty Sir; devilish sty.



Mr. Dombey introduces his daughter Florence.

"You are making
of my own liberty, as
"I am making nothing
of it in my company
before your service.
Mr. Carke the Man
not accustomed to the
best and treated best
best for having other
and spirits.
"By God, Sir,
yes, for it's a
Dumby, Sir."
much as to re-
and ending in
does Dumby.
Mr. Carke
The very word
"But who
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CHAPTER XXVI.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST AND FUTURE.

"YOUR most obedient, Sir," said the Major. "Damme, Sir, a friend of my friend Dombey's, is a friend of mine, and I'm glad to see you!"

"I am infinitely obliged, Carker," explained Mr. Dombey, "to Major Bagstock, for his company and conversation. Major Bagstock has rendered me great service, Carker."

Mr. Carker the Manager, hat in hand, just arrived at Leamington, and just introduced to the Major, showed the Major his whole double range of teeth, and trusted he might take the liberty of thanking him with all his heart for having effected so great an improvement in Mr. Dombey's looks and spirits.

"By Gad, Sir," said the Major, in reply, "there are no thanks due to me, for it's a give and take affair. A great creature like our friend Dombey, Sir," said the Major, lowering his voice, but not lowering it so much as to render it inaudible to that gentleman, "cannot help improving and exalting his friends. He strengthens and invigorates a man, Sir, does Dombey, in his moral nature."

Mr. Carker snapped at the expression. In his moral nature. Exactly. The very words he had been on the point of suggesting.

"But when my friend Dombey, Sir," added the Major, "talks to you of Major Bagstock, I must crave leave to set him and you right. He means plain Joe, Sir—Joey B.—Josh. Bagstock—Joseph—rough and tough Old J., Sir. At your service."

Mr. Carker's excessively friendly inclinations towards the Major, and Mr. Carker's admiration of his roughness, toughness, and plainness, gleamed out of every tooth in Mr. Carker's head.

"And now Sir," said the Major, "you and Dombey have the devil's own amount of business to talk over."

"By no means, Major," observed Mr. Dombey.

"Dombey," said the Major defiantly, "I know better; a man of your mark—the Colossus of commerce—is not to be interrupted. Your moments are precious. We shall meet at dinner-time. In the interval, Old Joseph will be scarce. The dinner hour is a sharp seven, Mr. Carker."

With that, the Major, greatly swollen as to his face, withdrew; but immediately putting in his head at the door again, said:

"I beg your pardon. Dombey, have you any message to 'em?"

Mr. Dombey in some embarrassment, and not without a glance at the courteous keeper of his business confidence, intrusted the Major with his compliments.

"By the Lord, Sir," said the Major, "you must make it something warmer than that, or Old Joe will be far from welcome."

"Regards then, if you will, Major," returned Mr. Dombey.

"Damme, Sir," said the Major, shaking his shoulders and his great cheeks jocularly: "make it something warmer than that."

"What you please then, Major," observed Mr. Dombey.

"Our friend is sly Sir, sly Sir, de-vilish sly," said the Major, staring round the door at Carker. "So is Bagstock." But stopping in the midst of a chuckle, and drawing himself up to his full height, the Major solemnly exclaimed, as he struck himself on the chest, "Dombey! I envy your feelings. God bless you!" and withdrew.

"You must have found the gentleman a great resource," said Carker, following him with his teeth.

"Very great indeed," said Mr. Dombey.

"He has friends here, no doubt," pursued Carker. "I perceive, from what he has said, that you go into society here. Do you know," smiling horribly, "I am so very glad that you go into society!"

Mr. Dombey acknowledged this display of interest on the part of his second in command, by twirling his watch-chain, and slightly moving his head.

"You were formed for society," said Carker. "Of all the men I know, you are the best adapted, by nature, and by position, for society. Do you know I have been frequently amazed that you should have held it at arm's length so long!"

"I have had my reasons, Carker. I have been alone, and indifferent to it. But you have great social qualifications yourself, and are the more likely to have been surprised."

"Oh! *I!*" returned the other, with ready self-disparagement. "It's quite another matter in the case of a man like me. I don't come into comparison with *you*."

Mr. Dombey put his hand to his neckcloth, settled his chin in it, coughed, and stood looking at his faithful friend and servant for a few moments in silence.

"I shall have the pleasure, Carker," said Mr. Dombey at length: making as if he swallowed something a little too large for his throat: "to present you to my—to the Major's friends. Highly agreeable people."

"Ladies among them, I presume?" insinuated the smooth Manager.

"They are all—that is to say, they are both—ladies," replied Mr. Dombey.

"Only two?" smiled Carker.

"They are only two. I have confined my visits to their residence, and have made no other acquaintance here."

"Sisters, perhaps?" quoth Carker.

"Mother and daughter," replied Mr. Dombey.

As Mr. Dombey dropped his eyes, and adjusted his neckcloth again, the smiling face of Mr. Carker the Manager became in a moment, and without any stage of transition, transformed into a most intent and frowning face, scanning his closely, and with an ugly sneer. As Mr. Dombey raised his eyes, it changed back, no less quickly, to its old expression, and showed him every gum of which it stood possessed.

"You are very kind," said Carker. "I shall be delighted to know them. Speaking of daughters, I have seen Miss Dombey."

There was a sudden rush of blood to Mr. Dombey's face.

"I took the liberty of waiting on her," said Carker, to "inquire if she could charge me with any little commission. I am not so fortunate as to be the bearer of any but her—but her dear love."

Wolf's face that it was then, with even the hot tongue revealing itself through the stretched mouth, as the eyes encountered Mr. Dombey's!

"What business intelligence is there?" inquired the latter gentleman, after a silence, during which Mr. Carker had produced some memoranda and other papers.

"There is very little," returned Carker. "Upon the whole we have not had our usual good fortune of late, but that is of little moment to you. At Lloyd's, they give up the Son and Heir for lost. Well, she was insured, from her keel to her masthead."

"Carker," said Mr. Dombey, taking a chair near him, "I cannot say that young man, Gay, ever impressed me favourably—"

"Nor me," interposed the Manager.

"But I wish," said Mr. Dombey, without heeding the interruption, "he had never gone on board that ship. I wish he had never been sent out."

"It is a pity you didn't say so, in good time, is it not?" retorted Carker, coolly. "However, I think it's all for the best. I really think it's all for the best. Did I mention that there was something like a little confidence between Miss Dombey and myself?"

"No," said Mr. Dombey, sternly.

"I have no doubt," returned Mr. Carker, after an impressive pause, "that wherever Gay is, he is much better where he is, than at home here. If I were, or could be, in your place, I should be satisfied of that. I am quite satisfied of it myself. Miss Dombey is confiding and young—perhaps hardly proud enough, for your daughter—if she have a fault. Not that that is much though, I am sure. Will you check these balances with me?"

Mr. Dombey leaned back in his chair, instead of bending over the papers that were laid before him, and looked the Manager steadily in the face. The Manager, with his eyelids slightly raised, affected to be glancing at his figures, and to await the leisure of his principal. He showed that he affected this, as if from great delicacy, and with a design to spare Mr. Dombey's feelings; and the latter, as he looked at him, was cognizant of his intended consideration, and felt that but for it, this confidential Carker would have said a great deal more, which he, Mr. Dombey, was too proud to ask for. It was his way in business, often. Little by little, Mr. Dombey's gaze relaxed, and his attention became diverted to the papers before him; but while busy with the occupation they afforded him, he frequently stopped, and looked at Mr. Carker again. Whenever he did so, Mr. Carker was demonstrative, as before, in his delicacy, and impressed it on his great chief more and more.

While they were thus engaged; and under the skilful culture of the Manager, angry thoughts in reference to poor Florence brooded and bred in Mr. Dombey's breast, usurping the place of the cold dislike that generally reigned there; Major Bagstock, much admired by the old ladies of Leamington, and followed by the Native, carrying the usual amount of light baggage, straddled along the shady side of the way, to make a morning call on Mrs. Skewton. It being mid-day when the Major

reached the bower of Cleopatra, he had the good fortune to find his Princess on her usual sofa, languishing over a cup of coffee, with the room so darkened and shaded for her more luxurious repose, that Withers, who was in attendance on her, loomed like a phantom page.

"What insupportable creature is this, coming in!" said Mrs. Skewton. "I cannot bear it. Go away, whoever you are!"

"You have not the heart to banish J. B., Ma'am!" said the Major, halting midway, to remonstrate, with his cane over his shoulder.

"Oh it's you, is it? On second thoughts, you may enter," observed Cleopatra.

The Major entered accordingly, and advancing to the sofa pressed her charming hand to his lips.

"Sit down," said Cleopatra, listlessly waving her fan, "a long way off. Don't come too near me, for I am frightfully faint and sensitive this morning, and you smell of the Sun. You are absolutely tropical."

"By George, Ma'am," said the Major, "the time has been when Joseph Bagstock has been grilled and blistered by the Sun; the time was, when he was forced, Ma'am, into such full blow, by high hothouse heat in the West Indies, that he was known as the Flower. A man never heard of Bagstock, Ma'am, in those days; he heard of the Flower—the Flower of Our's. The Flower may have faded, more or less, Ma'am," observed the Major, dropping into a much nearer chair than had been indicated by his cruel Divinity, "but it is a tough plant yet, and constant as the evergreen."

Here the Major, under cover of the dark room, shut up one eye, rolled his head like a Harlequin, and, in his great self-satisfaction, perhaps went nearer to the confines of apoplexy than he had ever gone before.

"Where is Mrs. Granger?" inquired Cleopatra of her page.

Withers believed she was in her own room.

"Very well," said Mrs. Skewton. "Go away, and shut the door. I am engaged."

As Withers disappeared, Mrs. Skewton turned her head languidly towards the Major, without otherwise moving, and asked him how his friend was.

"Dombey, Ma'am," returned the Major, with a facetious gurgling in his throat, "is as well as a man in his condition *can* be. His condition is a desperate one, Ma'am. He is touched, is Dombey! Touched!" cried the Major. "He is bayoneted through the body."

Cleopatra cast a sharp look at the Major, that contrasted forcibly with the affected drawl in which she presently said:

"Major Bagstock, although I know but little of the world,—nor can I really regret my inexperience, for I fear it is a false place: full of withering conventionalities: where Nature is but little regarded, and where the music of the heart, and the gushing of the soul, and all that sort of thing, which is so truly poetical, is seldom heard,—I cannot misunderstand your meaning. There is an allusion to Edith—to my extremely dear child," said Mrs. Skewton, tracing the outline of her eyebrows with her forefinger, "in your words, to which the tenderest of chords vibrates excessively."

"Bluntness, Ma'am," returned the Major, "has ever been the characteristic of the Bagstock breed. You are right. Joe admits it."

"And that allusion," pursued Cleopatra, "would involve one of the most—if not positively *the* most—touching, and thrilling, and sacred emotions of which our sadly-fallen nature is susceptible, I conceive."

The Major laid his hand upon his lips, and wafted a kiss to Cleopatra, as if to identify the emotion in question.

"I feel that I am weak. I feel that I am wanting in that energy, which should sustain a mama: not to say a parent: on such a subject," said Mrs. Skewton, trimming her lips with the laced edge of her pocket-handkerchief; "but I can hardly approach a topic so excessively momentous to my dearest Edith without a feeling of faintness. Nevertheless, bad man, as you have boldly remarked upon it, and as it has occasioned me great anguish:" Mrs. Skewton touched her left side with her fan: "I will not shrink from my duty."

The Major, under cover of the dimness, swelled, and swelled, and rolled his purple face about, and winked his lobster eye, until he fell into a fit of wheezing, which obliged him to rise and take a turn or two about the room, before his fair friend could proceed.

"Mr. Dombey," said Mrs. Skewton, when she at length resumed, "was obliging enough, now many weeks ago, to do us the honour of visiting us here; in company, my dear Major, with yourself. I acknowledge—let me be open—that it is my failing to be the creature of impulse, and to wear my heart, as it were, outside. I know my failing full well. My enemy cannot know it better. But I am not penitent; I would rather not be frozen by the heartless world, and am content to bear this imputation justly."

Mrs. Skewton arranged her tucker, pinched her wiry throat to give it a soft surface, and went on, with great complacency.

"It gave me (my dearest Edith too, I am sure) infinite pleasure to receive Mr. Dombey. As a friend of yours, my dear Major, we were naturally disposed to be prepossessed in his favour; and I fancied that I observed an amount of Heart in Mr. Dombey, that was excessively refreshing."

"There is devilish little heart in Dombey now, Ma'am," said the Major.

"Wretched man!" cried Mrs. Skewton, looking at him languidly, "pray be silent."

"J. B. is dumb, Ma'am," said the Major.

"Mr. Dombey," pursued Cleopatra, smoothing the rosy hue upon her cheeks, "accordingly repeated his visit; and possibly finding some attraction in the simplicity and primitiveness of our tastes—for there is always a charm in nature—it is so very sweet—became one of our little circle every evening. Little did I think of the awful responsibility into which I plunged when I encouraged Mr. Dombey—to—"

"To beat up these quarters, Ma'am," suggested Major Bagstock.

"Coarse person!" said Mrs. Skewton, "you anticipate my meaning, though in odious language."

Here Mrs. Skewton rested her elbow on the little table at her side, and suffering her wrist to droop in what she considered a graceful and becoming manner, dangled her fan to and fro, and lazily admired her hand while speaking.

"The agony I have endured," she said, mincingly, "as the truth has

by degrees dawned upon me, has been too exceedingly terrific to dilate upon. My whole existence is bound up in my sweetest Edith; and to see her change from day to day—my beautiful pet, who has positively garnered up her heart since the death of that most delightful creature, Granger—is the most affecting thing in the world.”

Mrs. Skewton's world was not a very trying one, if one might judge of it by the influence of its most affecting circumstance upon her; but this by the way.

“Edith,” simpered Mrs. Skewton, “who is the perfect pearl of my life, is said to resemble me. I believe we *are* alike.”

“There is one man in the world who never will admit that any one resembles you, Ma'am,” said the Major; “and that man's name is Old Joe Bagstock.”

Cleopatra made as if she would brain the flatterer with her fan, but relenting, smiled upon him and proceeded:

“If my charming girl inherits any advantages from me, wicked one!”: the Major was the wicked one: “she inherits also my foolish nature. She has great force of character—mine has been said to be immense, though I don't believe it—but once moved, she is susceptible and sensitive to the last extent. What are my feelings when I see her pining! They destroy me.”

The Major advancing his double chin, and pursing up his blue lips into a soothing expression, affected the profoundest sympathy.

“The confidence,” said Mrs. Skewton, “that has subsisted between us—the free development of soul, and openness of sentiment—is touching to think of. We have been more like sisters than mama and child.”

“J. B.'s own sentiment,” observed the Major, “expressed by J. B. fifty thousand times!”

“Do not interrupt, rude man!” said Cleopatra. “What are my feelings, then, when I find that there is one subject avoided by us! That there is a what's his name—a gulf—opened between us. That my own artless Edith is changed to me! They are of the most poignant description, of course.”

The Major left his chair, and took one nearer to the little table.

“From day to day I see this, my dear Major,” proceeded Mrs. Skewton. “From day to day I feel this. From hour to hour I reproach myself for that excess of faith and trustfulness which has led to such distressing consequences; and almost from minute to minute, I hope that Mr. Dombey may explain himself, and relieve the torture I undergo, which is extremely wearing. But nothing happens, my dear Major; I am the slave of remorse—take care of the coffee cup: you are so very awkward—my darling Edith is an altered being; and I really don't see what is to be done, or what good creature I can advise with.”

Major Bagstock, encouraged perhaps by the softened and confidential tone into which Mrs. Skewton, after several times lapsing into it for a moment, seemed now to have subsided for good: stretched out his hand across the little table, and said with a leer,

“Advise with Joe, Ma'am.”

“Then, you aggravating monster,” said Cleopatra, giving one hand to the Major, and tapping his knuckles with her fan, which she held in the

other: "why don't you talk to me? You know what I mean. Why don't you tell me something to the purpose?"

The Major laughed, and kissed the hand she had bestowed upon him, and laughed again, immensely.

"Is there as much Heart in Mr. Dombey as I gave him credit for?" languished Cleopatra tenderly. "Do you think he is in earnest, my dear Major? Would you recommend his being spoken to, or his being left alone? Now tell me, like a dear man, what you would advise."

"Shall we marry him to Edith Granger, Ma'am?" chuckled the Major hoarsely.

"Mysterious creature!" returned Cleopatra, bringing her fan to bear upon the Major's nose. "How can *we* marry him?"

"Shall we marry him to Edith Granger, Ma'am, I say?" chuckled the Major again.

Mrs. Skewton returned no answer in words, but smiled upon the Major with so much archness and vivacity, that that gallant officer considering himself challenged, would have imprinted a kiss on her exceedingly red lips, but for her interposing the fan with a very winning and juvenile dexterity. It might have been in modesty; it might have been in apprehension of some danger to their bloom.

"Dombey, Ma'am," said the Major, "is a great catch."

"Oh, mercenary wretch!" cried Cleopatra, with a little shriek, "I am shocked."

"And Dombey, Ma'am," pursued the Major, thrusting forward his head, and distending his eyes, "is in earnest. Joseph says it; Bagstock knows it; J. B. keeps him to the mark. Leave Dombey to himself, Ma'am. Dombey is safe, Ma'am. Do as you have done; do no more; and trust to J. B. for the end."

"You really think so, my dear Major?" returned Cleopatra, who had eyed him very cautiously, and very searchingly, in spite of her listless bearing.

"Sure of it, Ma'am," rejoined the Major. "Cleopatra the peerless, and her Antony Bagstock, will often speak of this, triumphantly, when sharing the elegance and wealth of Edith Dombey's establishment. Dombey's right-hand man, Ma'am," said the Major, stopping abruptly in a chuckle, and becoming serious, "has arrived."

"This morning?" said Cleopatra.

"This morning, Ma'am," returned the Major. "And Dombey's anxiety for his arrival, Ma'am, is to be referred—take J. B.'s word for this; for Joe is de-vilish sly"—the Major tapped his nose, and screwed up one of his eyes tight: which did not enhance his native beauty—"to his desire that what is in the wind should become known to him, without Dombey's telling and consulting him. For Dombey is as proud, Ma'am," said the Major, "as Lucifer."

"A charming quality," lisped Mrs. Skewton; "reminding one of dearest Edith."

"Well, Ma'am," said the Major. "I have thrown out hints already, and the right-hand man understands 'em; and I'll throw out more, before the day is done. Dombey projected this morning a ride to Warwick Castle, and to Kenilworth, to-morrow, to be preceded by a breakfast with us. I under-

took the delivery of this invitation. Will you honour us so far, Ma'am?" said the Major, swelling with shortness of breath and slyness, as he produced a note, addressed to the Honourable Mrs. Skewton, by favour of Major Bagstock, wherein her's ever faithfully, Paul Dombey, besought her and her amiable and accomplished daughter to consent to the proposed excursion; and in a postscript unto which, the same ever faithfully Paul Dombey entreated to be recalled to the remembrance of Mrs. Granger.

"Hush!" said Cleopatra, suddenly, "Edith!"

The loving mother can scarcely be described as resuming her insipid and affected air when she made this exclamation; for she had never cast it off; nor was it likely that she ever would or could, in any other place than in the grave. But hurriedly dismissing whatever shadow of earnestness, or faint confession of a purpose, laudable or wicked, that her face, or voice, or manner, had, for the moment, betrayed, she lounged upon the couch, her most insipid and most languid self again, as Edith entered the room.

Edith, so beautiful and stately, but so cold and so repelling. Who, slightly acknowledging the presence of Major Bagstock, and directing a keen glance at her mother, drew back the curtain from a window, and sat down there, looking out.

"My dearest Edith," said Mrs. Skewton, "where on earth have you been? I have wanted you, my love, most sadly."

"You said you were engaged, and I stayed away," she answered, without turning her head.

"It was cruel to Old Joe, Ma'am," said the Major in his gallantry.

"It was very cruel, I know," she said, still looking out—and said with such calm disdain, that the Major was discomfited, and could think of nothing in reply.

"Major Bagstock, my darling Edith," drawled her mother, "who is generally the most useless and disagreeable creature in the world: as you know—"

"It is surely not worth while, Mama," said Edith, looking round, "to observe these forms of speech. We are quite alone. We know each other."

The quiet scorn that sat upon her handsome face—a scorn that evidently lighted on herself, no less than them—was so intense and deep, that her mother's simper, for the instant, though of a hardy constitution, drooped before it.

"My darling girl," she began again.

"Not woman yet?" said Edith, with a smile.

"How very odd you are to-day, my dear! Pray let me say, my love, that Major Bagstock has brought the kindest of notes from Mr. Dombey, proposing that we should breakfast with him to-morrow, and ride to Warwick and Kenilworth. Will you go, Edith?"

"Will I go!" she repeated, turning very red, and breathing quickly as she looked round at her mother.

"I knew you would, my own," observed the latter, carelessly. "It is, as you say, quite a form to ask. Here is Mr. Dombey's letter, Edith."

"Thank you. I have no desire to read it," was her answer.

"Then perhaps I had better answer it myself," said Mrs. Skewton

"though I had thought of asking *you* to be my secretary, darling." As Edith made no movement, and no answer, Mrs. Skewton begged the Major to wheel her little table nearer, and to set open the desk it contained, and to take out pen and paper for her; all which congenial offices of gallantry the Major discharged, with much submission and devotion.

"Your regards, Edith, my dear?" said Mrs. Skewton, pausing, pen in hand, at the postscript.

"What you will, Mama," she answered, without turning her head, and with supreme indifference.

Mrs. Skewton wrote what she would, without seeking for any more explicit directions, and handed her letter to the Major, who receiving it as a precious charge, made a show of laying it near his heart, but was fain to put it in the pocket of his pantaloons on account of the insecurity of his waistcoat. The Major then took a very polished and chivalrous farewell of both ladies, which the elder one acknowledged in her usual manner, while the younger, sitting with her face addressed to the window, bent her head so slightly that it would have been a greater compliment to the Major to have made no sign at all, and to have left him to infer that he had not been heard or thought of.

"As to alteration in her, Sir," mused the Major on his way back; on which expedition—the afternoon being sunny and hot—he ordered the Native and the light baggage to the front, and walked in the shadow of that expatriated prince: "as to alteration, Sir, and pining, and so forth, that won't go down with Joseph Bagstock. None of that, Sir. It won't do here. But as to there being something of a division between 'em—or a gulf as the mother calls it—damme, Sir, that seems true enough. And it's odd enough! Well, Sir!" panted the Major, "Edith Granger and Dombey are well matched; let 'em fight it out! Bagstock backs the winner!"

The Major, by saying these latter words aloud, in the vigour of his thoughts, caused the unhappy Native to stop, and turn round, in the belief that he was personally addressed. Exasperated to the last degree by this act of insubordination, the Major (though he was swelling with enjoyment of his own humour, at the moment of its occurrence) instantly thrust his cane among the Native's ribs, and continued to stir him up, at short intervals, all the way to the Hotel.

Nor was the Major less exasperated as he dressed for dinner, during which operation the dark servant underwent the pelting of a shower of miscellaneous objects, varying in size from a boot to a hairbrush, and including everything that came within his master's reach. For the Major plumed himself on having the Native in a perfect state of drill, and visited the least departure from strict discipline with this kind of fatigue duty. Add to this, that he maintained the Native about his person as a counter-irritant against the gout, and all other vexations, mental as well as bodily; and the Native would appear to have earned his pay—which was not large.

At length, the Major having disposed of all the missiles that were convenient to his hand, and having called the Native so many new names as must have given him great occasion to marvel at the resources of the

English language, submitted to have his cravat put on; and being dressed, and finding himself in a brisk flow of spirits after this exercise, went down stairs to enliven "Dombey" and his right-hand man.

Dombey was not yet in the room, but the right-hand man was there, and his dental treasures were, as usual, ready for the Major.

"Well, Sir!" said the Major. "How have you passed the time since I had the happiness of meeting you? Have you walked at all?"

"A saunter of barely half an hour's duration," returned Carker. "We have been so much occupied."

"Business, eh?" said the Major.

"A variety of little matters necessary to be gone through," replied Carker. "But do you know—this is quite unusual with me, educated in a distrustful school, and who am not generally disposed to be communicative," he said, breaking off, and speaking in a charming tone of frankness—"but I feel quite confidential with you, Major Bagstock."

"You do me honour, Sir," returned the Major. "You may be."

"Do you know then," pursued Carker, "that I have not found my friend—*our* friend, I ought rather to call him—"

"Meaning Dombey, Sir?" cried the Major. "You see me, Mr. Carker, standing here! J. B.?"

He was puffy enough to see, and blue enough; and Mr. Carker intimated that he had that pleasure.

"Then you see a man, Sir, who would go through fire and water to serve Dombey," returned Major Bagstock.

Mr. Carker smiled, and said he was sure of it. "Do you know, Major," he proceeded: "to resume where I left off: that I have not found our friend so attentive to business to-day, as usual?"

"No?" observed the delighted Major.

"I have found him a little abstracted, and with his attention disposed to wander," said Carker.

"By Jove, Sir," cried the Major, "there's a lady in the case."

"Indeed, I begin to believe there really is," returned Carker. "I thought you might be jesting when you seemed to hint at it; for I know you military men—"

The Major gave the horse's cough, and shook his head and shoulders, as much as to say, "Well! we *are* gay dogs, there's no denying." He then seized Mr. Carker by the button-hole, and with starting eyes whispered in his ear, that she was a woman of extraordinary charms, Sir. That she was a young widow, Sir. That she was of a fine family, Sir. That Dombey was over head and ears in love with her, Sir, and that it would be a good match on both sides; for she had beauty, blood, and talent, and Dombey had fortune; and what more could any couple have? Hearing Mr. Dombey's footstep without, the Major cut himself short by saying, that Mr. Carker would see her to-morrow morning, and would judge for himself; and between his mental excitement, and the exertion of saying all this in wheezy whispers, the Major sat gurgling in the throat and watering at the eyes, until dinner was ready.

The Major, like some other noble animals, exhibited himself to great advantage at feeding time. On this occasion, he shone resplendent at one end of the table, supported by the milder lustre of Mr. Dombey at the

other; while Carker on one side lent his ray to either light, or suffered it to merge into both, as occasion arose.

During the first course or two, the Major was usually grave; for the Native, in obedience to general orders, secretly issued, collected every sauce and cruet round him, and gave him a great deal to do, in taking out the stoppers, and mixing up the contents in his plate. Besides which, the Native had private zests and flavours on a side-table, with which the Major daily scorched himself; to say nothing of strange machines out of which he spirted unknown liquids into the Major's drink. But on this occasion, Major Bagstock, even amidst these many occupations, found time to be social; and his sociality consisted in excessive slyness for the behoof of Mr. Carker, and the betrayal of Mr. Dombey's state of mind.

"Dombey," said the Major, "you don't eat; what's the matter?"

"Thank you," returned that gentleman, "I am doing very well; I have no great appetite to-day."

"Why, Dombey, what's become of it?" asked the Major. "Where's it gone? You haven't left it with our friends, I'll swear, for I can answer for their having none to-day at luncheon. I can answer for one of 'em, at least; I won't say which."

Then the Major winked at Carker, and became so frightfully sly, that his dark attendant was obliged to pat him on the back, without orders, or he would probably have disappeared under the table.

In a later stage of the dinner: that is to say, when the Native stood at the Major's elbow ready to serve the first bottle of champagne: the Major became still slyer.

"Fill this to the brim, you scoundrel," said the Major, holding up his glass. "Fill Mr. Carker's to the brim too. And Mr. Dombey's too. By Gad, gentlemen," said the Major, winking at his new friend, while Mr. Dombey looked into his plate with a conscious air, "we'll consecrate this glass of wine to a Divinity whom Joe is proud to know, and at a distance humbly and reverently to admire. Edith," said the Major, "is her name; angelic Edith!"

"To angelic Edith!" cried the smiling Carker.

"Edith, by all means," said Mr. Dombey.

The entrance of the waiters with new dishes caused the Major to be slyer yet, but in a more serious vein. "For though, among ourselves, Joe Bagstock mingles jest and earnest on this subject, Sir," said the Major, laying his finger on his lips, and speaking half apart to Carker, "he holds that name too sacred to be made the property of these fellows, or of any fellows. Not a word, Sir, while they are here!"

This was respectful and becoming on the Major's part, and Mr. Dombey plainly felt it so. Although embarrassed in his own frigid way, by the Major's allusions, Mr. Dombey had no objection to such rallying, it was clear; but rather courted it. Perhaps the Major had been pretty near the truth, when he had divined that morning that the great man who was too haughty formally to consult with, or confide in his prime minister, on such a matter, yet wished him to be fully possessed of it. Let this be how it may, he often glanced at Mr. Carker while the Major plied his light artillery, and seemed watchful of its effect upon him.

But the Major, having secured an attentive listener, and a smiler who

had not his match in all the world—"in short, a de-vilish intelligent and agreeable fellow," as he often afterwards declared—was not going to let him off with a little slyness personal to Mr. Dombey. Therefore, on the removal of the cloth, the Major developed himself as a choice spirit in the broader and more comprehensive range of narrating regimental stories, and cracking regimental jokes, which he did with such prodigal exuberance, that Carker was (or feigned to be) quite exhausted with laughter and admiration: while Mr. Dombey looked on over his starched cravat, like the Major's proprietor, or like a stately showman who was glad to see his bear dancing well.

When the Major was too hoarse with meat and drink, and the display of his social powers, to render himself intelligible any longer, they adjourned to coffee. After which, the Major inquired of Mr. Carker the Manager, with little apparent hope of an answer in the affirmative, if he played picquet.

"Yes, I play picquet a little," said Mr. Carker.

"Backgammon, perhaps?" observed the Major, hesitating.

"Yes, I play backgammon a little, too," replied the man of teeth.

"Carker plays at all games, I believe," said Mr. Dombey, laying himself on a sofa like a man of wood without a hinge or a joint in him; "and plays them well."

In sooth, he played the two in question, to such perfection, that the Major was astonished, and asked him, at random, if he played chess.

"Yes, I play chess a little," answered Carker. "I have sometimes played, and won a game—it's a mere trick—without seeing the board."

"By Gad, Sir!" said the Major, staring, "you're a contrast to Dombey, who plays nothing."

"Oh! *He!*" returned the Manager. "*He* has never had occasion to acquire such little arts. To men like me, they are sometimes useful. As at present, Major Bagstock, when they enable me to take a hand with you."

It might be only the false mouth, so smooth and wide; and yet there seemed to lurk, beneath the humility and subserviency of this short speech, a something like a snarl; and, for a moment, one might have thought that the white teeth were prone to bite the hand they fawned upon. But the Major thought nothing about it; and Mr. Dombey lay meditating, with his eyes half shut, during the whole of the play, which lasted until bed time.

By that time, Mr. Carker, though the winner, had mounted high into the Major's good opinion, insomuch that when he left the Major at his own room before going to bed, the Major, as a special attention, sent the Native—who always rested on a mattress spread upon the ground at his master's door—along the gallery, to light him to his room in state.

There was a faint blur on the surface of the mirror in Mr. Carker's chamber, and its reflection was, perhaps, a false one. But it showed, that night, the image of a man, who saw, in his fancy, a crowd of people slumbering on the ground at his feet, like the poor Native at his master's door: who picked his way among them: looking down, maliciously enough: but trod upon no upturned face—as yet.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEEPER SHADOWS.

MR. CARKER the Manager rose with the lark, and went out, walking in the summer day. His meditations—and he meditated with contracted brows while he strolled along—hardly seemed to soar as high as the lark, or to mount in that direction; rather they kept close to their nest upon the earth, and looked about, among the dust and worms. But there was not a bird in the air, singing unseen, farther beyond the reach of human eye than Mr. Carker's thoughts. He had his face so perfectly under control, that few could say more, in distinct terms, of its expression, than that it smiled or that it pondered. It pondered now, intently. As the lark rose higher, he sank deeper in thought. As the lark poured out her melody clearer and stronger, he fell into a graver and profounder silence. At length, when the lark came headlong down, with an accumulating stream of song, and dropped among the green wheat near him, rippling in the breath of the morning like a river, he sprang up from his reverie, and looked round with a sudden smile, as courteous and as soft as if he had had numerous observers to propitiate; nor did he relapse, after being thus awakened; but clearing his face, like one who bethought himself that it might otherwise wrinkle and tell tales, went smiling on, as if for practice.

Perhaps with an eye to first impressions, Mr. Carker was very carefully and trimly dressed, that morning. Though always somewhat formal, in his dress, in imitation of the great man whom he served, he stopped short of the extent of Mr. Dombey's stiffness: at once perhaps because he knew it to be ludicrous, and because in doing so he found another means of expressing his sense of the difference and distance between them. Some people quoted him indeed, in this respect, as a pointed commentary, and not a flattering one, on his icy patron—but the world is prone to misconstruction, and Mr. Carker was not accountable for its bad propensity.

Clean and florid: with his light complexion, fading as it were, in the sun, and his dainty step enhancing the softness of the turf: Mr. Carker the Manager strolled about meadows, and green lanes, and glided among avenues of trees, until it was time to return to breakfast. Taking a nearer way back, Mr. Carker pursued it, airing his teeth, and said aloud as he did so, "Now to see the second Mrs. Dombey!"

He had strolled beyond the town, and re-entered it by a pleasant walk, where there was a deep shade of leafy trees, and where there were a few benches here and there for those who chose to rest. It not being a place of general resort at any hour, and wearing at that time of the still morning the air of being quite deserted and retired, Mr. Carker had it, or thought he had it, all to himself. So, with the whim of an idle man, to whom

there yet remained twenty minutes for reaching a destination easily accessible in ten, Mr. Carker threaded the great boles of the trees, and went passing in and out, before this one and behind that, weaving a chain of footsteps on the dewy ground.

But he found he was mistaken in supposing there was no one in the grove, for as he softly rounded the trunk of one large tree, on which the obdurate bark was knotted and overlapped like the hide of a rhinoceros or some kindred monster of the ancient days before the flood, he saw an unexpected figure sitting on a bench near at hand, about which, in another moment, he would have wound the chain he was making.

It was that of a lady, elegantly dressed and very handsome, whose dark proud eyes were fixed upon the ground, and in whom some passion or struggle was raging. For as she sat looking down, she held a corner of her under lip within her mouth, her bosom heaved, her nostril quivered, her head trembled, indignant tears were on her cheek, and her foot was set upon the moss as though she would have crushed it into nothing. And yet almost the self-same glance that showed him this, showed him the self-same lady rising with a scornful air of weariness and lassitude, and turning away with nothing expressed in face or figure but careless beauty and imperious disdain.

A withered and very ugly old woman, dressed not so much like a gipsy as like any of that medley race of vagabonds who tramp about the country, begging, and stealing, and tinkering, and weaving rushes, by turns, or all together, had been observing the lady, too; for, as she rose, this second figure strangely confronting the first, scrambled up from the ground—out of it, it almost appeared—and stood in the way.

"Let me tell your fortune, my pretty lady," said the old woman, munching with her jaws, as if the Death's Head beneath her yellow skin were impatient to get out.

"I can tell it for myself," was the reply.

"Aye, aye, pretty lady; but not right. You didn't tell it right when you were sitting there. I see you! Give me a piece of silver, pretty lady, and I'll tell your fortune true. There's riches, pretty lady, in your face."

"I know," returned the lady, passing her, with a dark smile, and a proud step. "I knew it before."

"What! You won't give me nothing?" cried the old woman. "You won't give me nothing to tell your fortune, pretty lady? How much will you give me *not* to tell it, then? Give me something, or I'll call it after you!" croaked the old woman, passionately.

Mr. Carker, whom the lady was about to pass close, slinking against his tree as she crossed to gain the path, advanced so as to meet her, and pulling off his hat as she went by, bade the old woman hold her peace. The lady acknowledged his interference with an inclination of the head, and went her way.

"You give me something, then, or I'll call it after her!" screamed the old woman, throwing up her arms, and pressing forward against his outstretched hand. "Or come," she added, dropping her voice suddenly, looking at him earnestly, and seeming in a moment to forget the object of her wrath, "give me something, or I'll call it after you!"

"After me, old lady!" returned the Manager, putting his hand in his pocket.

"Yes," said the woman, steadfast in her scrutiny, and holding out her shrivelled hand. "I know!"

"What do you know?" demanded Carker, throwing her a shilling. "Do you know who the handsome lady is?"

Munching like that sailor's wife of yore, who had chesnuts in her lap, and scowling like the witch who asked for some in vain, the old woman picked the shilling up, and going backwards, like a crab, or like a heap of crabs: for her alternately expanding and contracting hands might have represented two of that species, and her creeping face, some half-a-dozen more: crouched on the venous root of an old tree, pulled out a short black pipe from within the crown of her bonnet, lighted it with a match, and smoked in silence, looking fixedly at her questioner.

Mr. Carker laughed, and turned upon his heel.

"Good!" said the old woman. "One child dead, and one child living: one wife dead, and one wife coming. Go and meet her!"

In spite of himself, the Manager looked round again, and stopped. The old woman, who had not removed her pipe, and was munching and mumbling while she smoked, as if in conversation with an invisible familiar, pointed with her finger in the direction he was going, and laughed.

"What was that you said, Beldamite?" he demanded.

The woman mumbled, and chattered, and smoked, and still pointed before him; but remained silent. Muttering a farewell that was not complimentary, Mr. Carker pursued his way; but as he turned out of that place, and looked over his shoulder at the root of the old tree, he could yet see the finger pointing before him, and thought he heard the woman screaming, "Go and meet her!"

Preparations for a choice repast were completed, he found, at the hotel; and Mr. Dombey, and the Major, and the breakfast, were awaiting the ladies. Individual constitution has much to do with the development of such facts, no doubt; but in this case, appetite carried it hollow over the tender passion; Mr. Dombey being very cool and collected, and the Major fretting and fuming in a state of violent heat and irritation. At length the door was thrown open by the Native, and, after a pause, occupied by her languishing along the gallery, a very blooming, but not very youthful lady, appeared.

"My dear Mr. Dombey," said the lady, "I am afraid we are late, but Edith has been out already looking for a favourable point of view for a sketch, and kept me waiting for her. Falsest of Majors," giving him her little finger, "how do you do?"

"Mrs. Skewton," said Mr. Dombey, "let me gratify my friend Carker." Mr. Dombey unconsciously emphasised the word friend, as saying 'no really; I do allow him to take credit for that distinction: ' by presenting him to you. You have heard me mention Mr. Carker."

"I am charmed, I am sure," said Mrs. Skewton, graciously.

Mr. Carker was charmed, of course. Would he have been more charmed on Mr. Dombey's behalf, if Mrs. Skewton had been (as he at first supposed her) the Edith whom they had toasted over night?

"Why, where, for Heaven's sake, is Edith?" exclaimed Mrs. Skewton, looking round. "Still at the door, giving Withers orders about the

mounting of those drawings! My dear Mr. Dombey, will you have the kindness—”

Mr. Dombey was already gone to seek her. Next moment he returned, bearing on his arm the same elegantly dressed and very handsome lady whom Mr. Carker had encountered underneath the trees.

“Carker—” began Mr. Dombey. But their recognition of each other was so manifest, that Mr. Dombey stopped surprised.

“I am obliged to the gentleman,” said Edith, with a stately bend, “for sparing me some annoyance from an importunate beggar just now.”

“I am obliged to my good fortune,” said Mr. Carker, bowing low, “for the opportunity of rendering so slight a service to one whose servant I am proud to be.”

As her eye rested on him for an instant, and then lighted on the ground, he saw in its bright and searching glance a suspicion that he had not come up at the moment of his interference, but had secretly observed her sooner. As he saw that, she saw in *his* eye that her distrust was not without foundation.

“Really,” cried Mrs. Skewton, who had taken this opportunity of inspecting Mr. Carker through her glass, and satisfying herself (as she lisped audibly to the Major) that he was all heart; “really now, this is one of the most enchanting coincidences that I ever heard of. The idea! My dearest Edith, there is such an obvious destiny in it, that really one might almost be induced to cross one’s arm upon one’s frock, and say, like those wicked Turks, there is no What’s-his-name but Thingummy, and What-you-may-call-it is his prophet!”

Edith deigned no revision of this extraordinary quotation from the Koran, but Mr. Dombey felt it necessary to offer a few polite remarks.

“It gives me great pleasure,” said Mr. Dombey, with cumbrous gallantry, “that a gentleman so nearly connected with myself as Carker is should have had the honour and happiness of rendering the least assistance to Mrs. Granger.” Mr. Dombey bowed to her. “But it gives me some pain, and it occasions me to be really envious of Carker;” he unconsciously laid stress on these words, as sensible that they must appear to involve a very surprising proposition; “envious of Carker, that I had not that honour and that happiness myself.” Mr. Dombey bowed again. Edith, saving for a curl of her lip, was motionless.

“By the Lord, Sir,” cried the Major, bursting into speech at sight of the waiter, who was come to announce breakfast, “it’s an extraordinary thing to me that no one can have the honour and happiness of shooting all such beggars through the head without being brought to book for it. But here’s an arm for Mrs. Granger if she’ll do J. B. the honour to accept it; and the greatest service Joe can render you, Ma’am, just now, is, to lead you in to table!”

With this, the Major gave his arm to Edith; Mr. Dombey led the way with Mrs. Skewton; Mr. Carker went last, smiling on the party.

“I am quite rejoiced, Mr. Carker,” said the lady-mother, at breakfast, after another approving survey of him through her glass, “that you have timed your visit so happily, as to go with us to-day. It is the most enchanting expedition!”

“Any expedition would be enchanting in such society,” returned Carker; “but I believe it is, in itself, full of interest.”

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Skewton, with a faded little scream of rapture, "the Castle is charming!—associations of the Middle ages—and all that—which is so truly exquisite. Don't you dote upon the Middle ages, Mr. Carker?"

"Very much, indeed," said Mr. Carker.

"Such charming times!" cried Cleopatra. "So full of Faith! So vigorous and forcible! So picturesque! So perfectly removed from commonplace! Oh dear! If they would only leave us a little more of the poetry of existence in these terrible days!"

Mrs. Skewton was looking sharp after Mr. Dombey all the time she said this, who was looking at Edith: who was listening, but who never lifted up her eyes.

"We are dreadfully real, Mr. Carker," said Mrs. Skewton; "are we not?"

Few people had less reason to complain of their reality than Cleopatra, who had as much that was false about her as could well go to the composition of anybody with a real individual existence. But Mr. Carker commiserated our reality nevertheless, and agreed that we were very hardly used in that regard.

"Pictures at the Castle, quite divine!" said Cleopatra. "I hope you dote upon pictures?"

"I assure you, Mrs. Skewton," said Mr. Dombey, with solemn encouragement of his Manager, "that Carker has a very good taste for pictures; quite a natural power of appreciating them. He is a very creditable artist himself. He will be delighted, I am sure, with Mrs. Granger's taste and skill."

"Damme, Sir!" cried Major Bagstock, "my opinion is, that you're the admirable Carker, and can do anything."

"Oh!" smiled Carker, with humility, "you are much too sanguine, Major Bagstock. I can do very little. But Mr. Dombey is so generous in his estimation of any trivial accomplishment a man like myself may find it almost necessary to acquire, and to which, in his very different sphere, he is far superior, that—" Mr. Carker shrugged his shoulders, deprecating further praise, and said no more.

All this time, Edith never raised her eyes, unless to glance towards her mother when that lady's fervent spirit shone forth in words. But as Carker ceased, she looked at Mr. Dombey for a moment. For a moment only; but with a transient gleam of scornful wonder on her face, not lost on one observer, who was smiling round the board.

Mr. Dombey caught the dark eye-lash in its descent, and took the opportunity of arresting it.

"You have been to Warwick often, unfortunately?" said Mr. Dombey.

"Several times."

"The visit will be tedious to you, I am afraid."

"Oh no; not at all."

"Ah! You are like your cousin Feenix, my dearest Edith," said Mrs. Skewton. "He has been to Warwick Castle fifty times, if he has been there once; yet if he came to Leamington to-morrow—I wish he would, dear angel!—he would make his fifty-second visit next day."

"We are all enthusiastic, are we not, Mama?" said Edith, with a cold smile.

"Too much so, for our peace, perhaps, my dear," returned her mother; "but we won't complain. Our own emotions are our recompense. If, as your cousin Feenix says, the sword wears out the what's-its-name—"

"The scabbard, perhaps," said Edith.

"Exactly—a little too fast, it is because it is bright and glowing, you know, my dearest love."

Mrs. Skewton heaved a gentle sigh, supposed to cast a shadow on the surface of that dagger of lath, whereof her susceptible bosom was the sheath: and leaning her head on one side, in the Cleopatra manner, looked with pensive affection on her darling child.

Edith had turned her face towards Mr. Dombey when he first addressed her, and had remained in that attitude, while speaking to her mother, and while her mother spoke to her, as though offering him her attention, if he had anything more to say. There was something in the manner of this simple courtesy: almost defiant, and giving it the character of being rendered on compulsion, or as a matter of traffic to which she was a reluctant party: again not lost upon that same observer who was smiling round the board. It set him thinking of her as he had first seen her, when she had believed herself to be alone among the trees.

Mr. Dombey, having nothing else to say, proposed—the breakfast being now finished, and the Major gorged, like any Boa Constrictor—that they should start. A barouche being in waiting, according to the orders of that gentleman, the two ladies, the Major and himself, took their seats in it; the Native and the wan page mounted the box, Mr. Towlinson being left behind; and Mr. Carker, on horseback, brought up the rear.

Mr. Carker cantered behind the carriage, at the distance of a hundred yards or so, and watched it, during all the ride, as if he were a cat, indeed, and its four occupants, mice. Whether he looked to one side of the road, or to the other—over distant landscape, with its smooth undulations, wind-mills, corn, grass, bean fields, wild-flowers, farm-yards, hayricks, and the spire among the wood—or upwards in the sunny air, where butterflies were sporting round his head, and birds were pouring out their songs—or downward, where the shadows of the branches interlaced, and made a trembling carpet on the road—or onward, where the overhanging trees formed aisles and arches, dim with the softened light that steeped through leaves—one corner of his eye was ever on the formal head of Mr. Dombey, addressed towards him, and the feather in the bonnet, drooping so neglectfully and scornfully between them: much as he had seen the haughty eyelids droop; not least so, when the face met that now fronting it. Once, and once only, did his wary glance release these objects; and that was, when a leap over a low hedge, and a gallop across a field, enabled him to anticipate the carriage coming by the road, and to be standing ready, at the journey's end, to hand the ladies out. Then, and but then, he met her glance for an instant in her first surprise; but when he touched her, in alighting, with his soft white hand, it overlooked him altogether as before.

Mrs. Skewton was bent on taking charge of Mr. Carker herself, and showing him the beauties of the Castle. She was determined to have his arm, and the Major's too. It would do that incorrigible creature: who was the most barbarous infidel in point of poetry: good to be in such company. This chance arrangement left Mr. Dombey at liberty to escort Edith: which he did: stalking before them through the apartments with a gentlemanly solemnity.

"Those darling bygone times, Mr. Carker," said Cleopatra, "with

their delicious fortresses, and their dear old dungeons, and their delightful places of torture, and their romantic vengeance, and their picturesque assaults and sieges, and everything that makes life truly charming! How dreadfully we have degenerated!"

"Yes, we have fallen off deplorably," said Mr. Carker.

The peculiarity of their conversation was, that Mrs. Skewton, in spite of her ecstasies, and Mr. Carker, in spite of his urbanity, were both intent on watching Mr. Dombey and Edith. With all their conversational endowments, they spoke somewhat distractedly, and at random, in consequence.

"We have no Faith left, positively," said Mrs. Skewton, advancing her shrivelled ear; for Mr. Dombey was saying something to Edith. "We have no Faith in the dear old Barons, who were the most delightful creatures—or in the dear old Priests, who were the most warlike of men—even in the days of that inestimable Queen Bess, upon the wall there, which were so extremely golden. Dear creature! She was all Heart! And that charming father of hers! I hope you dote on Harry the Eighth!"

"I admire him very much," said Carker.

"So bluff!" cried Mrs. Skewton, "wasn't he? So burly. So truly English. Such a picture, too, he makes, with his dear little peepy eyes, and his benevolent chin!"

"Ah, Ma'am!" said Carker, stopping short; "but if you speak of pictures, there's a composition! What gallery in the world can produce the counterpart of that!"

As the smiling gentleman thus spake, he pointed through a doorway to where Mr. Dombey and Edith were standing alone in the centre of another room.

They were not interchanging a word or a look. Standing together, arm in arm, they had the appearance of being more divided than if seas had rolled between them. There was a difference even in the pride of the two, that removed them farther from each other, than if one had been the proudest and the other the humblest specimen of humanity in all creation. He, self-important, unbending, formal, austere. She, lovely and graceful, in an uncommon degree, but totally regardless of herself and him and everything around, and spurning her own attractions with her haughty brow and lip, as if they were a badge or livery she hated. So unmatched were they, and opposed, so forced and linked together by a chain which adverse hazard and mischance had forged: that fancy might have imagined the pictures on the walls around them, startled by the unnatural conjunction, and observant of it in their several expressions. Grim knights and warriors looked scowling on them. A churchman, with his hand upraised, denounced the mockery of such a couple coming to God's altar. Quiet waters in landscapes, with the sun reflected in their depths, asked, if better means of escape were not at hand, was there no drowning left? Ruins cried, 'Look here, and see what We are, wedded to uncongenial Time!' Animals, opposed by nature, worried one another, as a moral to them. Loves and Cupids took to flight afraid, and Martyrdom had no such torment in its painted history of suffering.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Skewton was so charmed by the sight to which Mr. Carker invoked her attention, that she could not refrain from saying, half aloud, how sweet, how very full of soul it was! Edith, overhearing, looked round, and flushed indignant scarlet to her hair.

"My dearest Edith knows I was admiring her!" said Cleopatra, tapping her, almost timidly, on the back with her parasol. "Sweet pet!"

Again Mr. Carker saw the strife he had witnessed so unexpectedly among the trees. Again he saw the haughty languor and indifference come over it, and hide it like a cloud.

She did not raise her eyes to him; but with a slight peremptory motion of them, seemed to bid her mother come near. Mrs. Skewton thought it expedient to understand the hint, and advancing quickly, with her two cavaliers, kept near her daughter from that time.

Mr. Carker now, having nothing to distract his attention, began to discourse upon the pictures, and to select the best, and point them out to Mr. Dombey: speaking with his usual familiar recognition of Mr. Dombey's greatness, and rendering homage by adjusting his eye-glass for him, or finding out the right place in his catalogue, or holding his stick, or the like. These services did not so much originate with Mr. Carker, in truth, as with Mr. Dombey himself, who was apt to assert his chieftainship by saying, with subdued authority, and in an easy way—for him—"Here, Carker, have the goodness to assist me, will you!" which the smiling gentleman always did, with pleasure.

They made the tour of the pictures, the walls, crow's nest, and so forth; and as they were still one little party, and the Major was rather in the shade: being sleepy during the process of digestion: Mr. Carker became communicative and agreeable. At first, he addressed himself for the most part to Mrs. Skewton; but as that sensitive lady was in such ecstasies with the works of art, after the first quarter of an hour, that she could do nothing but yawn (they were such perfect inspirations, she observed as a reason for that mark of rapture), he transferred his attentions to Mr. Dombey. Mr. Dombey said little beyond an occasional "Very true, Carker," or "Indeed, Carker," but he tacitly encouraged Carker to proceed, and inwardly approved of his behaviour very much: deeming it as well that somebody should talk, and thinking that his remarks, which were, as one might say, a branch of the parent establishment, might amuse Mrs. Granger. Mr. Carker, who possessed an excellent discretion, never took the liberty of addressing that lady, direct; but she seemed to listen, though she never looked at him; and once or twice, when he was emphatic in his peculiar humility, the twilight smile stole over her face, not as a light, but as a deep black shadow.

Warwick Castle being at length pretty well exhausted, and the Major very much so: to say nothing of Mrs. Skewton, whose peculiar demonstrations of delight had become very frequent indeed: the carriage was again put in requisition, and they rode to several admired points of view in the neighbourhood. Mr. Dombey ceremoniously observed of one of these, that a sketch, however slight, from the fair hand of Mrs. Granger, would be a remembrance to him of that agreeable day: though he wanted no artificial remembrance, he was sure (here Mr. Dombey made another of his bows), which he must always highly value. Withers the lean having Edith's sketch-book under his arm, was immediately called upon by Mrs. Skewton to produce the same: and the carriage stopped, that Edith might make the drawing, which Mr. Dombey was to put away among his treasures.

"But I am afraid I trouble you too much," said Mr. Dombey.

"By no means. Where would you wish it taken from?" she answered, turning to him with the same enforced attention as before.

Mr. Dombey, with another bow, which cracked the starch in his cravat, would beg to leave that to the Artist.

"I would rather you chose for yourself," said Edith.

"Suppose then," said Mr. Dombey, "we say from here. It appears a good spot for the purpose, or—Carker, what do *you* think?"

There happened to be in the foreground, at some little distance, a grove of trees, not unlike that in which Mr. Carker had made his chain of footsteps in the morning, and with a seat under one tree, greatly resembling, in the general character of its situation, the point where his chain had broken.

"Might I venture to suggest to Mrs. Granger," said Carker, "that that is an interesting—almost a curious—point of view?"

She followed the direction of his riding-whip with her eyes, and raised them quickly to his face. It was the second glance they had exchanged since their introduction; and would have been exactly like the first, but that its expression was plainer.

"Will you like that?" said Edith to Mr. Dombey.

"I shall be charmed," said Mr. Dombey to Edith.

Therefore the carriage was driven to the spot where Mr. Dombey was to be charmed; and Edith, without moving from her seat, and opening her sketch-book with her usual proud indifference, began to sketch.

"My pencils are all pointless," she said, stopping and turning them over.

"Pray allow me," said Mr. Dombey. "Or Carker will do it better, as he understands these things. Carker, have the goodness to see to these pencils for Mrs. Granger."

Mr. Carker rode up close to the carriage-door on Mrs. Granger's side, and letting the rein fall on his horse's neck, took the pencils from her hand with a smile and a bow, and sat in the saddle leisurely mending them. Having done so, he begged to be allowed to hold them, and to hand them to her as they were required; and thus Mr. Carker, with many commendations of Mrs. Granger's extraordinary skill—especially in trees—remained close at her side, looking over the drawing as she made it. Mr. Dombey in the meantime stood bolt upright in the carriage like a highly respectable ghost, looking on too; while Cleopatra and the Major dallied as two ancient doves might do.

"Are you satisfied with that, or shall I finish it a little more?" said Edith, showing the sketch to Mr. Dombey.

Mr. Dombey begged that it might not be touched; it was perfection.

"It is most extraordinary," said Carker, bringing every one of his red gums to bear upon his praise. "I was not prepared for anything so beautiful, and so unusual altogether."

This might have applied to the sketcher no less than to the sketch; but Mr. Carker's manner was openness itself—not as to his mouth alone, but as to his whole spirit. So it continued to be while the drawing was laid aside for Mr. Dombey, and while the sketching materials were put up; then he handed in the pencils (which were received with a distant acknowledgment of his help, but without a look), and tightening his rein, fell back, and followed the carriage again.

Thinking, perhaps, as he rode, that even this trivial sketch had been made

and delivered to its owner, as if it had been bargained for and bought. Thinking, perhaps, that although she had assented with such perfect readiness to his request, her haughty face, bent over the drawing, or glancing at the distant objects represented in it, had been the face of a proud woman, engaged in a sordid and miserable transaction. Thinking, perhaps, of such things : but smiling certainly, and while he seemed to look about him freely, in enjoyment of the air and exercise, keeping always that sharp corner of his eye upon the carriage.

A stroll among the haunted ruins of Kenilworth, and more rides to more points of view : most of which, Mrs. Skewton reminded Mr. Dombey, Edith had already sketched, as he had seen in looking over her drawings : brought the day's expedition to a close. Mrs. Skewton and Edith were driven to their own lodgings ; Mr. Carker was graciously invited by Cleopatra to return thither with Mr. Dombey and the Major, in the evening, to hear some of Edith's music ; and the three gentlemen repaired to their hotel to dinner.

The dinner was the counterpart of yesterday's, except that the Major was twenty-four hours more triumphant and less mysterious. Edith was toasted again. Mr. Dombey was again agreeably embarrassed. And Mr. Carker was full of interest and praise.

There were no other visitors at Mrs. Skewton's. Edith's drawings were strewn about the room, a little more abundantly than usual perhaps ; and Withers, the wan page, handed round a little stronger tea. The harp was there ; the piano was there ; and Edith sang and played. But even the music was paid by Edith to Mr. Dombey's order, as it were, in the same uncompromising way. As thus.

"Edith, my dearest love," said Mrs. Skewton, half an hour after tea, "Mr. Dombey is dying to hear you, I know."

"Mr. Dombey has life enough left to say so for himself, Mama, I have no doubt."

"I shall be immensely obliged," said Mr. Dombey.

"What do you wish ?"

"Piano ?" hesitated Mr. Dombey.

"Whatever you please. You have only to choose."

Accordingly, she began with the piano. It was the same with the harp ; the same with her singing ; the same with the selection of the pieces that she sang and played. Such frigid and constrained, yet prompt and pointed acquiescence with the wishes he imposed upon her, and on no one else, was sufficiently remarkable to penetrate through all the mysteries of picquet, and impress itself on Mr. Carker's keen attention. Nor did he lose sight of the fact that Mr. Dombey was evidently proud of his power, and liked to show it.

Nevertheless, Mr. Carker played so well—some games with the Major, and some with Cleopatra, whose vigilance of eye in respect of Mr. Dombey and Edith no lynx could have surpassed—that he even heightened his position in the lady-mother's good graces ; and when on taking leave he regretted that he would be obliged to return to London next morning, Cleopatra trusted : community of feeling not being met with every day : that it was far from being the last time they would meet.

"I hope so," said Mr. Carker, with an expressive look at the couple in the distance, as he drew towards the door, following the Major. "I think so."

Mr. Dombey, who had taken a stately leave of Edith, bent, or made some approach to a bend, over Cleopatra's couch, and said, in a low voice:

"I have requested Mrs. Granger's permission to call on her to-morrow morning—for a purpose—and she has appointed twelve o'clock. May I hope to have the pleasure of finding you at home, Madam, afterwards?"

Cleopatra was so much fluttered and moved, by hearing this, of course, incomprehensible speech, that she could only shut her eyes, and shake her head, and give Mr. Dombey her hand; which Mr. Dombey, not exactly knowing what to do with, dropped.

"Dombey, come along!" cried the Major, looking in at the door. "Damme, Sir, old Joe has a great mind to propose an alteration in the name of the Royal Hotel, and that it should be called the Three Jolly Bachelors, in honour of ourselves and Carker." With this, the Major slapped Mr. Dombey on the back, and winking over his shoulder at the ladies, with a frightful tendency of blood to the head, carried him off.

Mrs. Skewton reposed on her sofa, and Edith sat apart, by her harp, in silence. The mother, trifling with her fan, looked stealthily at the daughter more than once, but the daughter, brooding gloomily with downcast eyes, was not to be disturbed.

Thus they remained for a long hour, without a word, until Mrs. Skewton's maid appeared, according to custom, to prepare her gradually for night. At night, she should have been a skeleton, with dart and hour-glass, rather than a woman, this attendant; for her touch was as the touch of Death. The painted object shrivelled underneath her hand; the form collapsed, the hair dropped off, the arched dark eye-brows changed to scanty tufts of grey; the pale lips shrank, the skin became cadaverous and loose; an old, worn, yellow nodding woman, with red eyes, alone remained in Cleopatra's place, huddled up, like a slovenly bundle, in a greasy flannel gown.

The very voice was changed, as it addressed Edith, when they were alone again.

"Why don't you tell me," it said, sharply, "that he is coming here to-morrow by appointment?"

"Because you know it," returned Edith, "Mother."

The mocking emphasis she laid on that one word!

"You know he has bought me," she resumed. "Or that he will, to-morrow. He has considered of his bargain; he has shown it to his friend; he is even rather proud of it; he thinks that it will suit him, and may be had sufficiently cheap; and he will buy to-morrow. God, that I have lived for this, and that I feel it!"

Compress into one handsome face the conscious self-abasement, and the burning indignation of a hundred women, strong in passion and in pride; and there it hid itself with two white shuddering arms.

"What do you mean?" returned the angry mother. "Haven't you from a child—"

"A child!" said Edith, looking at her, "when was I a child! What childhood did you ever leave to me? I was a woman—artful, designing, mercenary, laying snares for men—before I knew myself, or you, or even understood the base and wretched aim of every new display I learnt. You gave birth to a woman. Look upon her. She is in her pride to-night."

And as she spoke, she struck her hand upon her beautiful bosom, as though she would have beaten down herself.

"Look at me," she said, "who have never known what it is to have an honest heart, and love. Look at me, taught to scheme and plot when children play; and married in my youth—an old age of design—to one for whom I had no feeling but indifference. Look at me, whom he left a widow, dying before his inheritance descended to him—a judgment on you! well deserved!—and tell me what has been my life for ten years since."

"We have been making every effort to endeavour to secure to you a good establishment," rejoined her mother. "That has been your life. And now you have got it."

"There is no slave in a market: there is no horse in a fair: so shown and offered and examined and paraded, Mother, as I have been, for ten shameful years," cried Edith, with a burning brow, and the same bitter emphasis on the one word. "Is it not so? Have I been made the by-word of all kinds of men? Have fools, have profligates, have boys, have dotards, dangled after me, and one by one rejected me, and fallen off, because you were too plain with all your cunning: yes, and too true, with all those false pretences: until we have almost come to be notorious? The licence of look and touch," she said, with flashing eyes, "have I submitted to it, in half the places of resort upon the map of England? Have I been hawked and vended here and there, until the last grain of self-respect is dead within me, and I loathe myself? Has *this* been my late childhood? I had none before. Do not tell me that I had, to-night, of all nights in my life!"

"You might have been well married," said her mother, "twenty times at least, Edith, if you had given encouragement enough."

"No! Who takes me, refuse that I am, and as I well deserve to be," she answered, raising her head, and trembling in her energy of shame and stormy pride, "shall take me, as this man does, with no art of mine put forth to lure him. He sees me at the auction, and he thinks it well to buy me. Let him! When he came to view me—perhaps to bid—he required to see the roll of my accomplishments. I gave it to him. When he would have me show one of them, to justify his purchase to his men, I require of him to say which he demands, and I exhibit it. I will do no more. He makes the purchase of his own will, and with his own sense of its worth, and the power of his money; and I hope it may never disappoint him. I have not vaunted and pressed the bargain; neither have you, so far as I have been able to prevent you."

"You talk strangely to-night, Edith, to your own mother."

"It seems so to me; stranger to me than you," said Edith. "But my education was completed long ago. I am too old now, and have fallen too low, by degrees, to take a new course, and to stop yours, and to help myself. The germ of all that purifies a woman's breast, and makes it true and good, has never stirred in mine, and I have nothing else to sustain me when I despise myself." There had been a touching sadness in her voice, but it was gone, when she went on to say, with a curled lip, "So, as we are genteel and poor, I am content that we should be made rich by these means; all I say, is, I have kept the only purpose I have had the strength to form—I had almost said the power, with you at my side, Mother—and have not tempted this man on."

"This man! You speak," said her mother, "as if you hated him."

"And you thought I loved him, did you not?" she answered, stopping on her way across the room, and looking round. "Shall I tell you," she continued, with her eyes fixed on her mother, "who already knows us thoroughly, and reads us right, and before whom I have even less of self-respect or confidence than before my own inward self: being so much degraded by his knowledge of me?"

"This is an attack, I suppose," returned her mother, coldly, "on poor, unfortunate what's-his-name—Mr. Carker! Your want of self-respect and confidence, my dear, in reference to that person (who is very agreeable, it strikes me), is not likely to have much effect on your establishment. Why do you look at me so hard? Are you ill?"

Edith suddenly let fall her face, as if it had been stung, and while she pressed her hands upon it, a terrible tremble crept over her whole frame. It was quickly gone; and with her usual step, she passed out of the room.

The maid who should have been a skeleton, then re-appeared, and giving one arm to her mistress, who appeared to have taken off her manner with her charms, and to have put on paralysis with her flannel gown, collected the ashes of Cleopatra and carried them away in the other, ready for to-morrow's revivification.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ALTERATIONS.

"So the day has come at length, Susan," said Florence to the excellent Nipper, "when we are going back to our quiet home!"

Susan drew in her breath with an amount of expression not easily described, and further relieving her feelings with a smart cough, answered, "Very quiet indeed, Miss Floy, no doubt. Excessive so."

"When I was a child," said Florence, thoughtfully, and after musing for some moments, "did you ever see that gentleman who has taken the trouble to ride down here to speak to me, now three times—three times, I think, Susan?"

"Three times, Miss," returned the Nipper. "Once was you was out a walking with them Sket—"

Florence gently looked at her, and Miss Nipper checked herself.

"With Sir Barnet and his lady, I mean to say, Miss, and the young gentleman. And two evenings since then."

"When I was a child, and when company used to come to visit Papa, did you ever see that gentleman at home, Susan?" asked Florence.

"Well, Miss," returned her maid, after considering, "I really couldn't say I ever did. When your poor dear Ma died, Miss Floy, I was very new in the family, you see, and *my* element: " the Nipper bridled, as opining that her merits had been always designedly extinguished by Mr. Dombey: "was the floor below the attics."

"To be sure," said Florence, still thoughtfully; "you are not likely to have known who came to the house. I quite forgot."

"Not, Miss, but what we talked about the family and visitors," said

Susan, "and but what I heard much said, although the nurse before Mrs. Richards *did* make unpleasant remarks when I was in company, and hint at little Pitchers, but that could only be attributed, poor thing," observed Susan with composed forbearance, "to habits of intoxication, for which she was required to leave, and did."

Florence, who was seated at her chamber window, with her face resting on her hand, sat looking out, and hardly seemed to hear what Susan said, she was so lost in thought.

"At all events, Miss," said Susan, "I remember very well that this same gentleman, Mr. Carker, was almost, if not quite, as great a gentleman with your Papa then, as he is now. It used to be said in the house then, Miss, that he was at the head of all your Pa's affairs in the city, and managed the whole, and that your Pa minded him more than anybody, which, begging your pardon Miss Floy he might easy do, for he never minded anybody else. I knew that, Pitcher as I might have been."

Susan Nipper, with an injured remembrance of the nurse before Mrs. Richards, emphasised 'Pitcher' strongly.

"And that Mr. Carker has not fallen off, Miss," she pursued, "but has stood his ground, and kept his credit with your Pa, I know from what is always said among our people by that Perch, whenever he comes to the house, and though he's the weakest weed in the world, Miss Floy, and no one can have a moment's patience with the man, he knows what goes on in the city tolerable well, and says that your Pa does nothing without Mr. Carker, and leaves all to Mr. Carker, and acts according to Mr. Carker, and has Mr. Carker always at his elbow, and I do believe that he believes (that washiest of Perches) that after your Pa, the Emperor of India is the child unborn to Mr. Carker."

Not a word of this was lost on Florence, who, with an awakened interest in Susan's speech, no longer gazed abstractedly on the prospect without, but looked at her, and listened with attention.

"Yes, Susan," she said, when that young lady had concluded. "He is in Papa's confidence, and is his friend, I am sure."

Florence's mind ran high on this theme, and had done for some days. Mr. Carker, in the two visits with which he had followed up his first one, had assumed a confidence between himself and her—a right on his part to be mysterious and stealthy, in telling her that the ship was still unheard of—a kind of mildly restrained power and authority over her—that made her wonder, and caused her great uneasiness. She had no means of repelling it, or of freeing herself from the web he was gradually winding about her; for that would have required some art and knowledge of the world, opposed to such address as his; and Florence had none. True, he had said no more to her than that there was no news of the ship, and that he feared the worst; but how he came to know that she was interested in the ship, and why he had the right to signify his knowledge to her, so insidiously and darkly, troubled Florence very much.

This conduct on the part of Mr. Carker, and her habit of often considering it with wonder and uneasiness, began to invest him with an uncomfortable fascination in Florence's thoughts. A more distinct remembrance of his features, voice, and manner: which she sometimes courted, as a means of reducing him to the level of a real personage, capable of exerting no greater charm over her than another: did not remove the

vague impression. And yet he never frowned, or looked upon her with an air of dislike or animosity, but was always smiling and serene.

Again, Florence, in pursuit of her strong purpose with reference to her father, and her steady resolution to believe that she was herself unwittingly to blame for their so cold and distant relations, would recall to mind that this gentleman was his confidential friend, and would think, with an anxious heart, could her struggling tendency to dislike and fear him be a part of that misfortune in her, which had turned her father's love adrift, and left her so alone? She dreaded that it might be; sometimes believed it was; then she resolved that she would try to conquer this wrong feeling; persuaded herself that she was honoured and encouraged by the notice of her father's friend; and hoped that patient observation of him and trust in him would lead her bleeding feet along that stony road which ended in her father's heart.

Thus, with no one to advise her—for she could advise with no one without seeming to complain against him—gentle Florence tossed on an uneasy sea of doubt and hope; and Mr. Carker, like a scaly monster of the deep, swam down below, and kept his shining eye upon her.

Florence had a new reason in all this for wishing to be at home again. Her lonely life was better suited to her course of timid hope and doubt: and she feared sometimes, that in her absence she might miss some hopeful chance of testifying her affection for her father. Heaven knows, she might have set her mind at rest, poor child! on this last point; but her slighted love was fluttering within her, and, even in her sleep, it flew away in dreams, and nestled, like a wandering bird come home, upon her father's neck.

Of Walter she thought often. Ah! how often, when the night was gloomy, and the wind was blowing round the house! But hope was strong in her breast. It is so difficult for the young and ardent, even with such experience as hers, to imagine youth and ardour quenched like a weak flame, and the bright day of life merging into night, at noon, that hope was strong yet. Her tears fell frequently for Walter's sufferings; but rarely for his supposed death, and never long.

She had written to the old Instrument-maker, but had received no answer to her note: which indeed required none. Thus matters stood with Florence on the morning when she was going home, gladly, to her old secluded life.

Doctor and Mrs. Blimber, accompanied (much against his will) by their valued charge, Master Barnet, were already gone back to Brighton, where that young gentleman and his fellow pilgrims to Parnassus were then, no doubt, in the continual resumption of their studies. The holiday time was past and over; most of the juvenile guests at the villa had taken their departure; and Florence's long visit was come to an end.

There was one guest, however, albeit not resident within the house, who had been very constant in his attentions to the family, and who still remained devoted to them. This was Mr. Toots, who after renewing, some weeks ago, the acquaintance he had had the happiness of forming with Skettles Junior, on the night when he burst the Blimberian bonds and soared into freedom with his ring on, called regularly every other day, and left a perfect pack of cards at the hall-door; so many indeed, that the ceremony was quite a deal on the part of Mr. Toots, and a hand at whist on the part of the servant.

Mr. Toots, likewise, with the bold and happy idea of preventing the family from forgetting him (but there is reason to suppose that this expedient originated in the teeming brain of the Chicken), had established a six-oared cutter, manned by aquatic friends of the Chicken's and steered by that illustrious character in person, who wore a bright red fireman's coat for the purpose, and concealed the perpetual black eye with which he was afflicted, beneath a green shade. Previous to the institution of this equipage, Mr. Toots sounded the Chicken on a hypothetical case, as, supposing the Chicken to be enamoured of a young lady named Mary, and to have conceived the intention of starting a boat of his own, what would he call that boat? The Chicken replied, with divers strong asseverations, that he would either christen it Poll or The Chicken's Delight. Improving on this idea, Mr. Toots, after deep study and the exercise of much invention, resolved to call his boat The Toots's Joy, as a delicate compliment to Florence, of which no man knowing the parties, could possibly miss the appreciation.

Stretched on a crimson cushion in his gallant bark, with his shoes in the air, Mr. Toots, in the exercise of his project, had come up the river, day after day, and week after week, and had flitted to and fro, near Sir Barnet's garden, and had caused his crew to cut across and across the river at sharp angles, for his better exhibition to any lookers-out from Sir Barnet's windows, and had had such evolutions performed by the Toots's Delight as had filled all the neighbouring part of the water-side with astonishment. But whenever he saw any one in Sir Barnet's garden on the brink of the river, Mr. Toots always feigned to be passing there, by a combination of coincidences of the most singular and unlikely description.

"How are you, Toots!" Sir Barnet would say, waving his hand from the lawn, while the artful Chicken steered close in shore.

"How de do, Sir Barnet!" Mr. Toots would answer. "What a surprising thing that I should see *you* here!"

Mr. Toots, in his sagacity, always said this, as if, instead of that being Sir Barnet's house, it were some deserted edifice on the banks of the Nile, or Ganges.

"I never was so surprised!" Mr. Toots would exclaim.—"Is Miss Dombey there?"

Whereupon Florence would appear, perhaps.

"Oh, Diogenes is quite well, Miss Dombey," Mr. Toots would cry. "I called to ask this morning."

"Thank you very much!" the pleasant voice of Florence would reply.

"Won't you come ashore, Toots?" Sir Barnet would say then. "Come! You're in no hurry. Come and see us."

"Oh it's of no consequence, thank you!" Mr. Toots would blushing rejoine. "I thought Miss Dombey might like to know, that's all. Good bye!" And poor Mr. Toots, who was dying to accept the invitation, but hadn't the courage to do it, signed to the Chicken, with an aching heart and away went the Delight, cleaving the water like an arrow.

The Delight was lying in a state of extraordinary splendour, at the garden steps, on the morning of Florence's departure. When she went down-stairs to take leave, after her talk with Susan, she found Mr. Toots awaiting her in the drawing-room.

"Oh, how de do, Miss Dombey?" said the stricken Toots, always

dreadfully disconcerted when the desire of his heart was gained, and he was speaking to her; "thank you I'm very well indeed, I hope you're the same, so was Diogenes yesterday."

"You are very kind," said Florence.

"Thank you, it's of no consequence," retorted Mr. Toots. "I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind, in this fine weather, coming home by water, Miss Dombey. There's plenty of room in the boat for your maid."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Florence, hesitating. "I really am—but I would rather not."

"Oh, it's of no consequence," retorted Mr. Toots. "Good morning!"

"Won't you wait and see Lady Skettles?" asked Florence, kindly.

"Oh no, thank you," returned Mr. Toots, "it's of no consequence at all."

So shy was Mr. Toots on such occasions, and so flurried! But Lady Skettles entering at the moment, Mr. Toots was suddenly seized with a passion for asking her how she did, and hoping she was very well; nor could Mr. Toots by any possibility leave off shaking hands with her, until Sir Barnet appeared: to whom he immediately clung with the tenacity of desperation.

"We are losing, to-day, Toots," said Sir Barnet, turning towards Florence, "the light of our house, I assure you."

"Oh, it's of no consequence—I mean yes, to be sure," faltered the embarrassed Toots. "GOOD morning!"

Notwithstanding the emphatic nature of this farewell, Mr. Toots, instead of going away, stood leering about him, vacantly. Florence, to relieve him, bade adieu, with many thanks, to Lady Skettles, and gave her arm to Sir Barnet.

"May I beg of you, my dear Miss Dombey," said her host, as he conducted her to the carriage, "to present my best compliments to your dear Papa?"

It was distressing to Florence to receive the commission, for she felt as if she were imposing on Sir Barnet, by allowing him to believe that a kindness rendered to her, was rendered to her father. As she could not explain, however, she bowed her head, and thanked him; and again she thought that the dull home, free from such embarrassments, and such reminders of her sorrow, was her natural and best retreat.

Such of her late friends and companions as were yet remaining at the villa, came running from within, and from the garden, to say good bye. They were all attached to her, and very earnest in taking leave of her. Even the household were sorry for her going, and the servants came nodding and curtseying round the carriage door. As Florence looked round on the kind faces, and saw among them those of Sir Barnet and his lady, and of Mr. Toots, who was chuckling and staring at her from a distance, she was reminded of the night when Paul and she had come from Doctor Blimber's: and when the carriage drove away, her face was wet with tears.

Sorrowful tears, but tears of consolation, too; for all the softer memories connected with the dull old house to which she was returning made it dear to her, as they rose up. How long it seemed since she had wandered through the silent rooms: since she had last crept, softly and afraid, into those her father occupied: since she had felt the solemn but yet

soothing influence of the beloved dead in every action of her daily life! This new farewell reminded her, besides, of her parting with poor Walter: of his looks and words that night: and of the gracious blending she had noticed in him, of tenderness for those he left behind, with courage and high spirit. His little history was associated with the old house too, and gave it a new claim and hold upon her heart.

Even Susan Nipper softened towards the home of so many years, as they were on their way towards it. Gloomy as it was, and rigid justice as she rendered to its gloom, she forgave it a great deal. "I shall be glad to see it again, I don't deny, Miss," said the Nipper. "There aint much in it to boast of, but I wouldn't have it burnt or pulled down, neither!"

"You'll be glad to go through the old rooms, won't you, Susan?" said Florence, smiling.

"Well Miss," returned the Nipper, softening more and more towards the house, as they approached it nearer, "I won't deny but what I shall, though I shall hate 'em again, to-morrow, very likely."

Florence felt that, for her, there was greater peace within it than elsewhere. It was better and easier to keep her secret shut up there, among the tall dark walls, than to carry it abroad into the light, and try to hide it from a crowd of happy eyes. It was better to pursue the study of her loving heart, alone, and find no new discouragements in loving hearts about her. It was easier to hope, and pray, and love on, all uncared for, yet with constancy and patience, in the tranquil sanctuary of such remembrances: although it mouldered, rusted, and decayed about her: than in a new scene, let its gaiety be what it would. She welcomed back her old enchanted dream of life, and longed for the old dark door to close upon her, once again.

Full of such thoughts, they turned into the long and sombre street. Florence was not on that side of the carriage which was nearest to her home, and as the distance lessened between them and it, she looked out of her window for the children over the way.

She was thus engaged, when an exclamation from Susan caused her to turn quickly round.

"Why Gracious me!" cried Susan, breathless, "where's our house!"

"Our house!" said Florence.

Susan, drawing in her head from the window, thrust it out again, drew it in again as the carriage stopped, and stared at her mistress in amazement.

There was a labyrinth of scaffolding raised all round the house, from the basement to the roof. Loads of bricks and stones, and heaps of mortar, and piles of wood, blocked up half the width and length of the broad street at the side. Ladders were raised against the walls; labourers were climbing up and down; men were at work upon the steps of the scaffolding; painters and decorators were busy inside; great rolls of ornamental paper were being delivered from a cart at the door; an upholsterer's waggon also stopped the way; no furniture was to be seen through the gaping and broken windows in any of the rooms; nothing but workmen, and the implements of their several trades, swarming from the kitchens to the garrets. Inside and outside alike: bricklayers, painters, carpenters, masons: hammer, hod, brush, pickaxe, saw, and trowel: all at work together, in full chorus!

Florence descended from the coach, half doubting if it were, or could be the right house, until she recognised Towlinson, with a sun-burnt face, standing at the door to receive her.

"There is nothing the matter?" inquired Florence.

"Oh no, Miss."

"There are great alterations going on."

"Yes, Miss, great alterations," said Towlinson.

Florence passed him as if she were in a dream, and hurried up-stairs. The garish light was in the long-darkened drawing-rooms, and there were steps and platforms, and men in paper caps, in the high places. Her mother's picture was gone with the rest of the moveables, and on the mark where it had been, was scrawled in chalk, "this room in panel. Green and gold." The staircase was a labyrinth of posts and planks like the outside of the house, and a whole Olympus of plumbers and glaziers was reclining in various attitudes, on the skylight. Her own room was not yet touched within, but there were beams and boards raised against it without, baulking the daylight. She went up swiftly to that other bed-room, where the little bed was; and a dark giant of a man with a pipe in his mouth, and his head tied up in a pocket-handkerchief, was staring in at the window.

It was here that Susan Nipper, who had been in quest of Florence, found her, and said, would she go down stairs to her Papa, who wished to speak to her.

"At home! and wishing to speak to me!" cried Florence, trembling.

Susan, who was infinitely more distraught than Florence herself, repeated her errand; and Florence, pale and agitated, hurried down again, without a moment's hesitation. She thought upon the way down, would she dare to kiss him? The longing of her heart resolved her, and she thought she would.

Her father might have heard that heart beat, when it came into his presence. One instant, and it would have beat against his breast—

But he was not alone. There were two ladies there; and Florence stopped. Striving so hard with her emotion, that if her brute friend Di had not burst in and overwhelmed her with his caresses as a welcome home—at which one of the ladies gave a little scream, and that diverted her attention from herself—she would have swooned upon the floor.

"Florence," said her father, putting out his hand: so stiffly that it held her off: "how do you do?"

Florence took the hand between her own, and putting it timidly to her lips, yielded to its withdrawal. It touched the door in shutting it, with quite as much endearment as it had touched her.

"What dog is that?" said Mr. Dombey, displeased.

"It is a dog, papa—from Brighton."

"Well!" said Mr. Dombey; and a cloud passed over his face, for he understood her.

"He is very good-tempered," said Florence, addressing herself with her natural grace and sweetness to the two lady strangers. "He is only glad to see me. Pray forgive him."

She saw in the glance they interchanged, that the lady who had screamed, and who was seated, was old; and that the other lady, who stood near her papa, was very beautiful, and of an elegant figure.

"Mrs. Skewton," said her father, turning to the first, and holding out his hand, "this is my daughter Florence."

"Charming, I am sure," observed the lady, putting up her glass. "So natural! My darling Florence, you must kiss me, if you please."

Florence having done so, turned towards the other lady, by whom her father stood waiting.

"Edith," said Mr. Dombey, "this is my daughter Florence. Florence, this lady will soon be your mama."

Florence started, and looked up at the beautiful face in a conflict of emotions, among which the tears that name awakened, struggled for a moment with surprise, interest, admiration, and an indefinable sort of fear. Then she cried out, "Oh, papa, may you be happy! may you be very, very happy all your life!" and then fell weeping on the lady's bosom.

There was a short silence. The beautiful lady, who at first had seemed to hesitate whether or no she should advance to Florence, held her to her breast, and pressed the hand with which she clasped her, close about her waist, as if to reassure and comfort her. Not one word passed the lady's lips. She bent her head down over Florence, and she kissed her on the cheek, but she said no word.

"Shall we go on through the rooms," said Mr. Dombey, "and see how our workmen are doing? Pray allow me, my dear madam."

He said this, in offering his arm to Mrs. Skewton, who had been looking at Florence through her glass, as though picturing to herself what she might be made, by the infusion—from her own copious storehouse, no doubt—of a little more Heart and Nature. Florence was still sobbing on the lady's breast, and holding to her, when Mr. Dombey was heard to say from the Conservatory:

"Let us ask Edith. Dear me, where is she?"

"Edith, my dear!" cried Mrs. Skewton, "where are you? Looking for Mr. Dombey somewhere, I know. We are here, my love."

The beautiful lady released her hold of Florence, and pressing her lips once more upon her face, withdrew hurriedly, and joined them. Florence remained standing in the same place: happy, sorry, joyful, and in tears, she knew not how, or how long, but all at once: when her new Mama came back, and took her in her arms again.

"Florence," said the lady, hurriedly, and looking into her face with great earnestness. "You will not begin by hating me?"

"By hating you, Mama!" cried Florence, winding her arm round her neck, and returning the look.

"Hush! Begin by thinking well of me," said the beautiful lady. "Begin by believing that I will try to make you happy, and that I am prepared to love you, Florence. Good bye. We shall meet again, soon. Good bye! Don't stay here, now."

Again she pressed her to her breast—she had spoken in a rapid manner, but firmly—and Florence saw her rejoin them in the other room.

And now Florence began to hope that she would learn, from her new and beautiful Mama, how to gain her father's love; and in her sleep that night, in her lost old home, her own Mama smiled radiantly upon the hope, and blessed it. Dreaming Florence!

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But we must stop, for there is no end to the catalogue, and it is an exhibition of which we must not see too much at a passing glance, lest it should wile us from our proper purpose. And we have mentioned these few particulars merely to let those who are yet in ignorance of the subject know how well the world is worth our studying: how richly the earth which we inhabit has been endowed by its bountiful Maker; how full the feast which it affords to all; and yet how varied, how free from surfeiting, how healthful.

Now, as we have already said, not only might, but *should*, every commodity of every region transport us to that region, and make it render up to our enjoyment all that it possesses; but an Atlas of the World, which has been duly studied, brings the whole before us the moment we glance at it; for in proportion to the extent of our knowledge will be the extent of the reminiscence which this most powerful talisman will conjure up. Truly it is magic,—but it is magic of nature's exhibiting; the effect of infinite wisdom and goodness, without deception, without anything to mislead, and with everything to inform the head and soften the heart.

As we look intellectually upon the Atlas, the whole of the human race, from Adam downward, rise in succession to our view; and every event, pictured to itself, stands out as fresh and as forcible in its colours as if it were before our mortal eyes.

Let the knowledge be once fairly acquired, whether it be limited or extended, if it be properly applied to the Atlas, the Atlas will render it up more briefly and clearly than it would be rendered up by any other means. The extent and the readiness of this *memorial* or suggestive power in the Atlas, will astonish those who have not been in the habit of using it; and there is a most agreeable way of finding this out. Let, for instance, the conversation be directed to the varieties of the human race, in appearance and character, and let any one lay his finger successively upon lands strongly contrasted in this respect; and in whatever order he takes them, he will find that the people stand up, as it were, the instant that his finger touches that country, as if that country were touched by the wand of a magician.

It is the same with every art which mankind have practised, and every science which they have studied. If we are once in possession of the knowledge, and have had the Atlas in juxtaposition with us in the study of it, the Atlas will not suffer us to forget it, but will faithfully bring to our recollection everything of weal or woe that has happened. The Atlas will not furnish us with the knowledge at first, but it will keep for us what we have acquired.

On a great scale, there is no artificial memory half so good for this purpose as an Atlas of the World. It must, however, be borne in mind, that the Atlas is only the casket, and not the jewels of knowledge; but then it is a casket so perfect, and so permanent in its arrangement, (especially when accompanied by descriptive letter-press, like "*Gilbert's Modern Atlas*," that every jewel which we can put into it is found the very instant that we require it. Every family, therefore, should have an Atlas of the World, as large and good as their circumstances will admit; and, BESIDES THE PLEASURE OF ITS POSSESSION, IT WILL INSURE THEM ITS VALUE MANIFOLD IN THE INSTRUCTION OF BOTH OLD AND YOUNG.

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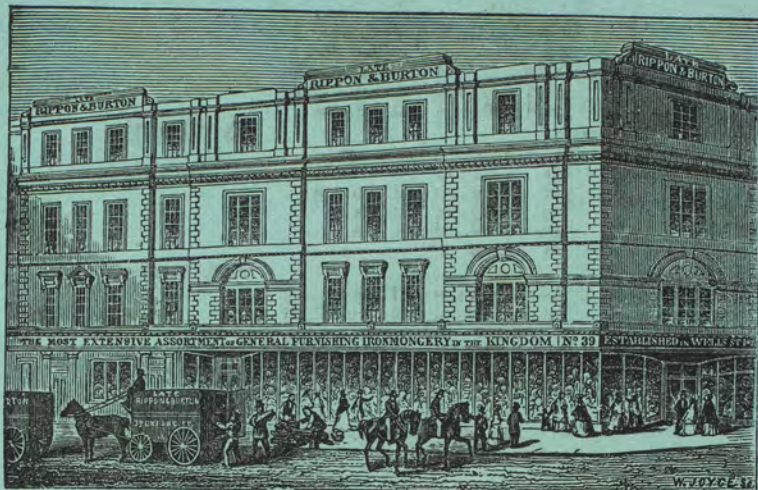
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For all these articles in trade ?
The prices MOSES' charge are such
As you may gain by very much :
Vast savings have they brought to me—
And hence shall MOSES ever be

My Choice.

LIST OF PRICES.

Made to Measure.		Ready Made.	
	£ s. d.		£ s. d.
Cashmerette Codringtons	from 0 15 6	Blouses	from 0 2 6
" Taglionis, silk collar and cuffs	1 2 0	Cashmerette Codringtons	0 15 6
Cambridge Coat, lined throughout	2 5 0	Cambridge's Chesterfield Polkas, and all the newest Patterns	from 0 18 0
Tweed Coat	0 15 0	Tweed Coats	0 8 6
Sporting Coat	0 13 6	Sporting Coats	0 6 6
Dress Coat	1 12 0	Dress Coats	1 0 0
" Best quality manufactured	2 15 0	" Extra Superfine, a superior Coat	1 15 0
Frock Coat	1 15 0	Frock Coat	1 4 0
" Best quality manufactured	3 3 0	Extra Superfine a superior Coat	2 2 0
Rich Pattern Vest	0 8 0	Roll Collar Vest	0 2 0
Cassimere or Cloth	0 8 6	Fancy Satins	0 6 6
Tweed Trowsers	0 8 0	Cloth or Cassimere	0 9 6
Single Milled Doe Skin ditto	1 2 0	Tweed Trowsers	0 4 6
Best or Dress ditto	1 6 0	Fancy Cassimere or Doeskins	0 10 6
Boys' Hussar and Tunic Suits	1 8 0	Boys' Tunic and Hussar Suits	0 18 6

Mourning to any extent can be had at Five Minutes' notice.

ESSENTIAL CAUTION.—E. MOSES and SON are under the necessity of guarding the public against imposition, having learned that the untradesmanlike falsehood of "Being connected with them," or "It's the same concern," has been resorted to in many instances and for obvious reasons. The Proprietors have no connection with any other house, and those who would prevent disappointment should observe the address, **E. MOSES & SON, Tailors, Woollen Drapers, Hosiery, Furriers, Hatters, Boot and Shoe Makers, and General Outfitters for Ladies and Gentlemen.**
154, 155, 156, & 157 Minories, & 83, 84, 85, & 86 Aldgate, City, London.