Children Stories

by Charles Dickens

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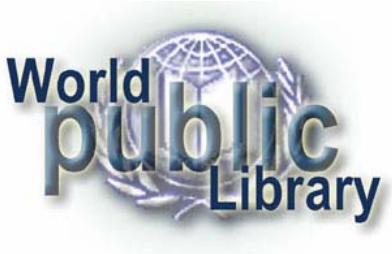

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TROTTY VECK'S DINNER

TROTTY VECK and HIS DAUGHTER MEG.

"TROTTY" seems a strange name for an old man, but it was given to Toby Veck because of his always going at a trot to do his errands; for he was a ticket porter, and his office was to take letters and messages for people who were in too great a hurry to send them by the post, which in those days was neither so cheap nor so quick as it is now. He did not earn very much, and had to be out in all weathers and all day long. But Toby was of a cheerful disposition, and looked on the bright side of everything, and was grateful for any small mercies that came in his way; and so was happier than many people who never knew what it

was to be hungry or in want of comforts. His greatest joy was his dear, bright, pretty daughter Meg, who loved him dearly.

One cold day, near the end of the year, Toby had been waiting a long time for a job, trotting up and down in his usual place before the church, and trying hard to keep himself warm, when the bells chimed twelve o'clock, which made Toby think of dinner.

"There 's nothing," he remarked, carefully feeling his nose to make sure it was still there, "more regular in coming round than dinner-time, and nothing less regular in coming round than dinner. That 's the great difference between 'em." He went on talking to himself, trotting up and down, and never noticing who was coming near to him.

"Why, father, father," said a pleasant voice, and Toby turned to find his daughter's sweet, bright eyes close to his.

"Why, pet," said he, kissing her and squeezing her blooming face between his hands, "what 's to-do? I didn't expect you to-day, Meg."

"Neither did I expect to come, father," said Meg, nodding and smiling. "But here I am! And not alone, not alone!"

"Why, you don't mean to say," observed Trotty, looking curiously at the covered basket she carried, "that you——"

"Smell it, father dear," said Meg; "only smell it, and guess what it is."

Toby took the shortest possible sniff at the edge of the basket. "Why, it 's hot," he said.

But to Meg's great delight he could not guess what it was that smelt so good.

"Polonies? Trotters? Liver? Pettitoes? Sausages?" he tried one after the other. At last he exclaimed in triumph, "Why, what am I a-thinking of? It 's tripe?"

And it was.

"And so," said Meg, "I 'll lay the cloth at once, father; for I have brought the tripe in a basin, and tied the basin up in a pocket-handkerchief; and if I like to be proud for once, and spread that for a cloth, and call it a cloth, there 's nobody to prevent me, is there, father?"

"Not that I know of, my dear," said Toby.

And just as Toby was about to sit down to his dinner on the door-steps of a big house close by, the chimes rang out again, and Toby took off his hat and said, "Amen."

"THEY BROKE IN LIKE A GRACE, MY DEAR."

"Amen to the bells, father?"

"They broke in like a grace, my dear," said Trotty, "they'd say a good one if they could, I'm sure. Many's the kind thing they say to me. How often have I heard them bells say, 'Toby Veck, Toby Veck, keep a good heart, Toby!' A million times? More!"

"Well, I never!" cried Meg.

"When things is very bad, then it's 'Toby Veck, Toby Veck, job coming soon, Toby!'"

"And it comes—at last, father," said Meg, with a touch of sadness in her pleasant voice.

"Always," answered Toby. "Never fails."

While Toby ate his unexpected dinner with immense relish, Meg told him how her lover Richard, a young blacksmith, had brought his dinner to share with her, and had begged her to marry him on New Year's Day, "the best and happiest day of the whole year." He had work promised him, for certain, for some time, and though they would be poor, they could be very happy, and cheer and encourage each other. "So," went on Meg, "I wanted to make this a sort of holiday to you, as well as a dear and happy day to me, father, and I made a little treat and brought it to surprise you."

Just then, Richard himself came up to persuade Toby to agree to their plan; and almost at the same moment, a footman came out of the house and ordered them all off the steps, and some gentlemen came out who called up Trotty, and asked a great many questions, and found

a good deal of fault, telling Richard he was very foolish to want to get married, which made Toby feel very unhappy, and Richard very angry. So the lovers went off together sadly ; Richard looking gloomy and downcast, and Meg in tears. Toby, who had a letter given him to carry, and a sixpence, trotted off in rather low spirits to a very grand house, where he was told to take the letter in to the gentleman. While he was waiting, he heard the letter read. It was from Alderman Cute, to tell Sir Joseph Bowley that one of his tenants named Will Fern who had come to London to try and get work, had been brought before him charged with sleeping in a shed, and asking if Sir Joseph wished him to be dealt leniently with or otherwise. To Toby's great disappointment, for Sir Joseph had talked a great deal about being a friend to the poor, the answer was given that Will Fern might be sent to prison as a vagabond, and made an example of, though his only fault was poverty. On his way home, Toby, thinking sadly, with his hat pulled down low on his head, ran against a man dressed like a countryman, carrying a fair-haired little girl. Toby enquired anxiously if he had hurt either of them. The man answered no, and seeing Toby had a kind face, he asked him the way to Alderman Cute's house.

"It 's impossible," cried Toby, "that your name is Will Fern ?"

"That 's my name," said the man.

Thereupon Toby told him what he had just heard, and said, "Don't go there."

Poor Will told him how he could not make a living in the country, and had come to London with his orphan niece to try and find a friend of her mother's and to endeavour to get some work, and wishing Toby a happy New Year, was about to trudge wearily off again, when Trotty caught his hand saying—

"Stay! The New Year never can be happy to me if I see the child and you go wandering away without a shelter for your heads. Come home with me. I 'm a poor man, living in a poor place, but I can give you lodging for one night and never miss it," and lifting up the pretty little one, he trotted towards home, talking all the way, for he couldn't bear to be thanked, and rushing in, he set the child down before his daughter. The little girl gave one look at Meg's

we are and here we go. Here, Uncle Will, come to the fire. Meg, my precious darling, where 's the kettle? Here it is and here it goes, and it 'll bile in no time!"

"Why, father!" said Meg, as she knelt before the child and pulled off her wet shoes, "you 're crazy to-night, I think. I don't know what the Bells would say to that. Poor little feet, how cold they are!"

"Oh, they 're warmer now!" exclaimed the child. "They 're quite warm now!"

"No, no, no," said Meg. "We haven't rubbed 'em half enough. We 're so busy. And when they 're done, we 'll brush out the damp hair; and when that 's done, we 'll bring some colour to the poor pale face with fresh water; and when that 's done, we 'll be so gay and brisk and happy!"

The child sobbing, clasped her round the neck, saying, "O Meg, O dear Meg!"

"Good gracious me!" said Meg presently, "father 's crazy! He 's put the dear child's bonnet on the kettle, and hung the lid behind the door!"

Trotty hastily repaired this mistake, and went off to find some tea and a rasher of bacon he fancied "he had seen lying somewhere on the stairs."

He soon came back and made the tea, and before long they were all enjoying the meal. Trotty and Meg only took a morsel for form's sake, but their delight was in seeing their visitors eat, and very happy they were—though Trotty had noticed that Meg was sitting by the fire in tears when they had come in, and he feared her marriage had been broken off.

After tea Meg took Lilian to bed, and Toby showed Will Fern where he was to sleep. As he came back past Meg's door he heard the child saying her prayers, remembering Meg's name and asking for his. Then he went to sit by the fire and read his paper, and fell asleep to have a wonderful dream, so terrible and sad, that it was a great relief when he woke to find Meg sitting near him, putting some ribbons on her simple gown for her wedding, and looking so happy and young and blooming, that he jumped up to clasp her in his arms.

But somebody came rushing in between them, crying,—"No! Not even you. The first kiss of Meg in the New Year is mine. Meg, my

precious prize, a happy year! A life of happy years, my darling wife!"

Then in came Lilian and Will Fern, and a band of usic with a flock of neighbours burst into the room shouting, "A Happy New Year, Meg," "A happy wedding!" "Many of 'em," and the Drum stepped forward and said—

"Trotty Veck, it's got about that your daughter is to be married to-morrow. And there ain't a soul that knows you both that don't wish you both all the happiness the New Year can bring. And here we are, to play it in and dance it in accordingly." Then Mrs Chickenstalker came in, (a good-humoured, comely woman, who, to the delight of all turned out to be the friend of Lilian's mother for whom Will Fern had come to look), with a stone pitcher full of "flip," to wish Meg joy, and then the music struck up and Trotty, making Meg and Richard second couple, led off Mrs Chickenstalker down the dance, and danced it in a step unknown before or since, founded on his own peculiar trot.

Tiny Tim

IT will surprise you all very much to hear that there was once a man who did not like Christmas. In fact, he had been heard on several occasions to use the word *humbug* with regard to it. His name was Scrooge, and he was a hard, sour-tempered man of business, intent only on saving and making money, and caring nothing for anyone. He paid the poor, hard-working clerk in his office as little as he could possibly get the work done for, and lived on as little as possible himself, alone, in two dismal rooms. He was never merry or comfortable, or happy, and he hated other people to be so, and that was the reason why he hated Christmas, because people *will* be happy at Christmas, you know, if they possibly can, and like to have a little money to make themselves and others comfortable.

Well, it was Christmas eve, a very cold and foggy one, and Mr Scrooge, having given his poor clerk unwilling permission to spend Christmas day at home, locked up his office and went home himself in a very bad temper, and with a cold in his head. After having taken some gruel as he sat over a miserable fire in his dismal room, he got into bed, and had some wonderful and disagreeable dreams, to which we will leave him, whilst we see how Tiny Tim, the son of his poor clerk, spent Christmas day.

TINY TIM.

The name of this clerk was Bob Cratchet. He had a wife and five other children besides Tim, who was a weak and delicate little cripple, and for this reason was dearly loved by his father, and the rest of the family; not but what he was a dear little boy too, gentle and patient and loving, with a sweet face of his own, which no one could help looking at.

Whenever he could spare the time, it was Mr Cratchet's delight to carry his little boy out on his shoulder to see the shops and the people; and to-day he had taken him to church for the first time.

"Whatever has got your precious father, and your brother Tiny Tim!" exclaimed Mrs Cratchet, "here's dinner all ready to be dished up. I've never known him so late on Christmas day before."

"Here he is, mother!" cried Belinda, and "here he is!" cried the other children, as Mr Cratchet came in, his long comforter hanging three feet from under his threadbare coat; for cold as it was, the poor clerk had no top-coat. Tiny Tim was perched on his father's shoulder with his little crutch in his hand.

"And how did Tim behave?" asked Mrs Cratchet.

"As good as gold and better," replied his father. "I think, wife, the child gets thoughtful, sitting at home so much. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people in church who saw he was a cripple, would be pleased to remember on Christmas day, who it was who made the lame to walk."

"Bless his sweet heart!" said the mother in a trembling voice, and the father's

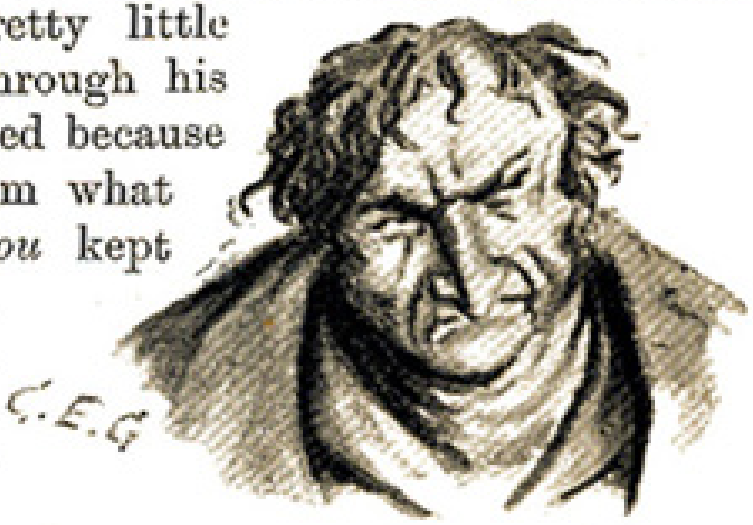
voice trembled too, as he remarked, that "Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty at last."

Dinner was waiting to be dished up. Mrs Cratchet proudly placed a goose upon the table. Belinda brought in the apple sauce, and Peter the mashed potatoes; the other children set chairs, Tim's as usual close to his father's; and Tim was so excited that he rapped the table with his knife, and cried "Hurrah." After the goose came the pudding, with a great smell of steam, like washing-day, as it came out of the copper; in it came, all a-blaze, with its sprig of holly in the middle, and was eaten to the last morsel; then apples and oranges were set upon the table, and a shovelful of chestnuts on the fire, and Mr Cratchet served round some hot sweet stuff out of a jug as they closed round the fire, and said, "A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears, God bless us." "God bless us, every one," echoed Tiny Tim, and then they drank each other's health, and Mr Scrooge's health, and told stories and sang songs,—Tim, who had a sweet, little voice, singing, very well indeed, a song about a child who was lost in the snow on Christmas day.

Now I told you that Mr Scrooge had some disagreeable and wonderful dreams on Christmas Eve, and so he had; and in one of them he dreamt that a Christmas spirit showed him his clerk's home; he saw them all gathered round the fire, and heard them drink his health, and Tiny Tim's song, and he took special note of Tiny Tim himself.

How Mr Scrooge spent Christmas day we do not know. He may have remained in bed, having a cold,

but on Christmas night he had more dreams, and the spirit took him again to his clerk's poor home. The mother was doing some needlework, seated by the table, a tear dropped on it now and then, and she said, poor thing, that the work, which was black, hurt her eyes. The children sat, sad and silent, about the room, except Tiny Tim, who was not there. Upstairs the father, with his face hidden in his hands sat beside a little bed, on which lay a tiny figure, white and still. "My little child, my pretty little child," he sobbed, as the tears fell through his fingers on to the floor. "Tiny Tim died because his father was too poor to give him what was necessary to make him well; *you* kept him poor," said the dream-spirit to Mr Scrooge. The father kissed the cold, little face on the bed, and went down-stairs, where the sprays of holly still remained about the humble room; and taking his hat, went out, with a wistful glance at the little crutch in the corner as he shut the door. Mr Scrooge saw all this, and many more things as strange and sad, the spirit took care of that; but, wonderful to relate, he woke the next morning feeling a different man—feeling as he had never felt in his life before.



"Why, I am as light as a feather, and as happy as an angel, and as merry as a schoolboy," he said to himself as he absolutely skipped into the next room to breakfast and threw on all the coals at once, and put two lumps of sugar in his tea. "I hope everybody had a merry Christmas, and here's a happy New Year to all the world."

Poor Bob Cratchet crept into the office a few minutes late, expecting to be roundly abused and scolded for it, but no such thing, his master was there with his back to a good fire, and actually smiling, and he shook hands with his clerk, telling him heartily he was going to raise his salary and asking quite affectionately after Tiny Tim! "And mind you make up a good fire in your room before you set to work, Bob," he said, as he closed his own door.

Bob could hardly believe his eyes and ears, but it was all true. Such doings as they had on New Year's day had never been seen before in the

Cratchets' home, nor such a turkey as Mr Scrooge sent them for dinner. Tiny Tim had his share too, for Tiny Tim did not die, not a bit of it. Mr Scrooge was a second father to him from that day, he wanted for nothing, and grew up strong and hearty. Mr Scrooge loved him, and well he might, for was it not Tiny Tim, who had unconsciously, through the Christmas dream-spirit, touched his hard heart, and caused him to become a good and happy man.

LITTLE DOMBEY

LITTLE DOMBEY was the son of a rich city merchant. Ever since his marriage, ten years before our story commences, Mr Dombey had ardently desired to have a son. He was a cold, stern, and pompous man, whose life and interests were entirely absorbed in his business, which appeared to him to be the most important thing in the whole world. It was not so much that he wanted a son to love, and to love him, but because he was so desirous of having one to associate with himself in the business, and make the house once more Dombey & Son in fact, as it was in name, that the little boy who was at last born to him was so precious, and so eagerly welcomed.

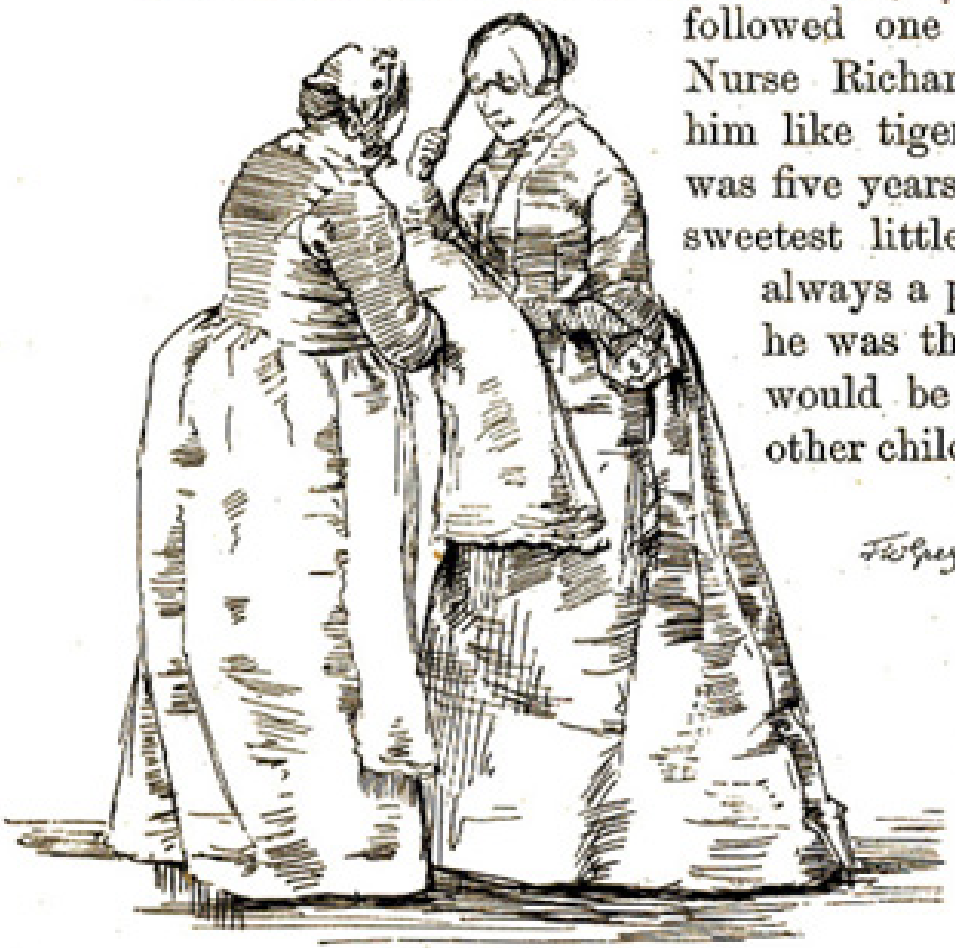
There was a pretty little girl of six years old, but her father had taken so little notice of her that it was doubtful if he would have known her had he met her in the street. Of what use was a girl to Dombey and Son? She could not go into the business.

Little Dombey's mother died when he was born, but the event did not greatly disturb Mr Dombey; and since his son lived, what did it matter to him that his little daughter Florence was breaking her heart in loneliness for the mother who had loved and cherished her!

During the first few months of his life, little Dombey grew and flourished; and as soon as he was old enough to take notice, there was no one he loved so well as his sister Florence. He would laugh and hold out his arms as soon as she came in sight, and the affection of her baby brother comforted the lonely little girl, who was never weary of waiting on and playing with him.

In due time the baby was taken to church, and baptised by the name of Paul (his father's name). A grand and stately christening it was, followed by a grand and stately feast; and little Paul, when he was brought in to be admired by the company, was declared by his godmother to be "an angel, and the perfect picture of his own papa."

Whether baby Paul caught cold on his christening day or not, no one could tell, but from that time he seemed to waste and pine; his healthy and thriving babyhood had received a check, and as for illnesses, "There never was a blessed dear so put upon," his nurse said. Every tooth cost him a fit, and as for chicken-pox, hooping-cough, and measles, they followed one upon the other, and to quote Nurse Richards again, "seized and worried him like tiger cats," so that by the time he was five years old, though he had the prettiest, sweetest little face in the world, there was always a patient, wistful look upon it, and he was thin and tiny and delicate. He would be as merry and full of spirits as other children when playing with Florence in their nursery, but he soon got tired, and had such old-fashioned ways of speaking and doing things, that Richards often shook her head sadly over him.



When he sat in his little arm-chair with his father, after

FLORENCE AND HER BROTHER.

dinner, as Mr Dombey would have him do every day, they were a strange pair,—so like, and so unlike each other.

"What is money, papa?" asked Paul on one of these occasions, crossing his tiny arms as well as he could—just as his father's were crossed.

"Why, gold, silver, and copper; you know what it is well enough, Paul," answered his father.

"Oh yes; I mean, what can money do?"

"Anything, everything — almost," replied Mr Dombey, taking one of his son's wee hands, and beating it softly against his own.

Paul drew his hand gently away. "It didn't save me my mamma, and it can't make me strong and big," said he.

"Why, you *are* strong and big, as big as such little people usually are," returned Mr Dombey.

"No," replied Paul, sighing; "when Florence was as little as me, she was strong and tall, and did not get tired of playing as I do. I am *so* tired sometimes, papa."

Mr Dombey's anxiety was aroused, and he summoned his sister, Mrs Chick, to consult with him over Paul, and the doctor was sent for to examine him.

"The child is hardly so stout as we could wish," said the doctor; "his mind is too big for his body, he thinks too much—let him try sea air—sea air does wonders for children."

So it was arranged that Florence, Paul, and nurse should go to Brighton, and stay in the house of a lady named Mrs Pipchin, who kept a very select boarding-house for children, and whose management of them was said, in the best circles, to be truly marvellous. Mr Dombey himself went down to Brighton every week, and had the children to stay with him at his hotel from Saturday to Monday, that he might judge of the progress made by his son and heir towards health.

There is no doubt that, apart from his importance to the house of Dombey & Son, little Paul had crept into his father's heart, cold though it still was towards his daughter, colder than ever now, for there was in it

a sort of unacknowledged jealousy of the warm love lavished on her by Paul, which he himself was unable to win.

Mrs Pipchin was a marvellously ugly old lady, with a hook nose and stern cold eyes. Two other children lived at present under her charge, a mild blue-eyed little girl who was known as Miss Pankey, and a Master Bitherstone, a solemn and sad looking little boy whose parents were in India, and who asked Florence in a depressed voice whether she could give him any idea of the way back to Bengal.

"Well, Master Paul, how do you think you will like me?" said Mrs Pipchin, seeing the child intently regarding her.

"I don't think I shall like you at all," replied Paul, shaking his head. "I want to go away. I do not like your house."

Paul did not like Mrs Pipchin, but he would sit in his arm-chair and look at her, just as he had looked at his father at home. Her ugliness seemed to fascinate him.

As the weeks went by little Paul grew more healthy-looking, but he did not seem any stronger, and could not run about out of doors. A little carriage was therefore got for him, in which he could be wheeled down to the beach, where he would pass the greater part of the day. He took a great fancy to a queer crab-faced old man, smelling of sea-weed, who wheeled his carriage, and held long conversations with him; but Florence was the only child-companion whom he ever cared to have with him, though he liked to watch other children playing in the distance. To have Florence sitting by his side, reading or talking to him, whilst the fresh salt wind blew about him, and the little waves rippled up under the wheels of his carriage seemed to perfectly content little Paul.

"I love you, Floy," he said one day to her; "if you went to India as that boy's sister did, I should die."

Florence laid her head against his pillow, and whispered how much stronger he was growing.

"Oh yes, I know, I am a great deal better," said Paul, "a very great deal better. Listen, Floy; what is it the sea keeps saying?"

"Nothing, dear, it is only the rolling of the waves you hear."

"Yes, but they are always saying something, and always the same thing. What place is over there, Floy?"

She told him there was another country opposite, but Paul said he

Will H. Frances Brundage

Little Paul and Florence

did not mean that, he meant somewhere much farther away, oh, much farther away—and often he would break off in the midst of their talk to listen to the sea and gaze out towards that country "farther away."

After having lived at Brighton for a year, Paul was certainly much stronger, though still thin and delicate. And on one of his weekly visits, Mr Dombey observed to Mrs Pipchin, with pompous condescension, "My son is getting on, Madam, he is really getting on. He is six years of age, and six will be sixteen before we have time to look about us." And then he went on to explain that Paul's weak health having kept him back in his studies, which, considering the great destiny before the heir of Dombey & Son, was much to be regretted, he had made arrangements to place him at the educational establishment of Dr Blimber, which was close by. Florence was, for the present, to remain under Mrs Pipchin's care, and see her brother every week.

Dr Blimber's school was a great hot-

house for the forcing of boys' brains;—no matter how backward a boy was, Doctor Blimber could always bring him on, and make a man of him in no time; and Dr Blimber promised speedily to make a man of Paul.

"Shall you like to be made a man of, my son?" asked Mr Dombey.

"I 'd rather be a child and stay with Floy," answered Paul.

Then a different life began for little Dombey.

Miss Blimber, the doctor's daughter, a learned lady in spectacles, was his special tutor, and from morning till night his poor little brains were forced and crammed, till his head was heavy and always had a dull ache in it, and his small legs grew weak again—every day he looked a little thinner and a little paler, and became more old-fashioned than ever in his looks and ways—"old-fashioned" was a distinguishing title which clung to him. He was gentle and polite to every one—always looking out for small kindnesses which he might do to any inmate of the house. Every one liked "little Dombey," but every one down to the footman said with the same kind of tender smile—he was such an old-fashioned boy. "The oddest and most old-fashioned child in the world," Dr Blimber would say to his daughter; "but bring him on, Cornelia—bring him on."

And Cornelia did bring him on; and Florence, seeing how pale and weary the little fellow looked when he came to her on Saturdays, and how he could not rest from anxiety about his lessons, would lighten his labours a little, and ease his mind by helping him to prepare his week's work. But one day, when his lessons were

over, about a fortnight before the commencement of holidays, little Paul laid his weary and aching head against the knee of a schoolfellow of whom he was very fond, and somehow forgot to lift it up again; and the first thing he noticed when he opened his eyes was that the window was open, his face and hair were wet with water, and that Dr Blimber and the usher were both standing looking at him.

"Ah, that 's well," said Dr Blimber as Paul opened his eyes, "and how is my little friend now?"

"Oh, quite well, thank you, sir," answered Paul, but when he got up there seemed something the matter with the floor, and the walls were dancing about and Dr Blimber's head was twice its natural size. Toots, the schoolfellow against whom Paul had been leaning, took him up in his arms, and very kindly helped him to bed, and presently the doctor came and looked at him, and said he was not to do any more lessons for the present.

In a few days Paul was able to get up and creep about the house. He wondered sometimes why every one looked at and spoke so very kindly to him, and was more than ever careful to do any little kindnesses he could think of for them: even the rough, ugly dog Diogenes, who lived in the yard, came in for a share of his attentions.

There was to be a party at Dr Blimber's on the evening before the boys went home, and Paul wished to remain for this, because Florence was coming, and he wanted her to see how every one was fond of him. He was to go away with her after the party. Paul sat in a corner of the sofa all the evening, and every one was very kind to him indeed, it was quite extraordinary, Paul thought, and he was very happy; he liked to see how pretty Florence was, and how every one admired and wished to dance with her. When the time came for them to take leave, the whole houseful gathered on the steps to say good-bye to little Dombey and his sister, Toots even opening the carriage door to say it over again. After resting for a night at Mrs Pipchin's house, little Paul went home, and was carried straight upstairs to his bed.

"Floy, dear," said he to his sister, when he was comfortably settled, "was that papa in the hall when I was carried in?"

"Yes, dear," answered Florence.

"He didn't cry, did he, Floy, and go into his own room when he saw me?"

Florence could only shake her head, and hide her face against his, as she kissed him.

"I should not like to think papa cried," murmured little Paul, as he went to sleep.

He lay in his bed day after day quite happily and patiently, content to watch and talk to Florence. He would tell her his dreams, and how he always saw the sunlit ripples of a river rolling, rolling fast in front of him; sometimes he seemed to be rocking in a little boat on the water, and its motion lulled him to rest, and then he would be floating away, away to that shore farther off, which he could not see. One day he told Florence that the water was rippling brighter and faster than ever, and that he could not see anything else.

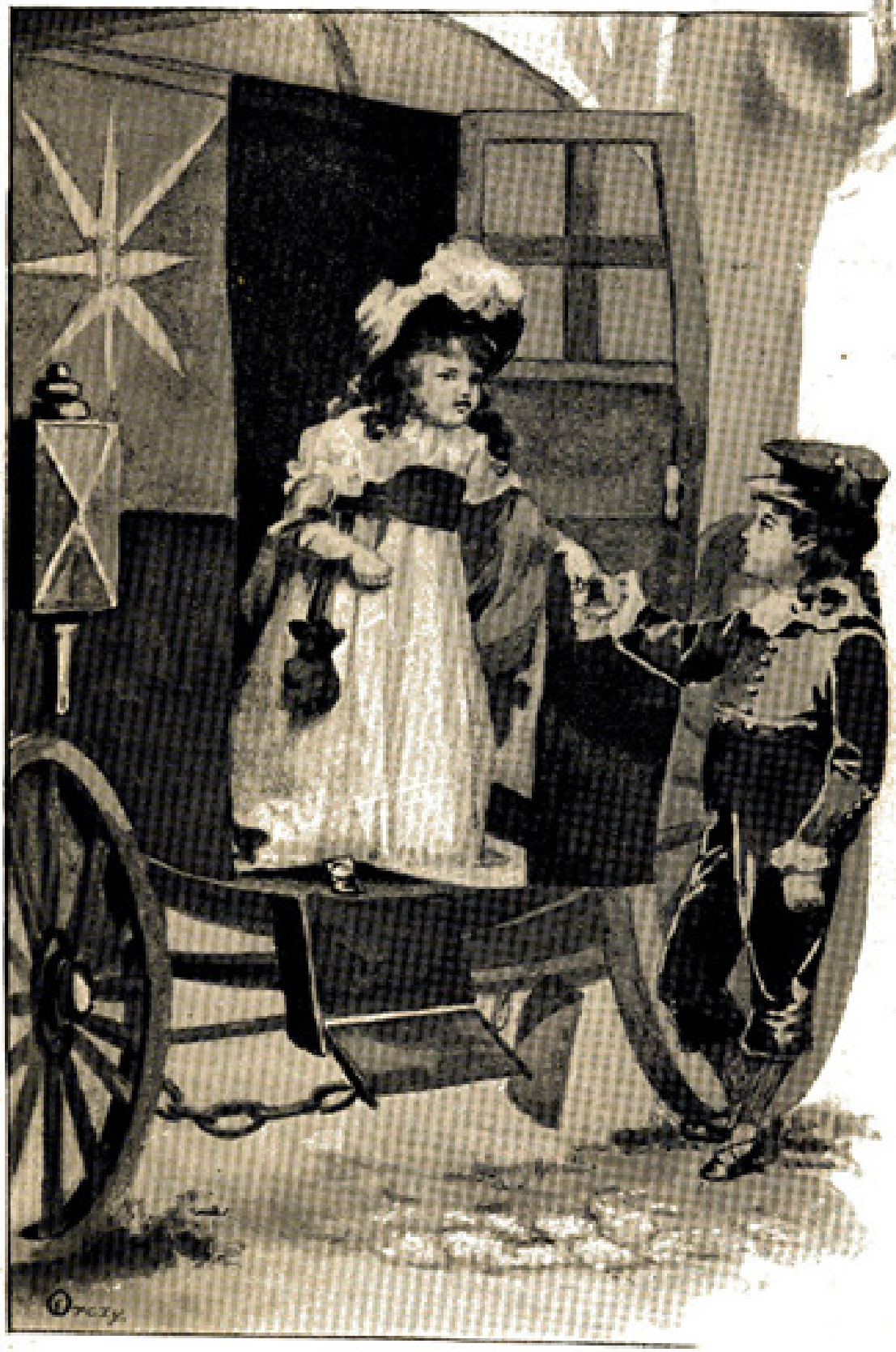
"My own boy, cannot you see your poor father?" said Mr Dombey, bending over him.

"Oh yes; but don't be so sorry, dear papa, I am so happy,—good-bye, dear papa." Presently he opened his eyes again, and said, "Floy, mamma is like you, I can see her. Come close to me, Floy, and tell them," whispered the dying boy "that the face of the picture of Christ on the staircase at school is not divine enough; the light from it is

shining on me now, and the water is shining too, and rippling so fast, so fast."

The evening light shone into the room, but little Paul's spirit had gone out on the rippling water, and the Divine Face was shining on him from the farther shore.

THE RUNAWAY COUPLE



"SUPPOSING a young gentleman not eight years old was to run away with a fine young woman of seven, would you consider that a queer start? That there is a start as I—the Boots at the Holly-Tree Inn—have seen with my own eyes; and I cleaned the shoes they ran away in, and they was so little that I couldn't get my hand into 'em.

"Master Harry Walmers's father, he lived at the Elms, away by Shooter's Hill, six or seven miles from London.

He was uncommon proud of Master Harry, as was his only child; but he didn't spoil him neither. He was a gentleman that had a will of his own, and an eye of his own, and that would be minded. Consequently, though he made quite a companion of the fine bright boy, still he kept the command over him, and the child *was* a child. I was under gardener there at that time; and one morning Master Harry, he comes to me and says—

"'Cobbs, how should you spell Norah, if you were asked?' and he took out his little knife and began cutting that name in print all over the fence. The next day as it might be, he stops, along with Miss Norah, where I was hoeing weeds in the gravel, and says, speaking up—

"'Cobbs, I like you! Why do I like you do you think, Cobbs? Because Norah likes you.'

"'Indeed, sir,' says I. 'That's very gratifying.'

"'Gratifying, Cobbs?' says Master Harry. 'It's better than a million of the brightest diamonds, to be liked by Norah. You're going away, ain't you, Cobbs? Then you shall be our head gardener when we're married.' And he tucks her, in her little sky-blue mantle, under his arm, and walks away.

"I was the boots at this identical Holly-Tree Inn when one summer afternoon the coach drives up, and out of the coach gets these two children. The young gentleman gets out; hands his lady out; gives the guard something for himself; says to my governor, the landlord: 'We're to stop here to-night, please. Sitting-room and two bed-rooms will be required. Mutton chops and cherry pudding for two!' and tucks her under his arm, and walks into the house, much bolder than brass.

"I had seen 'em without their seeing me, and I give the governor my views of the expedition they was upon. 'Cobbs,' says the governor, 'if this is so, I must set off myself

and quiet their friends' minds. In which case you must keep your eye upon 'em, and humour 'em, until I come back. But before I take these measures, Cobbs, I should wish you to find out from themselves whether your opinion is correct.'

"So I goes upstairs, and there I finds Master Harry on an e-normous sofa a-drying the eyes of Miss Norah with his pocket handkercher. Their little legs was entirely off the ground, of course, and it really is not possible to express how small them children looked. 'It 's Cobbs! it 's Cobbs!' cries Master Harry, and he comes a-running to me, and catching hold of my hand. Miss Norah, she comes running to me on t'other side, and catching hold of my t'other hand, and they both jump for joy. And what I had took to be the case was the case.

"'We're going to be married, Cobbs, at Gretna Green,' says the boy. 'We've run away on purpose. Norah has been in rather low spirits, Cobbs; but she'll be happy now we have found you to be our friend.'

"I give you my word and honour upon it that, by way of luggage the lady had got a parasol, a smelling-bottle, a round and a half of cold buttered toast, eight peppermint drops, and a doll's hair-brush. The gentleman had got about a dozen yards of string, a knife, three or four sheets of writing-paper folded up surprisingly small, a orange, and a chaney mug with his name on it.

"'What may be the exact nature of your plans, sir?' says I.

"'To go on,' replies the boy, 'in the morning, and be married to-morrow.'

AT THE HOLLY-TREE INN

"'Just so, sir. Well, sir, if you will excuse my having the freedom to give an opinion, what I should recommend would be this. I'm acquainted with a pony, sir, which would take you and Mrs Harry Walmers junior to the end of your journey in a very short space of time. I am not altogether sure, sir, that the pony will be at liberty to-morrow, but even if you had to wait for him it might be worth your while.'

"They clapped their hands and jumped for joy, and called me 'Good Cobbs!' and 'Dear Cobbs!' and says I, 'Is there anything you want at present, sir?'

"'We should like some cakes after dinner,' answers Mr Harry, 'and two apples—and jam. With dinner we should like to have toast and water. But Norah has always been accustomed to half a glass of currant wine at dessert, and so have I.'

"'They shall be ordered, sir,' I answered, and away I went; and the way in which all the women in the house went on about that boy and his bold spirit was a thing to see. They climbed up all sorts of places to get a look at him, and they peeped, seven deep, through the keyhole.

"In the evening, after the governor had set off for the Elms, I went into the room to see how the run-away couple was getting on. The gentleman was on the window seat, supporting the lady in his arms. She had tears upon her face, and was lying very tired and half asleep, with her head upon his shoulder.

"'Mrs Harry Walmers junior fatigued, sir?'

"'Yes, she's tired, Cobbs; she's been in low spirits again; she isn't

used to being in a strange place, you see. Could you bring a Norfolk biffin, Cobbs? I think that would do her good.'

"Well, I fetched the biffin, and Master Harry fed her with a spoon; but the lady being heavy with sleep and rather cross, I suggested bed, and called a chambermaid, but Master Harry must needs escort her himself, and carry the candle for her. After embracing her at her own door he retired to his room, where I softly locked him in.

"They consulted me at breakfast (they had ordered sweet milk and water, and toast and currant jelly, over night) about the pony, and I told 'em that it did unfortunately happen that the pony was half clipped, but that he'd be finished clipping in the course of the day, and that to-morrow morning at eight o'clock he would be ready. My own opinion is that Mrs Harry Walmers junior was beginning to give in. She hadn't had her hair curled when she went to bed, and she didn't seem quite up to brushing it herself, and its getting into her eyes put her out. But nothing put out Mr Harry. He sat behind his breakfast cup tearing away at the jelly, as if he'd been his own father.

"In the course of the morning, Master Harry rung the bell,—it was surprising how that there boy did carry on,—and said in a sprightly way, 'Cobbs, is there any good walks in the neighbourhood?'

"'Yes, sir, there's Love Lane.'

"'Get out with you, Cobbs!'—that was that there mite's expression—'you're joking.'

"'Begging your pardon, sir, there really is a Love Lane, and a

pleasant walk it is; and proud shall I be to show it to yourself and Mrs Harry Walmers junior.'

"Well, I took him down Love Lane to the water meadows, and there Master Harry would have drowned himself in another minute a-getting out a water lily for her. But they was tired out. All being so new and strange to them, they were as tired as tired could be. And they laid down on a bank of daisies and fell asleep.

"They woke up at last, and then one thing was getting pretty clear to me, namely, that Mrs Harry Walmers junior's temper was on the move. When Master Harry took her round the waist, she said he 'teased her so'; and when he says, 'Norah, my young May moon, your Harry tease you?' she tells him, 'Yes, and I want to go home.'

"A boiled fowl, and baked bread, and butter pudding brought Mrs Walmers up a little; but I could have wished, I must privately own, to have seen her more sensible to the voice of love and less abandoning herself to the currants in the pudding. However, Master Harry, he kep' up, and his noble heart was as fond as ever. Mrs Walmers turned very sleepy about dusk, and began to cry. Therefore, Mrs Walmers went off to bed as per yesterday; and Master Harry ditto repeated.

"About eleven at night comes back the governor in a chaise, along of Master Harry's father and a elderly lady. And Master Harry's door being unlocked by me, Master Harry's father goes in, goes up to the bedside, bends gently down, and kisses the little sleeping face. Then he stands looking at it for a moment, looking wonderfully like it; and then he gently shakes the little shoulder. 'Harry, my dear boy! Harry!'

"Master Harry starts up and looks at his pa. Such is the honour of that mite, that he looks at me, too, to see whether he has brought me into trouble.

"'I am not angry, my child. I only want you to dress yourself and come home.'

"'Yes, Pa.' Master Harry dresses himself quick.

"'Please may I—please, dear pa—may I—kiss Norah before I go?'

"Master Harry's father he takes Master Harry in his hand, and I leads the way with the candle to that other bedroom where the elderly lady is seated by the bed, and poor little Mrs Harry Walmers junior is fast asleep. There the father lifts the boy up to the pillow, and he lays his little face down for an instant by the little warm face of poor little Mrs Harry Walmers junior, and gently draws it to him.

"And that's all about it. Master Harry's father drove away in the chaise having hold of Master Harry's hand. The elderly lady and Mrs Harry Walmers junior that was never to be (she married a captain long after and went to India) went off next day."

Poor Jo!

JO was a crossing-sweeper; his crossing was in Holborn, and there every day he swept up the mud, and begged for pennies from the people who passed. Poor Jo wasn't at all pleasant to look at. He wasn't pretty and he wasn't clean. His clothes were only a few poor rags that hardly protected him from the cold and the rain. He had never been to school, and he could neither write nor read—could not even spell his own name. He had only one name, Jo, and that served him for Christian and surname too.

Poor Jo! He was ugly and dirty and ignorant; but he knew one thing, that it was wicked to tell a lie, and knowing this, he always told the truth. One other thing poor Jo knew too well, and that was what being hungry means. For little Jo was very poor. He lived in Tom-all-Alones, one of the most horrible places in all London. The road here is thick with mud. The crazy houses are dropping away; two of them, Jo remembered, once fell to pieces. The air one breathes here is full of fever. The people who live in this dreadful den are the poorest of London poor. All miserably clad, all dirty, all very hungry. They know and like Jo, for he is always willing to go on errands for them, and does them many little acts of kindness. Not that they speak of him as Jo.

Oh, dear no! No one in Tom-all-Alones is spoken of by his name,

whether it be his surname, or that which his godfathers and godmothers —always supposing that he had any—gave him. The ladies and gentlemen who live in this unfashionable neighbourhood have their fashions just as much as the great folks who live in the grand mansions in the West End. Here one of the prevailing customs is to give every one a nickname. Thus it is that if you inquired there for a boy named Jo, you would be asked whether you meant Carrots, or the Colonel, or Gallows, or young Chisel, or Terrier Tip, or Lanky, or the Brick.

Jo was generally called Toughy, although a few superior persons who gave themselves airs and graces, and affected a dignified style of speaking, called him "the tough subject."

Jo used to say he had never had but one friend.

It was one cold winter night, when he was shivering in a door-way near his crossing, that a dark-haired, rough-bearded man turned to look at him, and then came back and began to talk to him.

"Have you a friend, boy?" he asked presently.

"No, never 'ad none."

"Neither have I. Not one. Take this, and Good-night," and so saying, the man who looked very poor and shabby put into Jo's hand the price of a supper and a night's lodging.

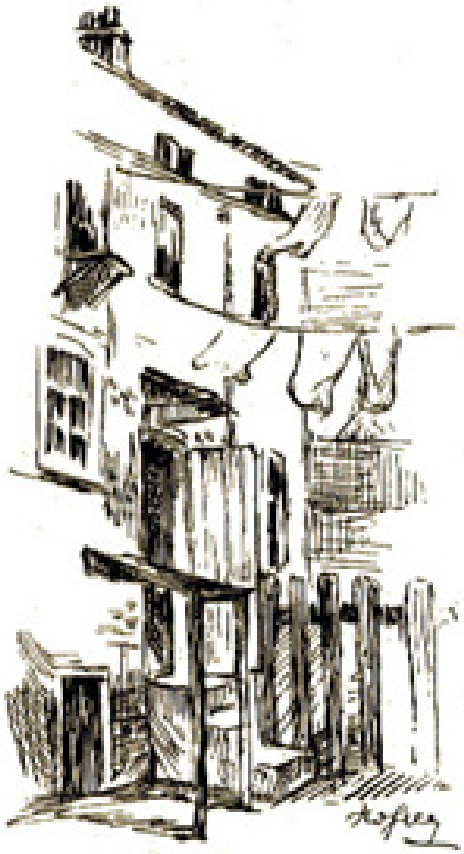
Often afterwards the stranger would stop to talk with Jo, and give him money, Jo firmly believed, whenever he had any to give. When he had none, he would merely say, "I am as poor as you are to-day, Jo," and pass on.

One day, Jo was fetched away from his crossing by the beadle, and taken by him to the Sol's Arms, a public-house in a little court near Chancery Lane, where the Coroner was holding an Inquest — an "Inkwich" Jo called it.

"Did the boy know the deceased?" asked the Coroner.

Indeed Jo had known him; it was his only friend who was dead. "He was very good to me, he was," was all poor Jo could say.

The next day they buried the dead man in the churchyard hard by; a churchyard hemmed in by houses on either side, and separated



by an iron gate from the wretched court through which one goes to it.

But that night there came a slouching figure through the court to the iron gate. It held the gate with both hands and looked between the bars—stood looking in for a little while, then with an old broom it softly swept the step and made the archway clean. It was poor Jo; and as, after one more long look through the bars of the gate, he went away, he softly said to himself, "He was very good to me, he was."

Now, there happened to be at the Inquest a kind-hearted little man named Snagsby, who was a stationer by trade, and he pitied Jo so much that he gave him half-a-crown. Half-a-crown was Mr Snagsby's one remedy for all the troubles of this world.

Jo was very sad after the death of his one friend. The more so as his friend had died in great poverty and misery, with no one near him to care whether he lived or not.

It was a few days after the funeral, while Jo was still living on Mr Snagsby's half-crown—half a bill Jo called it—that a much bigger slice of good luck fell to his share. He was standing at his crossing as the day closed in, when a lady, closely veiled and plainly dressed, came up to him.

"Are you the boy Jo who was examined at the Inquest?" she asked.

"That's me," said Jo.

"Come farther up the court, I want to speak to you."

"Wot, about him as was dead? Did you know him?"

"How dare you ask me if I knew him?"

"No offence, my lady," said Jo humbly.

"Listen and hold your tongue. Show me the place where he lived, then where he died, then where they buried him. Go in front of me, don't look back once, and I'll pay you well."

"I'm fly," said Jo. "But no larks, yer know. Stow hooking it."

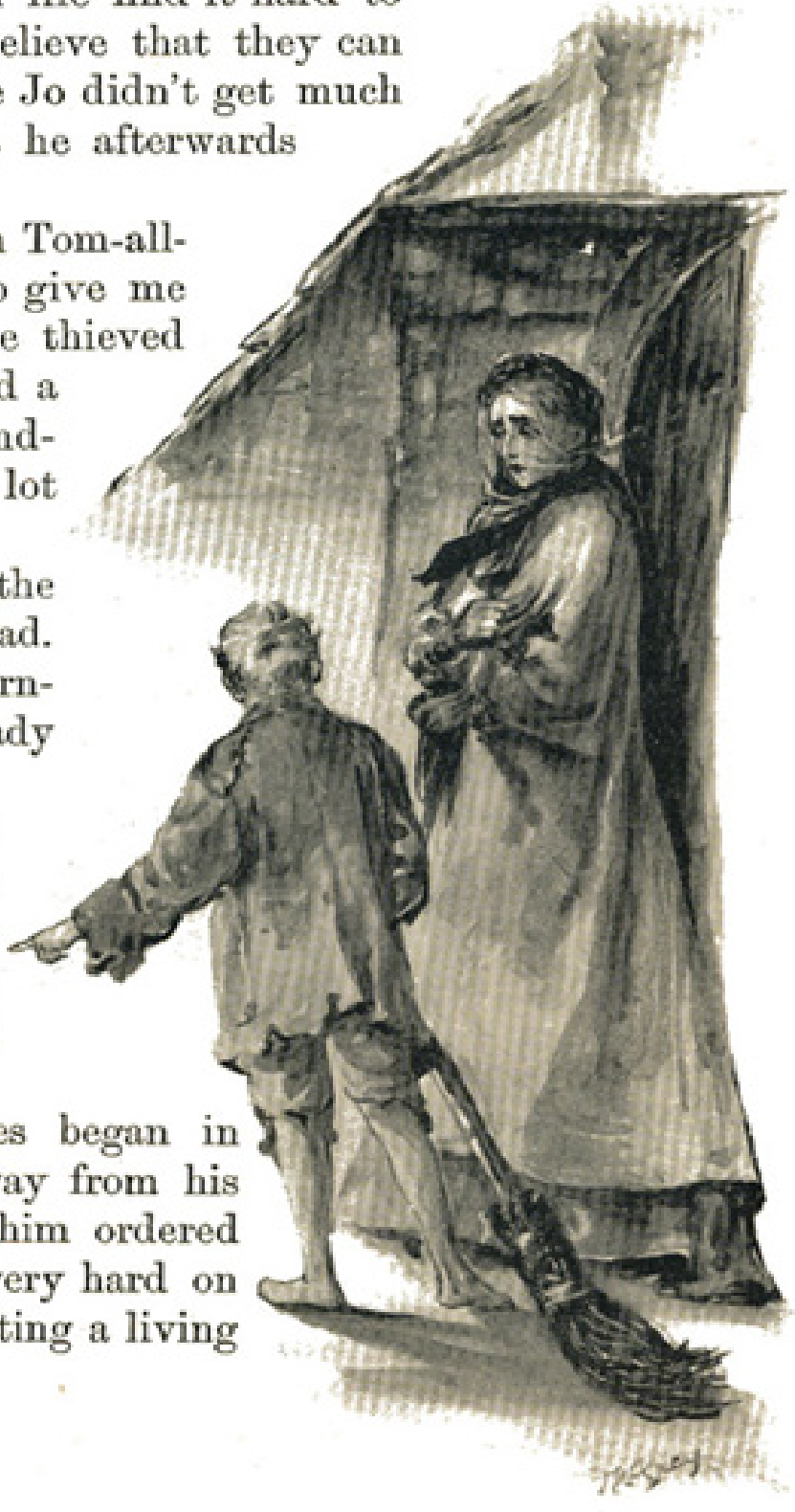
Jo takes her to each of the places she wants to see, and he notices

"I'm always a moving on"

that when he shows her the burying-place she shrinks into a dark corner as if to hide herself while she looks at the spot where the dead man's body rests. Then she draws off her glove, and Jo sees that she has sparkling rings on her fingers. She drops a coin into his hand and is gone. Jo holds the coin to the light and sees to his joy that it is a golden sovereign. He bites it to make sure that it is genuine, and being satisfied that it has successfully stood the test, he puts it under his tongue for safety, and goes off to Tom-all-Alones.

But people in Jo's position in life find it hard to change a sovereign, for who will believe that they can come by it honestly? So poor little Jo didn't get much of the sovereign for himself, for, as he afterwards told Mr Snagsby—

"I had to pay five bob down in Tom-all-Alones before they'd square it for to give me change, and then a young man he thieved another five while I was asleep, and a boy he thieved ninepence, and the landlord he stood drains round with a lot more of it."



And so Jo was left alone in the world again, now his friend was dead. And this poor friend had only two mourners, Jo the crossing-sweeper, and the lady who had come to look at his grave.

Jo mourned for him because he had been his only friend, and the lady mourned for the poor man because she had loved him dearly many years ago when they had both been young together.

As time went on Jo's troubles began in earnest. The police turned him away from his crossing, and wheresoever they met him ordered him "to move on." It was hard, very hard on poor Jo; for he knew no way of getting a living

except at his crossing. So he would go back to it as often as he dared, until the police turned him away again. Once a policeman, angry to find that Jo hadn't moved on, seized him by the arm and dragged him down to Mr Snagsby's.

"What's the matter, constable," asked Mr Snagsby.

"This boy's as obstinate a young gonoph as I know: although repeatedly told to, he won't move on."

"I'm always amoving on," cried Jo. "Oh, my eye, where am I to move to?"

"My instructions don't go to that," the constable answered; "my instructions are that you're to keep moving on. Now the simple question is, sir," turning to Mr Snagsby, "whether you know him. He says you do."

"Yes, I know him."

"Very well, I leave him here; but mind you keep moving on."

The constable then moved on himself, leaving Jo at Mr Snagsby's. There was a little tea-party there that evening, and one of the guests, a very greasy, oily looking man, whom they called Mr Chadband, and who was a dissenting minister, having by this time eaten and drunk a great deal more than was good for him, determined to improve the occasion by delivering a discourse on Jo. It was very long and very dull to Jo: all he could remember of the sermon was this couplet—

"O running stream of sparkling joy,
To be a soaring human boy."

What he remembered better was, when the perspiring Chadband had finished, and he was at last

allowed to go, Mr Snagsby followed him to the door and filled his hands with the remains of the little feast they had had upstairs.

And now Jo began to find life harder and rougher than ever. He lost his crossing altogether, and spent day after day in moving on. He grew hungrier and thinner, and at last the foul air of Tom-all-Alones began to have an ill-effect even on him—"the tough subject." His throat grew very dry, his cheeks were burning hot, and his poor little head ached till the pain made him cry. Then he remembered a poor woman he had once done a kindness to, a brickmaker's wife, who had told him she lived at St Albans, and that a lady there had been very good to her. "Perhaps she'll be good to me," thought Jo, and he started off to go to St Albans.

So it came about that one Saturday night, Jo reached that town very tired and very ill. Happily for him the brickmaker's wife met him and took him into her cottage. While he was resting there a lady came in.

The lady sat down by the bed, and asked him very kindly what was the matter.

"I'm abeing froze and then burnt up, and then froze and burnt up again, ever so many times over in an hour. And my head's all sleepy, and all agoing round like, and I'm so dry, and my bones is nothing half so much bones as pain."

"Where are you going?"

"Somewheres," replied Jo, "I'm a-being moved on, I am."

"Well, to-night you must come with me, and I'll make you comfortable." So Jo went with the lady to a great house not far off, and there in a nice warm loft they made a bed for him, and brought him tempting wholesome food. Everyone was very kind to him, even the servants called him "Old Chap," and told him he would soon be well. Jo

was really happy, and for a time forgot his pain and fever. But something frightened Jo, and he felt he could not stay there, and he ran out into the cold night air. Where he went he could never remember, for when he next came to his senses he found himself in an hospital. He stayed there for some weeks, and was then discharged, though still weak and ill. He was very thin, and when he drew a breath his chest was very painful. "It draws," said Jo, "as heavy as a cart."

Now, a certain young doctor who was very kind to poor people, was walking through Tom-all-Alones one morning, when he saw a ragged figure coming along, crouching close to the dirty wall. The figure shrank along with its shapeless clothes hanging to it. It was Jo. The young doctor took pity on Jo. "Come with me," he said, "and I will find you a better place than this to stay in," for he saw that the lad was very, very ill. So Jo was taken to a clean little room, and bathed, and had clean clothes, and good food, and kind people about him once more, but he was too ill now, far too ill, for anything to do him any good.

"Let me lie here quiet," said poor Jo, "and be so kind anyone as is passin' nigh where I used to sweep, as to say to Mr Snagsby as Jo, wot he knew once, is amoving on."

One day the young doctor was sitting by him, when suddenly Jo made a strong effort to get out of bed.

'Stay Jo—where now?"

"It 's time for me to go to that there burying-ground,"

"What burying-ground, Jo?"

"Where they laid him as was very good to me, very good to me indeed he was. It 's time for me to go down to that there burying-ground, sir, and ask to be put along of him. I wants to go there and be buried. He used for to say to me, 'I am as poor to-day as you, Jo,' he says. I

"Thankee, sir. There 's a step there as I used to sweep with my broom. It 's turned very dark, sir, is there any light coming?"

"It 's coming fast, Jo."

Then silence for a while.

"Jo, my poor fellow——!"

"I can hear you, sir, in the dark."

"Jo, can you say what I say?"

"I 'll say anythink you say, sir, for I knows it 's good."

"Our Father."

"Our Father—yes, that 's very good, sir."

"Which art in Heaven."

"Art in Heaven. Is the light a-coming, sir?"

"It 's close at hand. Hallowed be Thy name."

"Hallowed be Thy"—

The light had come. Oh yes! the light had come, for Jo was dead.

THE LITTLE KENWIGS

WHAT an odd-looking family! What are they all in such distress about?

This is Mrs Kenwigs, and those funny little girls are her daughters; and we shall see presently what is the cause of their grief.

Mrs Kenwigs was the wife of an ivory turner, and though they only had a very humble home of two rooms in a dingy-looking house in a small street, they had great pretensions to being "genteel," and Mrs Kenwigs was the admiration of all the neighbours. The little Miss Kenwigs had their flaxen hair plaited into pig-tails and tied with blue ribbons, and wore little white trousers with frills round their ankles, the highest fashion of that day: besides being dressed with such elegance, the two eldest girls went twice a week to a dancing school. Mrs Kenwigs, too, had an uncle who collected the water rate, and she was therefore considered a person of great distinction, with quite the manners of a lady. Now, it happened that on the eighth anniversary of their wedding-day, that Mr and Mrs Kenwigs decided to invite a party of friends to supper to celebrate the occasion. The four eldest children were to be allowed to sit up

to supper, and the uncle, Mr Lillyvick, the collector, had promised to come. The baby was put to bed in a little room lent by one of the lady guests, and a little girl hired to watch him, and Mrs Kenwigs, in a beautiful new gown, received her visitors in great state. All the company had assembled when a ring was heard, and Morleena, whose name had been *invented by Mrs Kenwigs* specially for her, ran down to open the door and lead in her distinguished great-uncle, then the supper was brought in and the party commenced.

The supper consisted of a pair of boiled fowls, a large piece of pork, potatoes and greens, and an apple-pie, which they all enjoyed amazingly.

Everybody had eaten everything, the table was cleared, Mr Lillyvick established in the arm-chair by the fireside, the four little girls arranged on a small form in front of the company with their flaxen tails towards them, when Mrs Kenwigs was suddenly dissolved in tears and sobbed out—

"They are so beautiful!"

"Oh dear," said all the ladies, "so they are; it's very natural you should feel proud of that; but don't give way, don't."

"I can—not help it, and it don't signify," sobbed Mrs Kenwigs; "oh! they're too beautiful to live, much too beautiful."

On hearing this dismal prophecy, all four little girls screamed until their light flaxen tails vibrated again, and rushed to bury their heads in their mother's lap, and she clasped them in her arms, as you see in the picture!

At length she was soothed, and the children calmed down; while the ladies and gentlemen all said they were sure they would live for many many years, and there was no occasion for their mother's distress: and as the children were not so remarkably lovely, this was quite true.

Janet Brundage

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The Kenwigs Family

Then Mr Lillyvick talked to the company about his niece's marriage, and said graciously that he had always found Mr Kenwigs a very honest, well-behaved, upright, and respectable sort of man, and shook hands with him, and then Morleena and her sisters kissed their uncle and most of the guests.

Then Miss Petowker, who was the daughter of a theatrical fireman, who went on in the pantomime, and who could sing and recite in a way that brought tears to Mrs Kenwigs' eyes, remarked—

"Oh, dear Mrs Kenwigs, while Mr Noggs is making that punch to drink happy returns in, do let Morleena go through that figure dance before Mr Lillyvick."

"No, no, my dear," replied Mrs Kenwigs, "it will only worry my uncle."

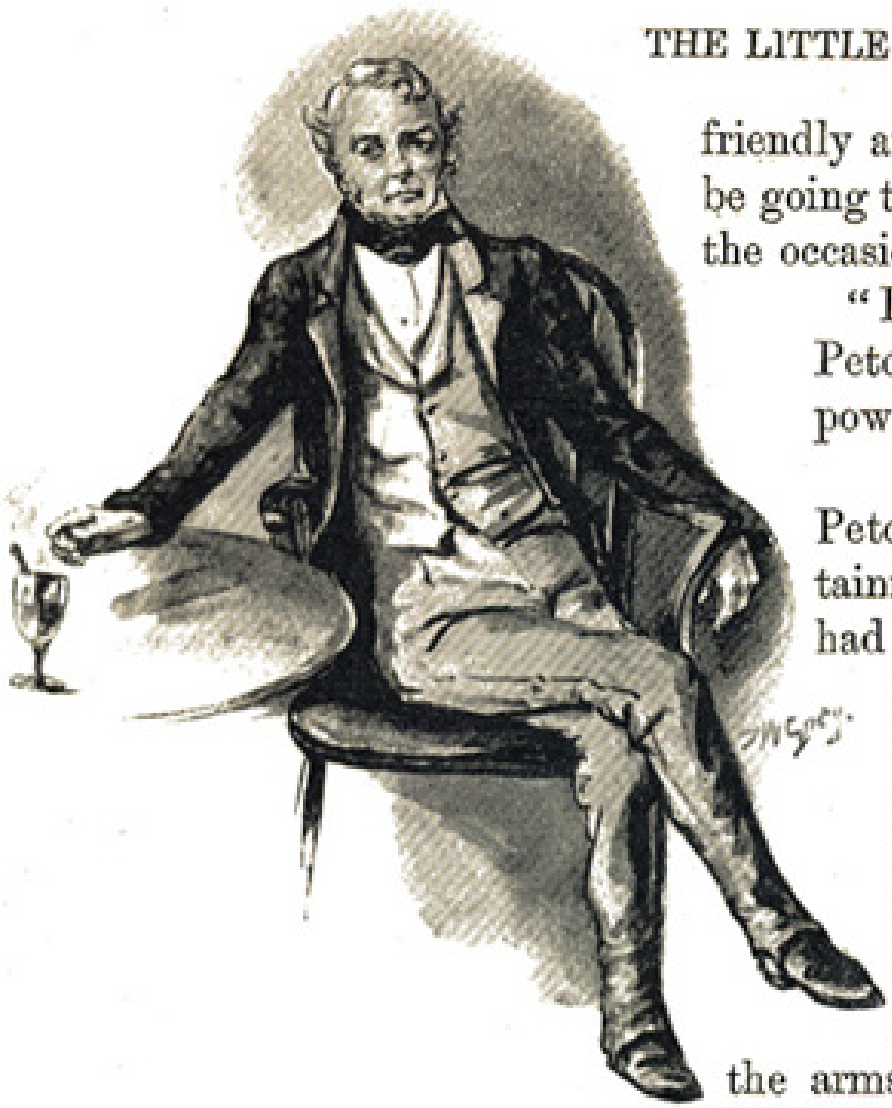
"It can't worry him, I'm sure," said Miss Petowker. "You will be very much pleased, won't you, sir?"

"That I am sure I shall," replied the collector, glancing at the punch mixer.

"Well, then, I'll tell you what," said Mrs Kenwigs. "Morleena shall do the steps, if uncle can persuade Miss Petowker to recite us the 'Blood-Drinker's Burial' afterwards."

Everyone clapped their hands and stamped their feet at this proposal, but Miss Petowker said, "You know I dislike doing anything professional at private parties."

"Oh, but not here!" said Mrs Kenwigs. "We are all so very



friendly and pleasant, that you might as well be going through it in your own room: besides, the occasion."

"I can't resist that," interrupted Miss Petowker, "anything in my humble power, I shall be delighted to do."

In reality Mrs Kenwigs and Miss Petowker had arranged all the entertainment between them beforehand, but had settled that a little pressing on each side would look more natural. Then Miss Petowker hummed a tune, and Morleena danced, the soles of her shoes being as carefully chalked as if she were going on the tight rope. It was a very beautiful figure, with a great deal of work for the arms, and gained much applause; and Miss Petowker observed that if she had such a child as that, she would have her out at the opera instantly. Then Miss Petowker was entreated to begin her recitation, so she let down her back hair, and went through the performance with great spirit, and died raving mad in the arms of a bachelor friend who was to rush out and catch her at the words "in death expire," to the great delight of the audience and the terror of the little Kenwigses, who were nearly frightened into fits.

Mr Noggs was just going to say that the punch was ready, when a knock at the door startled them all. Mrs Kenwigs shrieked, thinking the baby had fallen out of bed.

But it was only a friend of Mr Noggs, who lived upstairs, and who had come down to say that Mr Noggs was wanted by two queer-looking people all covered with mud and rain.

Mr Noggs hurried out saying he would be back soon, and presently startled them all by rushing in, snatching up a candle and a tumbler of hot punch, and darting out again.

Now, it happened unfortunately that the tumbler of punch was the very one that Mr Lillyvick was just going to lift to his lips, and the great

man—the rich relation—who had it in his power to make Morleena and her sisters heiresses—and whom everyone was most anxious to please—was offended.

Poor Mr Kenwigs endeavoured to soothe him, but only made matters worse by saying he didn't think such a little thing would have put him out of temper; Mr Lillyvick demanded his hat, and was only induced to remain by Mrs Kenwigs' tears and sobs, and the entreaties of all the little girls and the company, combined with those of his nephew-in-law.

"There, Kenwigs," said Mr Lillyvick, "and let me tell you, to show you how much out of temper I was, that if I had gone away without another word, it would have made no difference respecting that pound or two which I shall leave among your children when I die."

"Morleena Kenwigs," cried her mother, "go down on your knees to your dear uncle, and beg him to love you all his life through; for he's more an angel than a man, and I've always said so."

Just as all were happy again, everyone was startled by a rapid succession of the loudest and shrillest shrieks, apparently coming from the room where the baby was asleep. Mrs Kenwigs immediately thought that a strange cat must have got in and sucked the baby's breath while the girl was asleep, and made for the door, screaming dismally—

"My baby, my blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed baby! My own darling, sweet, innocent Lillyvick! Let me go-o-o-o."

Mr Kenwigs rushed out, and was met at the door of the bedroom by a young man with the baby (upside down) in his arms, who came out so quickly that he knocked Mr Kenwigs down; handing the child to his mother, he said, "Don't be alarmed, it's all out, it's all over—the

little girl, being tired, I suppose, fell asleep and set her hair on fire. I heard her cries and ran up in time to prevent her setting fire to anything else. The child is not hurt: I took it off the bed myself and brought it here to convince you."

All were very grateful to the young man, and invited him to join the party, but he excused himself, saying he had just had a very tiring journey, and wished to return to his friend Mr Noggs.

After they had all talked over this last excitement, and discussed little Lillyvick's deliverer, the collector pulled out his watch and announced that it was nearly two o'clock, and as the poor children had been for some time obliged to keep their little eyes open with their little forefingers, the company took leave, declaring they had never spent such a delightful evening, and that they wished Mr and Mrs Kenwigs had a wedding-day once a week, and many more remarks of the same kind; while Mr and Mrs Kenwigs, highly delighted with the success of their party, thanked them all for coming, and hoped they had enjoyed themselves only half as much as they said they had.

LITTLE DORRIT

MANY years ago, when people could be put in prison for debt, a poor gentleman, who was unfortunate enough to lose all his money, was brought to the Marshalsea prison. As there seemed no prospect of being able to pay his debts, his wife and their two little children came to live there with him. The elder child was a boy of three; the younger a little girl of two years old, and not long afterwards another little girl was born. The three children played in the courtyard, and were happy on the whole, for they were too young to remember a happier state of things.

But the youngest child, who had never been outside the prison walls, was a thoughtful little creature, and wondered what the outside world could be like. Her great friend, the turnkey, who was also her godfather, became very fond of her, and as soon as she could walk and talk, he bought a little arm-chair and stood it by his fire at the lodge, and coaxed her with cheap toys to come and sit with him. In return the child loved him dearly, and would often bring her doll to dress and undress as she sat in the little arm-chair. She was still a very tiny creature when she began to understand that everyone did not live locked up inside high walls with spikes at the top, and though she and the rest of the family might pass through the door that the great key opened, her father could not; and she would look at him with a wondering pity in her tender little heart.

One day, she was sitting in the lodge gazing wistfully up at the sky through the barred window. The turnkey, after watching her some time, said:—

"Thinking of the fields, ain't you?"

"Where are they?" she asked.

"Why, they're—over there, my dear," said the turnkey, waving his key vaguely; "just about there."

"Does anybody open them and shut them? Are they locked?"

"Well," said the turnkey, discomfited, "not in general."

"Are they pretty, Bob?" She called him Bob, because he wished it.

"Lovely. Full of flowers. There's buttercups and there's daisies, and there's—" here he hesitated, not knowing the names of many flowers —"there's dandelions, and all manner of games."

"Is it very pleasant to be there, Bob?"

"Prime," said the turnkey.

"Was father ever there?"

"Hem!" coughed the turnkey. "O yes, he was there, sometimes."

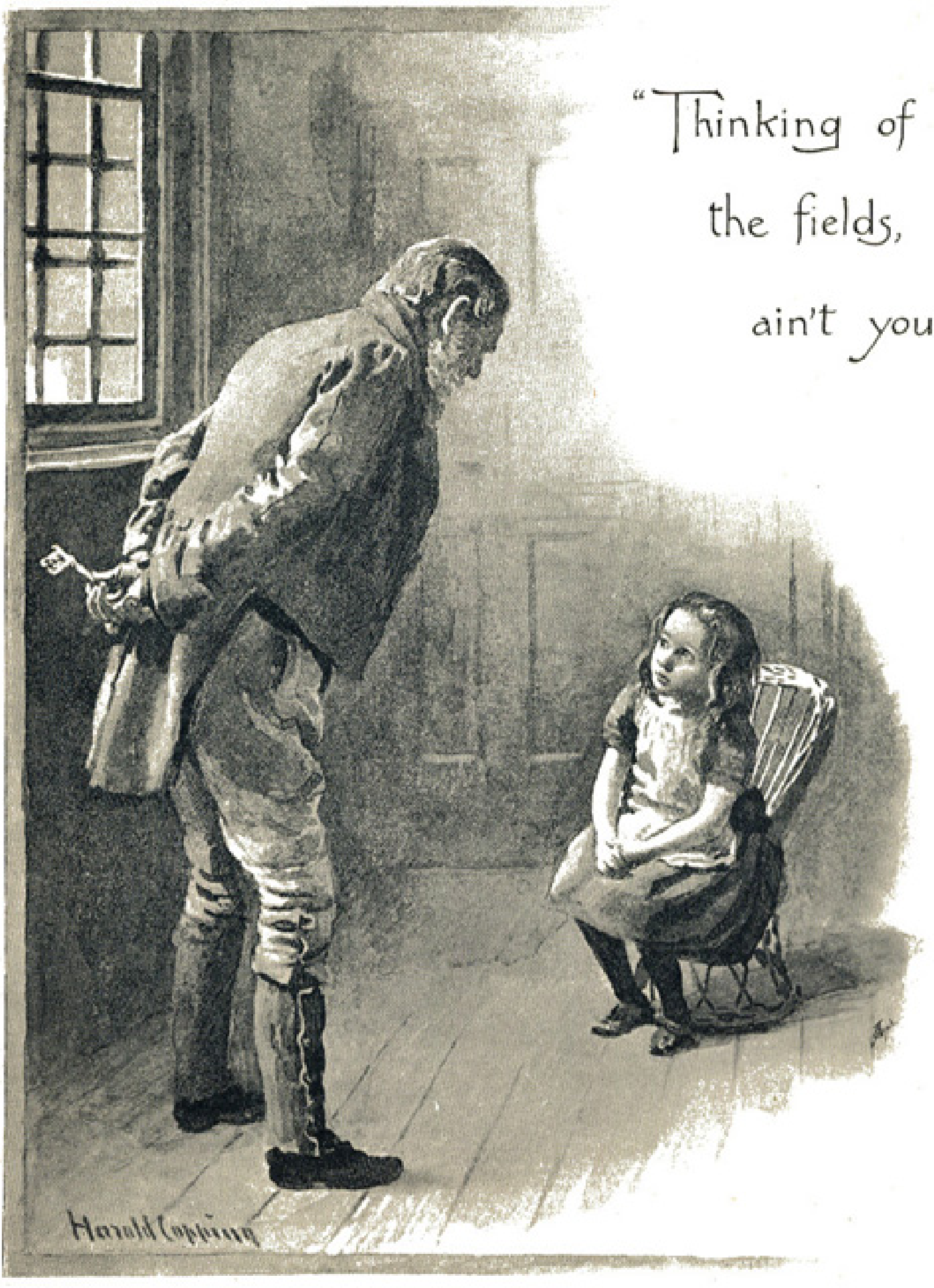
"Is he sorry not to be there now?"

"N—not particular," said the turnkey.

"Nor any of the people?" she asked, glancing at the listless crowd within. "O are you quite sure and certain, Bob?"

At this point, Bob gave in and changed the subject to hardbake. But after this chat, the turnkey and little Amy would go out on his free Sunday afternoons to some meadows or green lanes, and she would pick grass and flowers to bring home, while he smoked his pipe; and then they would go to some tea-gardens for shrimps and ale and other delicacies, and would come back hand in hand, unless she was very tired and had fallen asleep on his shoulder.

When Amy was only eight years old, her mother died, and the poor father was more helpless and broken-down than ever, and as Fanny was a careless child, and Edward idle, the little one, who had the bravest and truest heart, was inspired by her love and unselfishness to be the little mother of the forlorn family, and struggled to get some little education for herself and her brother and sister. She went as often as she could to an evening-school outside, and managed to get her brother and sister sent to a day-school at intervals, during three or four years. At thirteen, she could read and keep accounts. Once, amongst the debtors, a dancing-master came in, and as Fanny had a great desire to learn dancing, little Amy went timidly to the new prisoner, with a bag in her hand, and said,


"Thinking of
the fields,
ain't you?"
Harold Copping

"If you please, I was born here, sir."

"Oh! You are the young lady, are you?" said he, looking at the little figure.

"Yes, sir."

"And what can I do for you?"

"Nothing for me, sir, thank you," anxiously withdrawing the strings of the little bag; "but if, while you stay here, you could be so kind as to teach my sister cheap."

"My child, I'll teach her for nothing," said the dancing-master, shutting up the bag.

Fanny was a very apt pupil, and the good-natured dancing-master was so pleased with her progress that he went on giving her lessons after his release, which was not for ten weeks, and Amy was so emboldened with the success of her attempt, that when a milliner came in, she went to her on her own behalf, for she had a great desire to learn to do needle-work, and begged her to teach her.

"I am afraid you are so weak, you see," the milliner objected.

"I don't think I am weak, ma'am."

"And you are so very, very little, you see," the milliner still objected.

"Yes, I am afraid I am very little indeed," returned the child, and began to sob, so that the milliner was touched, and took her in hand with good will, and found her the most patient and earnest of pupils, and made her a clever workwoman.

But although the father was not too proud to accept "testimonials," in the shape of money and other presents, from the other debtors who pitied the poor gentleman who seemed doomed to pass his life there in that dismal abode, he could not bear the idea that his children should work for their living, so they had to keep it all secret. Fanny became a dancer, and lived with a poor old uncle, who played the clarionet at the small theatre where Fanny was engaged. Amy, or little Dorrit as she was generally called, her father's name being Dorrit, earned small sums by going out to do needlework. She was most anxious to get her brother away from the prison and the bad companions he met with there, and helped by her old friend Bob, she got him into a great many situations. But alas! he was an idle careless fellow, and always came

LITTLE DORRIT and MAGGIE

back to be a burden and care to his poor little sister. At last by dint of pinching and screwing, she saved up enough to send him out to Canada.

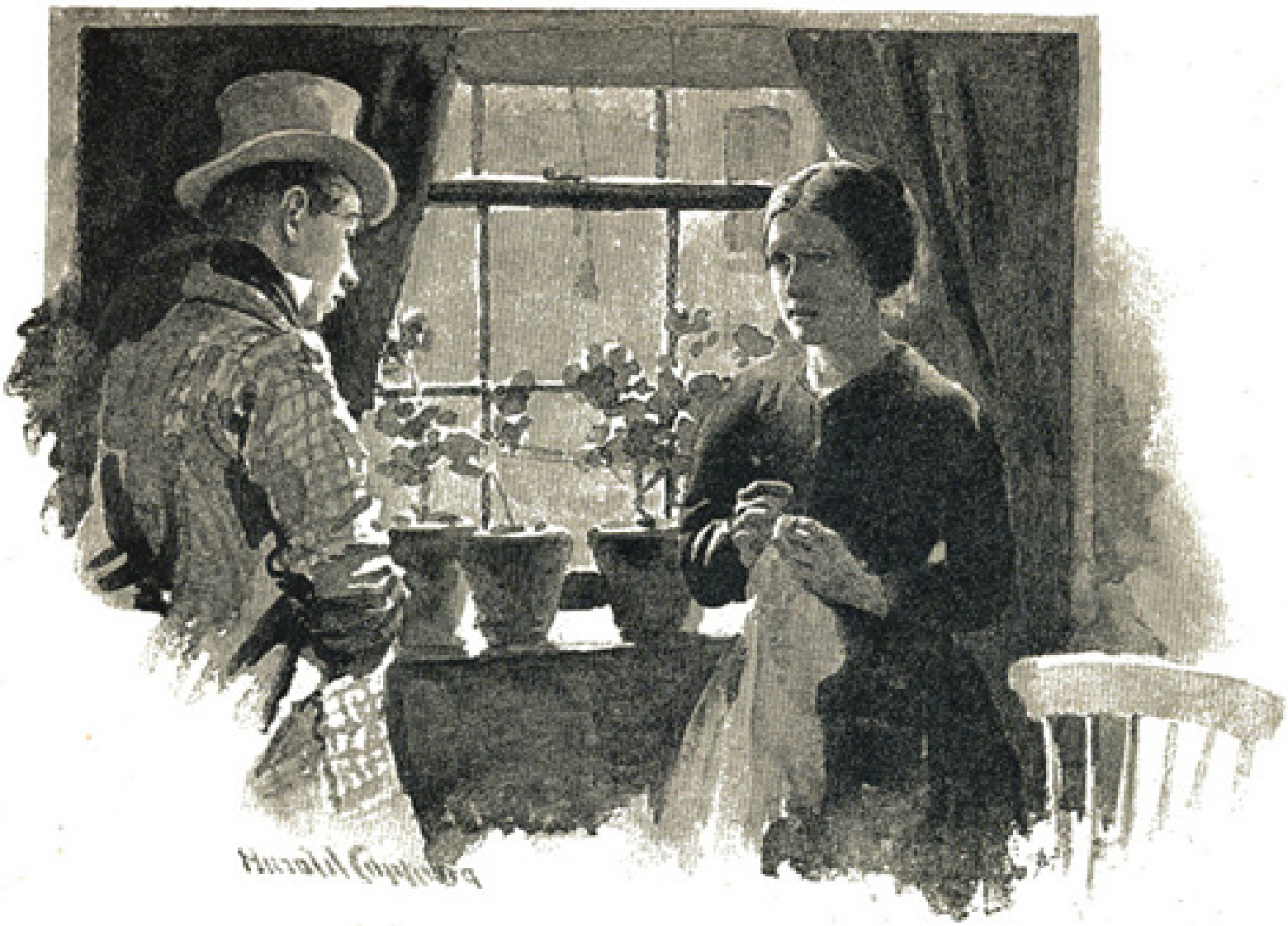
"God bless you, dear Tip" (he had been christened Edward, but it had gradually been shortened to Tip), "don't be too proud to come and see us when you have made your fortune," she said.

But Tip only went as far as Liverpool and walked back, being a month on the road, and appeared once more before his poor little second mother, in rags, and with no shoes.

In the end, after another trial, Tip returned telling Amy, that this time he had come back in a new way, as "one of the regulars."

"Oh! Don't say you are a prisoner, Tip. Don't, don't!"

But he was—and Amy nearly broke her heart. She implored him not to let her father know, as it would kill him, and as Fanny and uncle joined in her entreaties, he agreed. So with all these cares and worries, struggling bravely on, little Dorrit passed the first twenty-two years of her life. Then the son of a lady, Mrs Clennem, to whose house Amy went to do needlework, was interested in the pale, patient little creature, and learning her history resolved to do his best to try and get her father released, and to help them all.



One day when he was walking home with little Dorrit to try and find out the names of some of the people her father owed money to, a voice was heard calling, "little mother, little mother," and a strange figure came bouncing up to them and fell down, scattering her basketful of potatoes on the ground. "Oh Maggie," said little Dorrit, "what a clumsy child you are!"

She was about eight and twenty, with large bones, large features, large hands and feet, large eyes and no hair. Little Dorrit told Mr Clennem that Maggie was the grand-daughter of her old nurse, who had been dead a long time, and that her grandmother had been very unkind to her and beat her.

"When Maggie was ten years old, she had a fever, and she has never grown older since."

"Ten years old," said Maggie. "But what a nice hospital! So comfortable wasn't it? Such a Ev'nly place! Such beds there is there! Such lemonades! Such oranges! Such delicious broth and wine! Such Chicking! Oh, AIN'T it a delightful place to stop at!"

"Then when she came out, her grandmother did not know what to do with her, and was very unkind. But after some time, Maggie tried to improve, and was very attentive and industrious, and now she can earn her own living entirely, sir!"

Little Dorrit did not say who had taken pains to teach and encourage the poor half-witted creature, but Mr Clennem guessed from the name little mother, and the fondness of the poor creature for Amy.

One cold, wet evening, Little Dorrit and Maggie went to Mr Clennem's house to thank him for having freed Edward from the prison, and on coming out found it was too late to get home as the gate was locked. They tried to get in at Maggie's lodgings, but though they knocked twice, the people were asleep. As little Dorrit did not wish to disturb them, they wandered about all night; sometimes sitting at the gate of the prison, Maggie, shivering and whimpering.

"It will soon be over, dear," said patient Amy.

"Oh, it's all very well for you, mother," said Maggie, "but I'm a poor thing, only ten years old."

Thanks to Mr Clennem, a great change took place in the fortunes of the family, and not long after this wretched night, it was discovered that Mr Dorrit was owner of a large property, and they became very rich.

But little Dorrit never forgot, as, sad to say, the rest of the family did, the friends who had been kind to them in their poverty; and when, in his turn, Mr Clennem became a prisoner in the Marshalsea, little Dorrit came to comfort and console him, and after many changes of fortune, she became his wife, and they lived happy ever after.

The Blind Toy-Maker

CALEB PLUMMER and his blind daughter lived alone in a little cracked nutshell of a house. They were toy-makers, and their house, which was so small that it might have been knocked to pieces with a hammer, and carried away in a cart, was stuck like a toadstool on to the premises of Messrs Gruff & Tackleton, the Toy Merchants for whom they worked,—the latter of whom was himself both Gruff and Tackleton in one.

I am saying that Caleb and his blind daughter lived here. I should say Caleb did, his daughter lived in an enchanted palace, which her father's love had created for her. She did not know that the ceilings were cracked, the plaister tumbling down, and the wood work rotten; that everything was old and ugly and poverty-stricken about her, and that her father was a grey-haired stooping old man, and the master for whom they worked a hard and brutal taskmaster;—oh, dear no, she fancied a pretty, cosy, compact little home full of tokens of a kind master's care, a smart, brisk, gallant-looking father, and a handsome and noble-looking Toy Merchant who was an angel of goodness.

This was all Caleb's doing. When his blind daughter was a baby he had determined, in his great love and pity for her, that her deprivation should be turned into a blessing, and her life as happy as he could make it. And she was happy; everything about her she saw with her father's eyes, in the rainbow-coloured light with which it was his care and pleasure to invest it. A strange home it was, their living-room was their work-room also, on shelves around it were stored dolls' houses of all sizes and descriptions, dolls' furniture, and dolls themselves of all ranks of life, from the penny and plebeian Dutch to the aristocratic wax beauty. There was also a quantity of gay material, out of which

CALEB PLUMMER.

the blind girl manufactured dolls' garments. There were piles and rows of Noah's arks, carts and horses, fiddles, drums, and tumblers, and in the midst of it all Bertha sat busily at work, making a doll's frock, whilst Caleb bent over the opposite side of the table painting a doll's house.

"You were out in the rain last night in your beautiful new great-coat," said Bertha.

"Yes, in my beautiful new great-coat," answered Caleb, glancing to where a roughly made garment of sackcloth was hung up to dry.

"How glad I am you bought it, father."

"And of such a tailor! quite a fashionable tailor, a bright blue cloth, with bright buttons; it's a deal too good a coat for me."

"Too good!" cried the blind girl, stopping to laugh and clap her hands—"as if anything was too good for my handsome father, with his smiling face, and black hair, and his straight figure, as if *any* thing could be too good for my handsome father."

Ah, if poor Bertha could have seen him, with his wasted stooping form and worn face, bending wearily over his work in the squalid little room, I think the sight would have broken her heart.

Caleb began to sing a rollicking song about a sparkling bowl, which

made him appear more careworn and poverty-stricken still. "What, you are singing, are you?" growled a gruff voice, as Mr Tackleton put his head in at the door. "*I* can't afford to sing, I hope you can afford to work too. Hardly time for both, I should say."

"You don't see how the master is winking at me," whispered Caleb in his daughter's ear—"such a joke, pretending to scold, you know."

The blind girl laughed and nodded, and taking Mr Tackleton's reluctant hand, kissed it gently. "What is the idiot doing?" grumbled the Toy Merchant, pulling his hand roughly away.

"I am thanking you for the little tree, the beautiful little tree," replied Bertha, bringing forward a tiny rose-tree in blossom, which, by an innocent deception, Caleb had made her believe was her master's gift, though he himself, had gone without a meal or two to buy it.

"Here's Bedlam broke loose. What does the idiot mean?" snarled Mr Tackleton; and giving Caleb some rough orders, he departed without the politeness of a farewell.

"If you could only have seen him winking at me all the time, pretending to be so rough to escape thanking," exclaimed Caleb, when the door was shut.

"Always the same," murmured Bertha to herself, "always the same, refusing to be thanked for his thought-

ful and generous gifts, always merry and lighthearted in his desire to amuse me when he comes here."

Now a very sad and curious thing had happened. Caleb in his love for Bertha, had so successfully deceived her as to the real character of Mr Tackleton, making him out everything that was noble and good, and full of thought and care or her, that she had fallen in love, not with her master, but with what she imagined him to be, and was happy in an innocent belief in his affection for her ; but one day she accidentally heard he was going to be married, and could not hide from her father the pain and bewilderment she felt at the news.

"Great heaven!" exclaimed he, understanding the truth at once. "Have I deceived you, my poor Bertha, from your cradle, only to break your heart at last." Bertha said nothing, but a glimmer of the truth had come into her mind, and for some days afterwards, she went about sad and silent, while little by little the real state of affairs came home to her.

"Bertha, my dear," said Caleb at length, "I have a confession to make to you, there is something on my mind ; hear me kindly though I have been cruel to you." "You cruel to me!" cried Bertha, turning her sightless face towards him. "Not meaning it, my child! Oh, not meaning it! and I never suspected it till the other day. My poor one, my dear blind daughter, the eyes you trusted have been false to you. The world you live in does not exist as I have painted it ; I have concealed things from you which would have given you pain, I have invented things to please you, and have surrounded you with fancies." "But living people are not fancies, father, you cannot change them."

"I have done so, my child, God forgive me! I have done so! Bertha, the man who is married to-day, is in every way unlike what I have described him ; he is a hard master to us both, ugly in his looks and in his nature, and hard and heartless as he can be."

"Oh heavens! how blind I have been, how could you, father, and I so helpless!" Poor Caleb hung his head.

"Answer me, father," said Bertha. "What is my home like?"

"A poor place, Bertha, a very poor and bare place! indeed as little able to keep out wind and weather as my sackcloth coat."

"And the presents that I took such care of, that came at my wish, and were so dearly welcome?" Caleb did not answer.

Caleb Plummer and Bertha

"I see, I understand," said Bertha, "and now I am looking at you, at my kind, loving compassionate father, tell me what is he like?"

"An old man, my child, thin, bent, grey-haired, worn-out with hard work and sorrow, a weak, foolish, deceitful old man."

The blind girl threw herself on her knees before him, and took his grey head in her arms. "It is my sight, it is my sight restored," she cried. "I have been blind, but now I see, I have never till now truly seen my father. Does he think that there is a gallant, handsome father in this earth that I could love so dearly, cherish so devotedly, as this worn and grey-headed old man. Father, there is not a grey hair on your head that shall be forgotten in my prayers and thanks to Heaven."

"My Bertha!" sobbed Caleb, "and the brisk smart father in the blue coat—he's gone, my child."

"Dearest father, no, he's not gone, nothing is gone, everything I loved and believed in is here in this worn, old father of mine, and more—oh, so much more, too! I have been happy and contented, but I shall be happier and more contented still, now that I know what you are. I am *not* blind, father, any longer."

LITTLE NELL

THE house was one of those receptacles for old and curious things, which seem to crouch in odd corners of the town; and in the old, dark, murky rooms, there lived alone together an old man and a child—his grandchild, little Nell. Solitary and monotonous as was her life, the innocent and cheerful spirit of the child found happiness in all things, and through the dim rooms of the old curiosity shop little Nell went singing, moving with gay and lightsome step.

But gradually over the old man, to whom she was so tenderly attached, there stole a sad change. He became thoughtful, dejected, and wretched. He had no sleep or rest but that which he took by day in his easy chair; for every night, and all night long, he was away from home. To the child it seemed that her grandfather's love for her increased, even with the hidden grief by which she saw him struck down. And to see him sorrowful, and not to know the cause of his sorrow; to see him growing pale and weak under his agony of mind; so weighed upon her gentle spirit, that at times she felt as though her heart must break.

At last the time came when the old man's feeble frame could bear up no longer against his hidden care. A raging fever seized him, and as he lay delirious or insensible through many weeks, Nell learned that the

THE DEPARTURE OF LITTLE NELL AND HER GRANDFATHER.

house which sheltered them was theirs no longer; that in the future they would be very poor; that they would scarcely have bread to eat.

At length the old man began to mend, but his mind was weakened.

He would sit for hours together, with Nell's small hand in his, playing with the fingers, and sometimes stopping to smooth her hair or kiss her brow; and when he saw that tears were glistening in her eyes he would look amazed. As the time drew near when they must leave the house, he made no reference to the necessity of finding other shelter. An indistinct idea he had, that the child was desolate, and in need of help; though he seemed unable to contemplate their real position more distinctly. But a change came upon him one evening, as he and Nell sat silently together.

"Let us speak softly, Nell," he said. "Hush! for if they knew our purpose they would say that I was mad, and take thee from me. We will not stop here another day. We will travel afoot through the fields and woods, and trust ourselves to God in the places where He dwells. To-morrow morning, dear, we'll turn our faces from this scene of sorrow, and be as free and happy as the birds."

The child's heart beat high with hope and confidence. She had no thought of hunger, or cold, or thirst, or suffering. To her it seemed that they might beg their way from door to door in happiness, so that they were together.

When the day began to glimmer they stole out of the house, and passing into the street stood still.

"Which way?" asked the child.

LITTLE NELL and her GRANDFATHER

The old man looked irresolutely and helplessly at her, and shook his head. It was plain that she was thenceforth his guide and leader. The child felt it, but had no doubts or misgivings, and putting her hand in his, led him gently away. Forth from the city, while it yet slumbered, went the two poor adventurers, wandering they knew not whither.

They passed through the long, deserted streets, in the glad light of early morning, until these streets dwindled away, and the open country was about them. They walked all day, and slept that night at a small cottage where beds were let to travellers. The sun was setting on the second day of their journey, and they were jaded and worn out with walking, when, following a path which led through a churchyard to the town where they were to spend the night, they fell in with two travelling showmen, exhibitors of a Punch and Judy show, bound for the races

at a neighbouring town. And with these men they travelled forward on the following day.

They made two long days' journey with their new companions, passing through villages and towns, and meeting upon one occasion with two young people walking upon stilts, who were also going to the races. The men were rough and strange, as it seemed to little Nell, in their ways, but they were kindly, too; and in the tumult and confusion of such scenes

as she had never known before, and in the bewildering noise and movement of the race-course, where she tried to sell some little nosegays, Nell would have clung to them for protection, had she not learned that these men suspected that she and the old man had left their home secretly, and that they meant to take steps to have them sent back and taken care of. Separation from her grandfather was the greatest evil Nell could dread. If they should be found (so the child thought), people would shut him from the light of sun and sky, saying that he was mad, and never let her see him more. She seized her opportunity to evade the watchfulness of the two men, and hand in hand she and the old man fled away together.

That night they reached a little village in a woody hollow. The village schoolmaster, a good and gentle man, pitying their weariness, and attracted by the child's sweetness and modesty, gave them a lodging for the night; nor would he let them leave him until two days more had passed.

They journeyed on, when the time came that they must wander

forth again, by pleasant country lanes; and as they passed, watching the birds that perched and twittered in the branches overhead, or listening to the songs that broke the happy silence, their hearts were tranquil and serene. But by-and-bye they came to a long winding road which lengthened out far into the distance, and though they still kept on, it was at a much slower pace, for they were now very weary and fatigued. The afternoon had worn away into a beautiful evening, when they came to a caravan drawn up by the road. It was a smart little house upon wheels, and at the door sat a stout and comfortable lady, taking tea. The tea-things were set out upon a drum, covered with a white napkin. And there, as if at the most convenient table in the world, sat this roving lady, taking her tea and enjoying the prospect. Of this stout lady Nell ventured to ask how far it was to the neighbouring town. And the lady, being kind-hearted, and noticing that the tired child could hardly repress a tear at hearing that eight weary miles lay still before them, not only gave them tea, but offered to take them on in the caravan.

Now this lady of the caravan was the owner of a wax-work show, and her name was Mrs Jarley. And Mrs Jarley was won, as the poor schoolmaster had been, by Nell's gentle looks and manner. She offered Nell employment in pointing out the figures in the wax-work show to the visitors who came to see it, promising in return both board and lodging for the child and her grandfather, and some small sum

of money. This offer Nell was thankful to accept, and for some time her life and that of the poor, vacant, fond old man, passed quietly and almost happily.

But heavier sorrow was yet to come. One night, a holiday night for them, Nell and her grandfather went out to walk. A terrible thunder-storm coming on, they were forced to take refuge in a small public-house; and here some sinister and ill-favoured men were playing cards. The old man watched them with increasing interest and excitement, until his whole appearance underwent a complete change. His face was flushed and eager, his teeth set. With a hand that trembled violently he seized Nell's little purse, and in spite of her entreaties joined in the game, gambling with such a savage thirst for gain that the distressed and frightened child could almost better have borne to see him dead. The night was far advanced before the play came to an end, and they were forced to remain where they were until the morning. And in the night the child was wakened from her troubled sleep to find a figure in the room—a figure busying its hands about her garments, while its face was turned to her, listening and looking lest she should awake. It was her grandfather himself, his white face pinched and sharpened by the greediness which made his eyes unnaturally bright, counting the money of which his hands were robbing her.

Evening after evening, after that night, the old man would steal away, not to return until the night was far spent, demanding, wildly, money. And at last there came an hour when the child overheard him, tempted beyond his feeble powers of resistance, undertake to find more money to feed the desperate passion which had laid its hold upon his weakness by robbing Mrs Jarley.

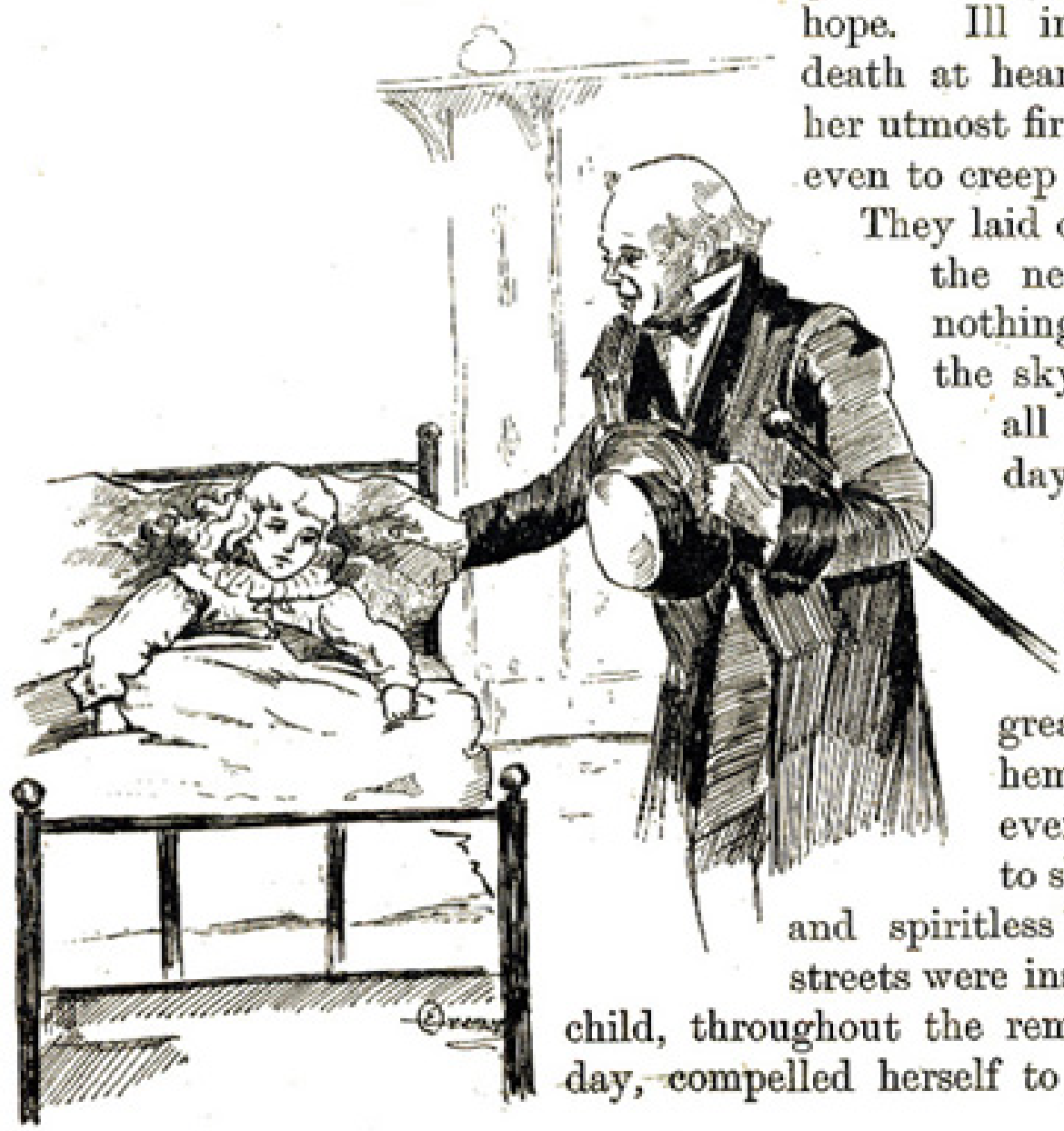
That night the child took her grandfather by the hand and led him forth. Through the strait streets and narrow outskirts of the town their trembling feet passed quickly;

LITTLE NELL AND HER GRANDFATHER

IN THE CHURCHYARD.

the child sustained by one idea—that they were flying from disgrace and crime, and that her grandfather's preservation must depend solely upon her firmness unaided by one word of advice or any helping hand; the old man following her as though she had been an angel messenger sent to lead him where she would.

The hardest part of all their wanderings was now before them. They slept in the open air that night, and on the following morning some men offered to take them a long distance on their barge. These men, though they were not unkindly, were very rugged, noisy fellows, and they drank and quarrelled fearfully among themselves, to Nell's inexpressible terror. It rained, too, heavily, and she was wet and cold. At last they reached the great city whither the barge was bound, and here they wandered up and down, being now penniless, and watched the faces of those who passed, to find among them a ray of encouragement or hope. Ill in body, and sick to death at heart, the child needed her utmost firmness and resolution even to creep along.



They laid down that night, and the next night too, with nothing between them and the sky; a penny loaf was all they had had that day, and when the third morning came, it found the child much weaker, yet she made no complaint. The great manufacturing city hemmed them in on every side, and seemed to shut out hope. Faint and spiritless as they were, its streets were insupportable; and the child, throughout the remainder of that hard day, compelled herself to press on, that they

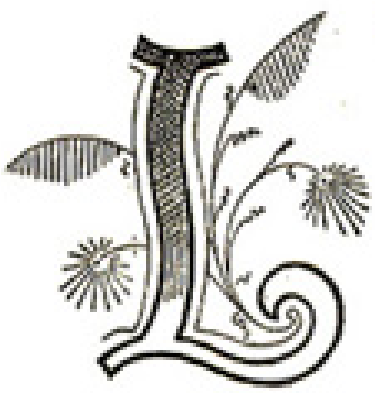
might reach the country. Evening was drawing on; they were dragging themselves through the last street, and she felt that the time was close at hand when her enfeebled powers would bear no more. Seeing a traveller on foot before them, and animated with a ray of hope, she shot on before her grandfather, and began in a few faint words to implore the stranger's help. He turned his head, the child clapped her hands together, uttered a wild shriek, and fell senseless at his feet. It was the village schoolmaster who had been so kind to them before.

And now Nell's weary wanderings were nearly over. The good man took her in his arms and carried her quickly to a little inn hard by, where she was tenderly put to bed, and where a doctor arrived with all speed. The schoolmaster, as it appeared, was on his way to a new home. And when the child had recovered somewhat from her exhaustion, it was arranged that she and her grandfather should accompany him to the village whither he was bound, and that he should endeavour to find them some humble occupation by which they could subsist.

It was a secluded village, lying among the quiet country scenes Nell

loved. And here, her grandfather being tranquil and at rest, a great peace fell upon the spirit of the child. Often she would steal into the church, and sitting down among the quiet figures carved upon the tombs, would think of the summer days and the bright spring time that would come; of the rays of sun that would fall in, aslant those sleeping forms; of the songs of birds, and the sweet air that would steal in. What if the spot awakened thoughts of death? It would be no pain to sleep amid such sights and sounds as these. For the time was drawing nearer every day when Nell was to rest indeed. She never murmured or complained, but faded like a light upon a summer's evening and died. Day after day and all day long, the old man, broken-hearted and with no love or care for anything in life, would sit beside her grave with her straw hat and the little basket she had been used to carry, waiting till she should come to him again. At last they found him lying dead upon the stone. And in the church where they had often prayed and mused and lingered, hand in hand, the child and the old man slept together.

LITTLE DAVID COPPERFIELD



ITTLE DAVID COPPERFIELD lived with his mother in a pretty house in the village of Blunderstone in Suffolk. He had never known his father, who died before David could remember anything, and he had neither brothers nor sisters. He was fondly loved by his pretty young mother, and their kind, good servant Peggotty, and David was a very happy little fellow. They had very few friends, and the only relation Mrs Copperfield talked about was an aunt of David's father, a tall and rather terrible old lady, from all accounts, who had once been to see them when David was quite a tiny baby, and had been so angry to find David was not a little girl, that she had left the house quite offended, and had never been heard of since. One visitor, a tall dark gentleman, David did not like at all, and he was rather inclined to be jealous that his mother should be friendly with the stranger.

One day Peggotty, the servant, asked David if he would like to go with her on a visit to her brother at Yarmouth.

"Is your brother an agreeable man, Peggotty?" he enquired.

"Oh, what an agreeable man he is!" cried Peggotty. "Then there's the sea, and the boats and ships, and the fishermen, and the beach. And 'Am to play with."

Ham was her nephew. David was quite anxious to go when he heard of all these delights; but his mother, what would she do all alone? Peggotty told him his mother was going to pay a visit to some friends, and would be sure to let him go. So all was arranged, and they were to start the next day in the carrier's cart. David was so eager that he wanted to put his hat and coat on the night before! But when the time came to say good-bye to his dear mamma, he cried a little, for he had

never left her before. It was rather a slow way of travelling, and poor David was very tired and sleepy when they arrived at Yarmouth, and found Ham waiting to meet them. He was a great strong fellow, six feet high, and took David on his back and the box under his arm to carry both to the house. David was delighted to find that this house was made of a real big black boat, with a door and windows cut in the side, and an iron funnel sticking out of the roof for a chimney. Inside, it was very cosy and clean, and David had a tiny bedroom in the stern. He was very much pleased to find a dear little girl, about his own age, to play with, and soon discovered that she and Ham were orphans, children of Mr Peggotty's brother and sister, whose fathers had both been drowned at sea, so kind Mr Peggotty had taken them to live with him. An elderly woman, named Mrs Gummidge, lived with them too, and did the cooking and cleaning, for she was a poor widow and had no home of her own. David thought Mr Peggotty was very good to take all these people to live with him, and he was quite right, for Mr Peggotty was only a poor man himself and had to work hard to get a living. David was very happy in this queer house, playing on the beach with Em'ly, as they called the little girl, and told her all about his happy home; and she told him how her father had been drowned at sea before she came to live with her uncle.

David said he thought Mr Peggotty must be a very good man.

"Good!" said Em'ly. "If ever I was to be a lady, I'd give him a sky-blue coat with diamond buttons, nankeen trousers, a red velvet waistcoat, a cocked hat, a large gold watch, a silver pipe, and a box of money!"

David was quite sorry to leave these kind people and his dear little companion, but still he was glad to think he should get back to his own

dear mamma. When he reached home, however, he found a great change. His mother was married to the dark man David did not like, whose name was Mr Murdstone, and he was a stern, hard man, who had no love for little David, and did not allow his mother to pet and indulge him as she had done before. Mr Murdstone's sister came to live with them, and as she was even more difficult to please than her brother, and disliked boys, David's life was no longer a happy one. He tried to be good and obedient, for he knew it made his mother very unhappy to see him punished and found fault with. He had always had lessons with his mother, and as she was patient and gentle, he had enjoyed learning to read, but now he had a great many very hard lessons to do, and was so frightened and shy when Mr and Miss Murdstone were in the room, that he did not get on at all well, and was continually in disgrace. His only pleasure was to go up into a little room at the top of the house where he had found a number of books that had belonged to his own father, and he would sit and read Robinson Crusoe, and many tales of travels and adventures, and he imagined himself to be the heroes, and went about for days with the centre-piece out of an old set of boot-trees, pretending to be a Captain in the British Royal Navy.

But one day he got into sad trouble over his lessons, and Mr Murdstone was very angry, and took him away from his mother and beat him with a cane. David had never been beaten in his life before, and was so maddened by the pain and rage that he bit Mr Murdstone's hand! Now, indeed, he had done something to deserve the punishment, and Mr Murdstone, in a fury, beat him savagely, and left him sobbing and crying on the floor, with a dreadful feeling in his heart of how wicked and full of hate he was. David was kept locked up in his room for some days, seeing no one but Miss Murdstone, who brought him his food. At last, one night, he heard his name whispered at the key-hole.

"Is that you, Peggotty?" he asked, groping his way to the door.

"Yes, my precious Davy. Be as soft as a mouse or the cat will hear us."

David understood she meant Miss Murdstone, whose room was quite near. "How's mamma, Peggotty dear? Is she very angry with me?" he whispered. Peggotty was crying softly on her side of the door as David was on his.

"No—not very," she said.

"What is going to be done with me, dear Peggotty, do you know?" asked poor David, who had been wondering all these long, lonely days.

"School—near London—"

"When, Peggotty?"

"To-morrow," answered Peggotty.

"Shan't I see mamma?"

"Yes—morning," she said, and went on to promise David she would always love him, and take the greatest care of his dear mamma, and write to him every week.

"Thank you, thank you, dear Peggotty, and do write and tell Mr Peggotty, and Em'ly and Ham and Mrs Gummidge, that I am not so bad as they might suppose, and give them all my love. Will you, please, Peggotty?"

Peggotty promised, and they both kissed the key-hole most tenderly, and parted.

The next morning David saw his mother, very pale and with red eyes. He ran to her arms and begged her to forgive him.

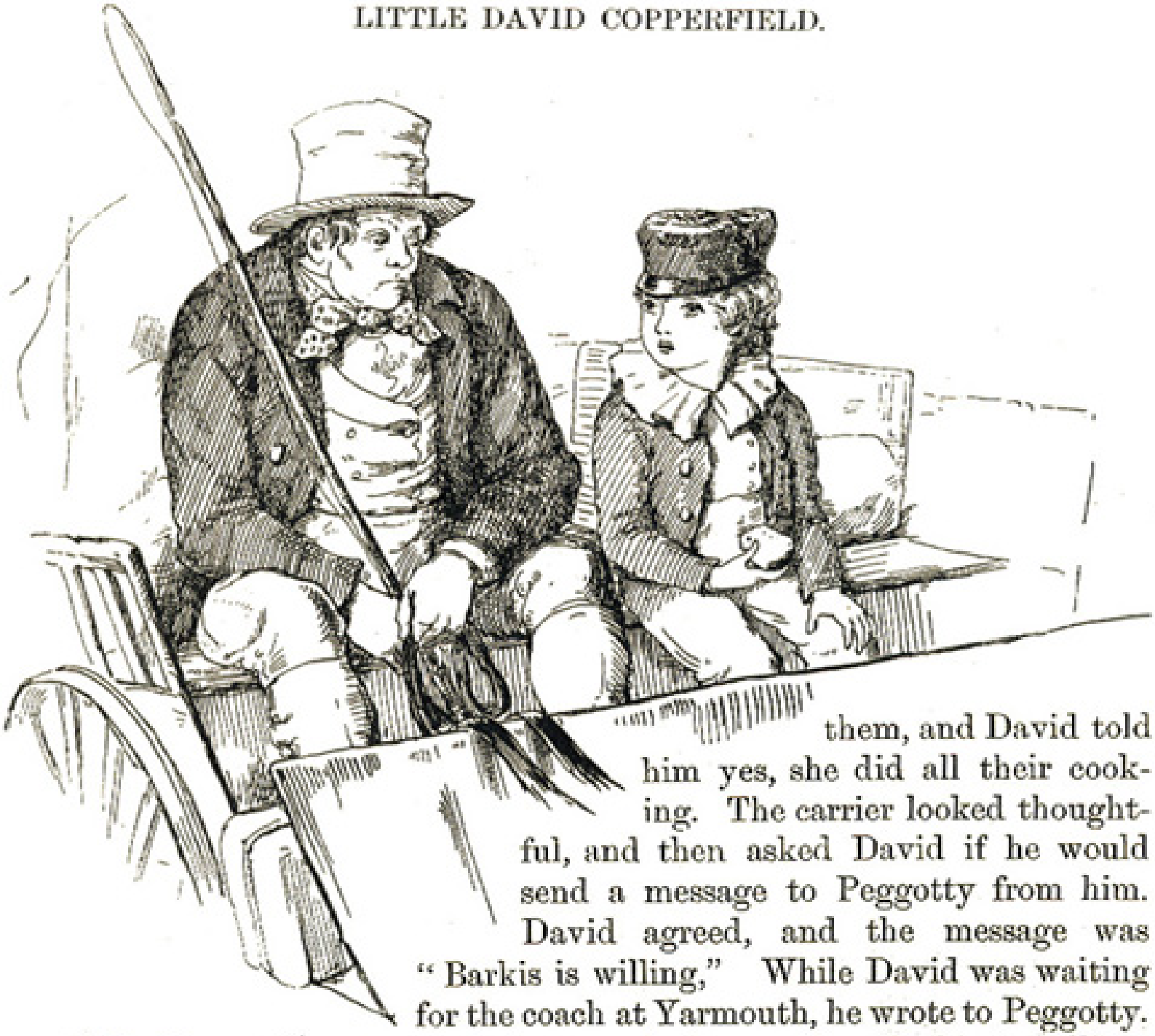
"Oh, Davy," she said, "that you should hurt anyone I love! I forgive you, Davy, but it grieves me so that you should have such bad passions in your heart. Try to be better, pray to be better."

David was very unhappy that his mother should think him so wicked, and though she kissed him, and said, "I forgive you, my dear boy, God bless you," he cried so bitterly when he was on his way in the carrier's cart, that his pocket handkerchief had to be spread out on the horse's back to dry.

After they had gone a little way the cart stopped, and Peggotty came running up with a parcel of cakes and a purse for David. After giving him a good hug, she ran off.

David found three bright shillings in the purse, and two half-crowns wrapped in paper on which was written, in his mother's hand—"For Davy. With my love."

David shared his cakes with the carrier, who asked if Peggotty made



them, and David told him yes, she did all their cooking. The carrier looked thoughtful, and then asked David if he would send a message to Peggotty from him. David agreed, and the message was "Barkis is willing," While David was waiting for the coach at Yarmouth, he wrote to Peggotty.

"My Dear Peggotty,—I have come here safe. Barkis is willing. My love to mamma.—Yours affectionately."

P.S.—He says he particularly wanted you to know *Barkis is willing.*"

At Yarmouth he found dinner was ordered for him, and felt very shy at having a table all to himself, and very much alarmed when the waiter told him he had seen a gentleman fall down dead after drinking some of their beer. David said he would have some water, and was quite grateful to the waiter for drinking the ale that had been ordered for him, for fear the people of the hotel should be offended. He also helped David to eat his dinner, and accepted one of his bright shillings.

After a long, tiring journey by the coach, for there were no trains in

those days, David arrived in London and was taken to the school at Blackheath, by one of the masters, Mr Mell.

When they got to Salem House, as the school was called, David found the holidays were not over, but that he had been sent before the school was opened as a punishment for his wickedness, and was also to wear a placard on his back, on which was written—"Take care of him. He bites." This made David miserable, and he dreaded the return of the boys. Fortunately for David, the first boy who came back, Tommy Traddles, was not an unkind boy, and seemed to think the placard rather a joke, and showed it to all the boys as they came back, with the remark—

"Look here—here's a game!"

Some of the boys teased David by pretending he was a dog, calling him Towser, and patting and stroking him; but, on the whole, it was not

so bad as David had expected. The head boy, too, Steerforth, who was very handsome and some years older than David, said he thought it was "a jolly shame" when he heard all about David's punishment, which consoled the little boy very much. Steerforth promised to take care of him, and David loved him dearly, and thought him a great hero. Steerforth took a great fancy to the pretty, bright-eyed little fellow, and David became a favourite with all the boys, by telling them all he could remember of the tales he had read. He spent all his money the first day on a grand supper in their bedroom (by Steerforth's advice), and heard many things about the school, and how severe Mr Creakle, the head master, was. This he found was very true, and the boys were always being caned and punished, especially poor Traddles, who often suffered from his firmly refusing ever to betray any of his school-fellows.

One day David had a visit from Mr Peggotty and Ham, who had brought two enormous lobsters, a huge crab, and a large canvas bag of shrimps, as they "remembered he was partial to a relish with his meals."

David was proud to introduce his friend Steerforth to these kind simple friends, and told them how good Steerforth was to him, and how he helped him with his work and took care of him, and Steerforth delighted the fishermen with his friendly, pleasant manners.

The "relish" was much appreciated by the boys at supper that night, Only poor Traddles became very ill from eating crab so late.

At last the holidays came, and David went home. The carrier, Barkis, met him at Yarmouth, and was rather gruff, which David soon found out was because he had not had any answer to his message. David promised to ask Peggotty for one. When he got home David found he had a little baby brother, and his mother and Peggotty were very much pleased to see him again. They had a very happy afternoon the day he came. Mr and Miss Murdstone were out, and David sat with his mother and Peggotty, and told them all about his school and Steerforth, and took the little baby in his arms and nursed it lovingly. But when the Murdstones came back David was more unhappy than ever, for they showed plainly they disliked him, and thought him in the way, and scolded him, and would not allow him to touch the baby, or even to sit with Peggotty in the kitchen, so he was not sorry when the time came for him to go back

to school, except for leaving his dear mamma and the baby. She kissed him very tenderly at parting, and held up the baby for him to see as he drove off in the carrier's cart once more.

About two months after he had been back at school he was sent for one day to go into the parlour. He hurried in joyfully, for it was his birthday, and he thought it might be a hamper from Peggotty—but, alas! no; it was very sad news Mrs Creakle had to give him—his dear mamma had died! Mrs Creakle was very kind and gentle to the desolate little boy, and the boys, especially Traddles, were very sorry for him.

David went home the next day, and heard that the dear baby had died too. Peggotty received him with great tenderness, and told him about his mother's illness and how she had sent a loving message.

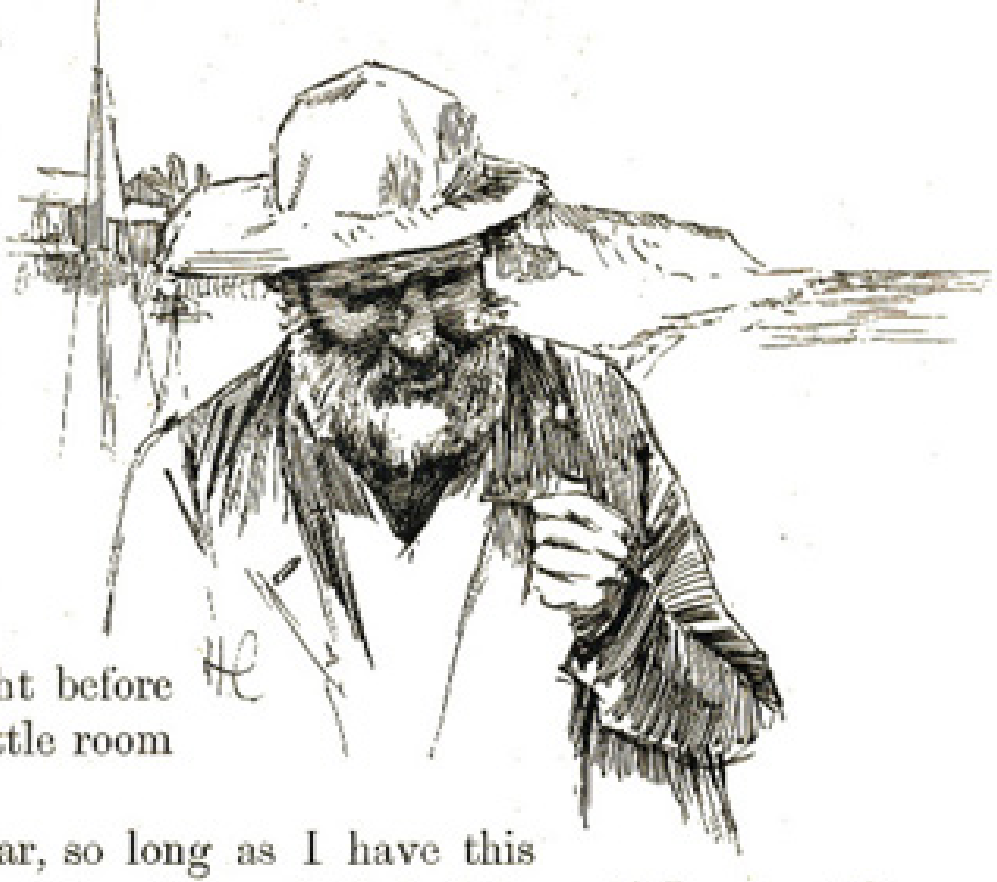
"Tell my dearest boy that his mother, as she lay here, blessed him not once, but a thousand times," and she had prayed to God to protect and keep her fatherless boy.

Mr Murdstone did not take any notice of poor little David, nor had Miss Murdstone a word of kindness for the orphan. Peggotty was to leave in a month, and, to their great joy, David was allowed to go with her on a visit to Mr Peggotty. On their way David found out that the mysterious message he had given to Peggotty meant that Barkis wanted to marry her, and Peggotty had consented. Everyone in Mr Peggotty's cottage was pleased to see David, and did their best to comfort him. Little Em'ly was at school when he arrived, and he went out to meet her, but when he saw her coming along, her blue eyes bluer, and her bright face prettier than ever, he pretended not to know her, and was passing by, when Em'ly laughed and ran away, so of course he was obliged to run and catch her, and try to kiss her, but she would not let him, saying she was not a baby now. But she was kind to him all the same, and when they spoke about the loss of his dear mother, David saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"Ah," said Mr Peggotty, running his fingers through her bright curls, "here's another orphan, you see, sir, and here," giving Ham a backhanded knock in the chest, "is another of 'em, though he don't look much like it."

"If I had *you* for a guardian, Mr Peggotty," said David, "I don't think I should *feel* much like it."

DAVID COPPERFIELD AND LITTLE EMLY



"Well said, Master Davy, bor!" cried Ham, delighted, "Hoorah, well said! no more you wouldn't, bor, bor!" returning Mr Peggotty's back-hander, while little Em'ly got up and kissed her uncle.

During this visit Peggotty was married to Mr Barkis, and had a nice little house of her own, and David spent the night before he was to return home in a little room in the roof.

"Young or old, Davy dear, so long as I have this house over my head," said Peggotty, "you shall find it as if I expected you here directly every minute. I shall keep it as I used to keep your old little room, my darling, and if you was to go to China, you might think of its being kept just the same all the time you were away."

David felt how good and true a friend she was, and thanked her as well as he could, for they had brought him to the gate of his home, and Peggotty had him clasped in her arms.

Poor little lonely David, with no one near to speak a loving word, or a face to look on his with love or liking, only the two persons who had broken his mother's heart to live with. How utterly wretched and forlorn he felt! He found he was not to go back to school any more, and wandered about sad and solitary, neglected and uncared for. Peggotty's weekly visits were his only comfort. He longed to go to school, however hard an one, to be taught something anyhow, anywhere—but no one took any pains with him, and he had no friends near who could help him.

At last one day, after some weary months had passed, Mr Murdstone told him he was to go to London and earn his own living. There was a place for him at Murdstone & Grinby's, a firm in the wine trade. His lodging and clothes would be provided for him by his step-father, and he would earn enough for his food and pocket money. The next day David was sent up to London with the manager, dressed in a shabby little white hat with black crape round it for his mother, a black jacket, and hard,

stiff corduroy trousers, a little fellow of ten years old to fight his own battles with the world!

His place, he found, was one of the lowest in the firm of Murdstone & Grinby, with boys of no education and in quite an inferior station to himself—his duties were to wash the bottles, stick on labels, and so on. David was utterly miserable at being degraded in this way, when he thought of his former companions, Steerforth and Traddles, and his hopes of becoming a learned and distinguished man, and shed bitter tears, as he feared he would forget all he had learnt at school. His lodging, one bare little room, was in the house of some people named Micawber, shiftless, careless, good-natured people, who were always in debt and difficulties. David felt great pity for their misfortunes and did what he could to help poor Mrs Micawber to sell her books and other little things she could spare, to buy food for herself, her husband, and their four children. David was too young and childish to know how to provide properly for himself, and often found he was obliged to live on bread and slices of cold pudding at the end of the week. If he had not been a very innocent-minded, good little boy, he might easily have fallen into bad ways at this time. But God took care of the orphan boy and kept him from harm. The dear little unselfish fellow would not even tell Peggotty how miserable he was, for fear of distressing her.

The troubles of the Micawbers increased more and more, until at last they were obliged to leave London. David was very sad at this, for he had been with them so long that he felt they were his friends, and the prospect of being once more utterly alone, and having to find a lodging with strangers, made him so unhappy that he determined to endure this sort of life no longer. The last Sunday the Micawbers were in town he dined with them. He had bought a spotted horse for their little boy, and a doll for the little girl, and had saved up a shilling for

the poor servant girl. After he had seen them off the next morning by the coach, he wrote to Peggotty to ask her if she knew where his aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood, lived, and to borrow half-a-guinea; for he had resolved to run away from Murdstone & Grinby's, and go to his aunt and tell her his story. He remembered his mother telling him of her visit when he was a baby, and that she fancied Miss Betsy had stroked her hair gently, and this gave him courage to appeal to her. Peggotty wrote, enclosing the half-guinea, and saying she only knew Miss Trotwood lived near Dover, but whether in that place itself, or at Folkestone, Sandgate, or Hythe, she could not tell. Hearing that all these places were close together, David made up his mind to start. As he had received his week's wages in advance, he waited till the following Saturday, thinking it would not be honest to go before. He went out to look for some one to carry his box to the coach office, and unfortunately employed a wicked young man who not only ran off with the box, but robbed him of his half-guinea, leaving poor David in dire distress. In despair, he started off to walk to Dover, and was forced to sell his waistcoat to buy some bread. The first night he found his way to his old school at Blackheath, and slept on a haystack close by, feeling some comfort in the thought of the boys being near. He knew Steerforth had left, or he would have tried to see him.

On he trudged the next day and sold his jacket at Chatham to a dreadful old man, who kept him wait ng all day for the money, which was only one shilling and fourpence. He was afraid to buy anything but bread or to spend any money on a bed or a shelter for the night, and was terribly frightened by some rough tramps, who threw stones at him when he did not answer to their calls. After six days, he arrived at Dover, ragged, dusty, and half-dead with hunger and fatigue. But here, at first, he could get no tidings of his aunt, and, in despair, was going to try some of the other places Peggotty had mentioned, when the driver of a fly dropped his horsecloth, and as David was handing it up to him, he saw something kind in the man's face that encouraged him to ask once more if he knew where Miss Trotwood lived.

The man directed him towards some houses on the heights, and thither David toiled. Going into a little shop, he by chance met with Miss Trotwood's maid, who shewed him the house, and went in leaving him standing at the gate, a forlorn little creature, without a jacket or

But his aunt said nothing of her intentions, and David was uncertain what was to become of him. He hoped she might befriend him.

At last Mr and Miss Murdstone arrived. To Miss Betsy's great indignation, Miss Murdstone rode a donkey across the green in front of the house, and stopped at the gate. Nothing made Miss Trotwood so angry as to see donkeys on that green, and David had already seen several battles between his aunt or Janet and the donkey boys.

After driving away the donkey and the boy who had dared to bring it there, Miss Trotwood received her visitors. David she kept near her, fenced in with a chair.

Mr Murdstone told Miss Betsy that David was a very bad, stubborn, violent-tempered boy, whom he had tried to improve, but could not succeed; that he had put him in a respectable business from which he had run away. If Miss Trotwood chose to protect and encourage him now, she must do it always, for he had come to fetch him away there and then, and if he was not ready to come, and Miss Trotwood did not wish to give him up to be dealt with exactly as Mr Murdstone liked, he would cast him off for always, and have no more to do with him.

"Are you ready to go, David?" asked his aunt.

But David answered no, and begged and prayed her for his father's sake to befriend and protect him, for neither Mr nor Miss Murdstone had ever liked him or been kind to him, and had made his mamma, who always loved him dearly, very unhappy about him, and he had been very miserable.

"Mr Dick," said Miss Trotwood, "what shall I do with this child?"

Mr Dick considered. "Have him measured for a suit of clothes directly."

"Mr Dick," said Miss Trotwood, "your common sense is invaluable."

Then she pulled David towards her, and said to Mr Murdstone, "You can go when you like. I'll take my chance with the boy. If he's all you say he is I can at least do as much for him as you have done. But I don't believe a word of it."

Then she told Mr Murdstone what she thought of the way he had treated David and his mother, which did not make that gentleman feel very comfortable, and finished by turning to Miss Murdstone, and saying—

"Good-day to you, too, ma'am, and if I ever see you ride a donkey across my green again, as sure as you have a head upon your shoulders, I'll knock your bonnet off and tread upon it!"

This startled Miss Murdstone so much that she went off quite quietly with her brother, while David, overjoyed, threw his arms round his aunt's neck, and kissed and thanked her with great heartiness.

Some clothes were bought for him that same day and marked "Trotwood Copperfield," for his aunt wished to call him by her name.

Now David felt his troubles were over, and he began quite a new life, well cared for and kindly treated. He was sent to a very nice school in Canterbury, where his aunt left him with these words, which David never forgot.

"Trot, be a credit to yourself, to me, and Mr Dick, and Heaven be with you. Never be mean in anything, never be false, never be cruel. Avoid these three vices, Trot, and I shall always be hopeful of you."

David did his

best to show his gratitude to his dear aunt by studying hard, and trying to be all she could wish.

When you are older you can read how he grew up to be a good, clever man, and met again all his old friends, and made many new ones.

Also, what became of Steerforth, Traddles, the Peggottys, little Em'ly, and the Micawbers.

JENNY WREN

WALKING into the city one holiday, a great many years ago, a gentleman ran up the steps of a tall house in the neighbourhood of St Mary Axe. The lower windows were those of a counting-house, but the blinds, like those of the entire front of the house, were drawn down.

The gentleman knocked and rang several times before any one came, but at last an old man opened the door. "What were you up to that you did not hear me?" said Mr Fledgeby irritably.

"I was taking the air at the top of the house, sir," said the old man meekly, "it being a holiday. What might you please to want, sir?"

"Humph! Holiday indeed," grumbled his master, who was a toy merchant amongst other things. He then seated himself in the counting-house and gave the old man—a Jew and Riah by name—directions about the dressing of some dolls about which he had come to speak, and, as he rose to go, exclaimed—

"By the bye, how *do* you take the air? Do you stick your head out of a chimney-pot?"

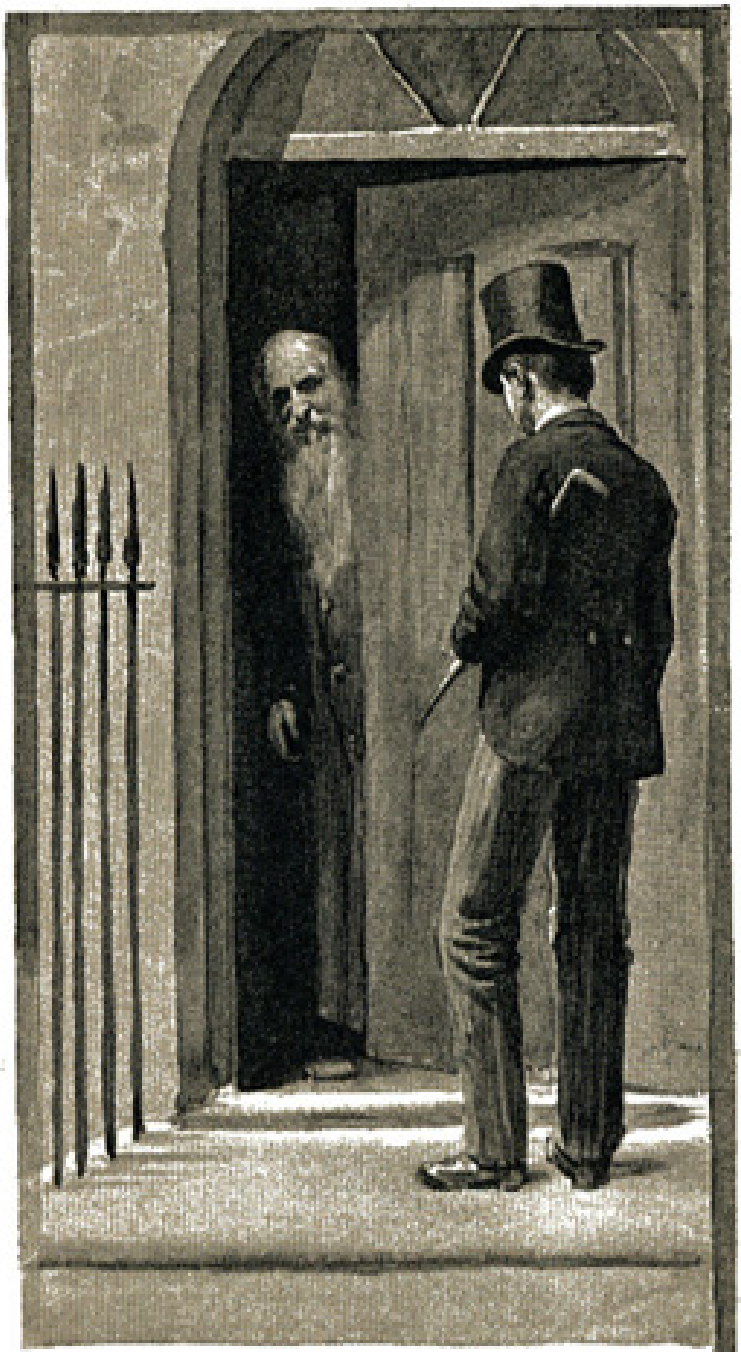
"No, sir, I have made a little garden on the leads."

"Let's look at it," said Mr Fledgeby.

"Sir, I have company there," returned Riah hesitating, "but will you please come up and see them?"

Mr Fledgeby nodded, and passing his master with a bow, the old man led the way up flight after flight of stairs, till they arrived at the house-top. Seated on a carpet, and leaning against a chimney-stack, were two girls bending over books. Some humble creepers were trained

round the chimney-pots, and evergreens were placed round the roof, and a few more books, a basket of gaily coloured scraps, and bits of tinsel, and another of common print stuff lay near. One of the girls rose on seeing that Riah had brought a visitor, but the other remarked, "I'm the person of the house downstairs, but I can't get up, whoever you are, because my back is bad, and my legs are queer."



"This is my master," said Riah, speaking to the two girls, "and this," he added, turning to Mr Fledgeby, "is Miss Jenny Wren; she lives in this house, and is a clever little dressmaker for little people. Her friend Lizzie," continued Riah, introducing the second girl. "They are good girls, both, and as busy as they are good; in spare moments they come up here, and take to book learning."

"We are glad to come up here for rest, sir," said Lizzie, with a grateful look at the old Jew. "No one can tell the rest that this place is to us."

"Humph!" said Mr Fledgeby, looking round, "Humph!" He was so much surprised that apparently he couldn't get beyond that word, and as he went down again the old chimney-pots in their black cowls seemed to turn round and look after him as if they were saying "Humph" too.

Lizzie, the elder of these two girls, was strong and hand-

JENNY WREN.

some, but the little Jenny Wren, whom she so loved and protected, was small, and deformed, though she had a beautiful little face, and the longest and loveliest golden hair in the world, which fell about her like a cloak of shining curls, as though to hide the poor little mis-shapen figure.

The Jew Riah, as well as Lizzie, was always kind and gentle to Jenny Wren, who called him her godfather. She had a father, who shared her poor little rooms, whom she called her child, for he was a bad, drunken, disreputable old man, and the poor girl had to care for him, and earn money to keep them both. She suffered a great deal, for the poor little bent back always ached sadly, and was often weary from incessant work, but it was only on rare occasions, when alone or with her friend Lizzie, who often brought her work and sat in Jenny's room, that the brave child ever complained of her hard lot. Sometimes the two girls, Jenny helping herself along with a crutch, would go and walk about the fashionable streets, in order to note how the grand folks were dressed. As they walked along, Jenny would tell her friend of the fancies she had when sitting alone at her work. "I imagine birds till I can hear them sing," she said one day, "and flowers till I can smell them. And oh! the beautiful

children that come to me in the early mornings! They are quite different to other children, not like me, never cold, or anxious, or tired, or hungry, never any pain; they come in numbers, in long bright slanting rows, all dressed in white, and with shiny heads. 'Who is this in pain?' they say, and they sweep around and about me, take me up in their arms, and I feel so light, and all the pain goes. I know when they are coming a long way off, by hearing them say, 'Who is this in pain?' and I answer, 'Oh my blessed children, it's poor me! have pity on me, and take me up and then the pain will go.'"

Lizzie sat stroking and brushing the beautiful hair, whilst the tired little dressmaker leant against her when they were at home again, and as she kissed her good-night, a miserable old man stumbled into the room. "How's my Jenny Wren, best of children?" he mumbled, as he shuffled unsteadily towards her, but Jenny pointed her small finger towards him exclaiming—"Go along with you, you bad, wicked, old child, you troublesome, wicked, old thing, *I* know where you have been, *I* know your tricks and your manners." The wretched man began to whimper, like a scolded child. "Slave, slave, slave, from morning to night," went on Jenny, still shaking her finger at him, "and all for this; ain't you ashamed of yourself, you disgraceful boy?"

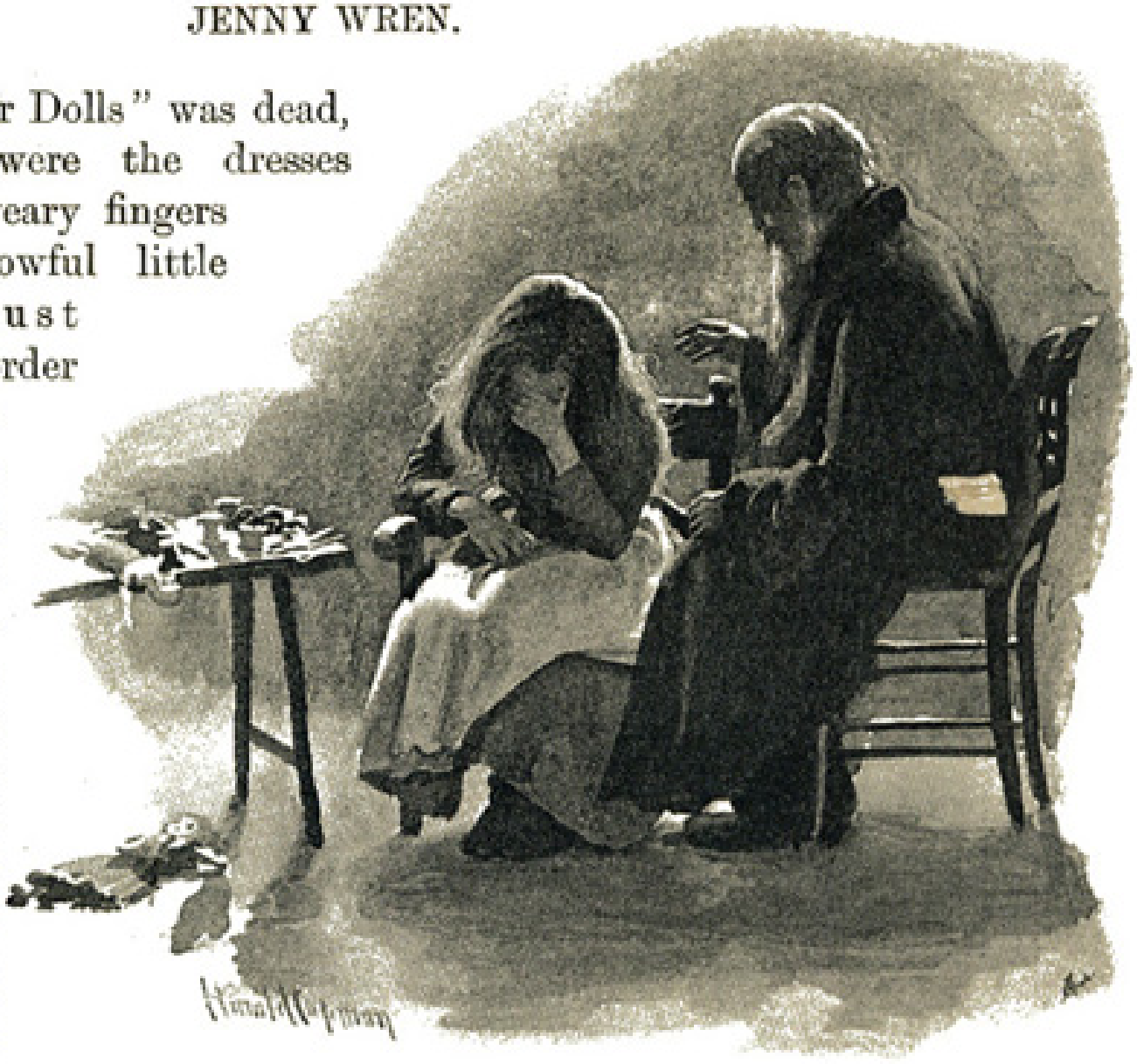
"Yes; my dear, yes," stammered the tipsy old father, tumbling into a corner. Thus was the poor little dolls' dressmaker dragged down day by day by the very hands that should have cared for and held her up; poor, poor little dolls' dressmaker! One day when Jenny was on her way home with Riah, who had accompanied her on one of her expeditions to the West End, they came on a small crowd of people. A tipsy man had been knocked down, and badly hurt—"Let us see what it is!" said Jenny, coming swiftly forward on her crutches. The next moment she exclaimed—"Oh, gentlemen—gentlemen, he is my child, he belongs to me, my poor, bad, old child!"

"Your child—belongs to you—" repeated the man who was about to lift the helpless figure on to a stretcher, which had been brought for the purpose. "Aye, it's old Dolls—tipsy old Dolls—" cried some one in the crowd, for it was by this name that they knew the old man.

"He's her father, sir," said Riah in a low tone to the doctor who was now bending over the stretcher.

"So much the worse," answered the doctor, "for the man is dead."

"SEATED ON THE CARPET WERE TWO GIRLS."



Yes, "Mr Dolls" was dead, and many were the dresses which the weary fingers of the sorrowful little worker must make in order to pay for his humble funeral, and buy a black frock for herself. Riah sat by her in her poor room, saying a word of comfort now and then, and Lizzie came and went, and did all manner of little things to help her; but often the tears rolled down on to her work. "My poor child," she said to Riah, "my poor old child, and to think I scolded him so."

"You were always a good, brave, patient girl," returned Riah, smiling a little over her quaint fancy about her *child*, "always good and patient, however tired."

And so the poor little "person of the house" was left alone but for the faithful affection of the kind Jew, and her friend Lizzie. Her room grew pretty and comfortable, for she was in great request in her "profession" as she called it, and there was now no one to spend and waste her earnings. But nothing could make her life otherwise than a suffering one till the happy morning, when her child-angels visited her for the last time and carried her away to the land where all such pain as hers is healed for evermore.

PIP'S ADVENTURE

ALL that little Philip Pirrip, usually called Pip, knew about his father and mother, and his five little brothers, was from seeing their tombstones in the churchyard. He was taken care of by his sister, who was twenty years older than himself. She had married a blacksmith, named Joe Gargery, a kind, good man, while she, unfortunately, was a hard, stern woman, and treated her little brother and her amiable husband with great harshness. They lived in a marshy part of the country, about twenty miles from the sea.

One cold, raw day towards evening, when Pip was about six years old, he had wandered into the churchyard, and trying to make out what he could of the inscriptions on his family tombstones, and the darkness coming on, he felt very lonely and frightened, and began to cry.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, and a man started up from among the graves close to him. "Keep still, you little imp, or I'll cut your throat!"

He was a dreadful looking man, dressed in coarse grey cloth, with a great iron on his leg. Wet, muddy and miserable, he limped and shivered, and glared and growled; his teeth chattered in his head, as he seized Pip by the chin.

"Oh! don't cut my throat, sir," cried Pip, in terror. "Pray don't do it, sir."

"Tell us your name!" said the man. "Quick!"

"Pip, sir."

"Once more," said the man, staring at him. "Give it mouth."

"Pip. Pip, sir."

"Show us where you live," said the man. "Point out the place."

Pip showed him the village, about a mile or more from the church.

The man looked at him for a moment, and then turned him upside down and emptied his pockets. He found nothing in them but a piece of bread, which he ate ravenously.

"You young dog," said the man, licking his lips, "what fat cheeks you ha' got . . . Darn me if I couldn't eat 'em, and if I han't half a mind to!"

Pip said earnestly that he hoped he would not.

"Now lookee here," said the man. "Where's your mother?"

"There, sir," said Pip.

At this the man started and seemed about to run away, but stopped and looked over his shoulder.

"There, sir," explained Pip, showing him the tombstone.

"Oh, and is that your father along of your mother?"

"Yes, sir," said Pip.

"Ha!" muttered the man, "then who d'ye live with—supposin' you 're kindly let to live, which I han't made up my mind about?"

"My sister,

sir, Mrs Joe Gargery, wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith, sir."

"Blacksmith, eh?" said the man, and looked down at his leg. Then he seized the trembling little boy by both arms, and glaring down at him, he said,—

"Now lookee here, the question being whether you're to be let to live —You know what a file is?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you know what wittles is?"

"Yes, sir."

"You get me a file, and you get me wittles—you bring 'em both to me." All this time he was tilting poor Pip backwards till he was so dreadfully frightened and giddy that he clung to the man with both hands.

"You bring me, to-morrow morning early, that file and them wittles—You do it, and you never dare to say a word or dare to make a sign concerning your having seen such a person as me, or any person sumever, and you shall be let to live." Then he threatened all sorts of dreadful and terrible things to poor Pip if he failed to do all he had commanded, and made him solemnly promise to bring him what he wanted, and to keep the secret. Then he let him go, saying—"You remember what you've undertook, and you get home."

"Goo—good night, sir," faltered Pip.

"Much of that!" said he glancing over the cold wet flat. "I wish I was a frog, or a eel!"

Pip ran home without stopping. Joe was sitting in the chimney corner, and told him Mrs Joe had been out to look for him, and taken Tickler with her. Tickler was a cane, and Pip was rather depressed by this piece of news.

Mrs Joe came in almost directly, and after having given Pip a taste of Tickler, she sat down to prepare the tea, and cutting a huge slice of bread and butter, she gave half of it to Joe and half to Pip. Pip managed, after some time, to slip his down the leg of his trouser, and Joe, thinking he had swallowed it, was dreadfully alarmed and begged him not to bolt his food like that. "Pip, old chap, you 'll do yourself a mischief,—it 'll stick somewhere, you can't have chewed it, Pip. You know, Pip, you and me is always friends, and I 'd be the last to tell upon you any time, but such a—such a most uncommon bolt as that."

"Been bolting his food, has he?" cried Mrs Joe.

"You know, old chap," said Joe, "I bolted myself when I was your age—frequent—and as a boy I 've been among a many bolters; but I never see your bolting equal yet, Pip, and it 's a mercy you ain't bolted dead."

Mrs Joe made a dive at Pip, fished him up by the hair, saying—"You come along and be dosed."

It was Christmas eve, and Pip had to stir the pudding from seven to eight, and found the bread and butter dreadfully in his way. At last he slipped out and put it away in his little bedroom.

Poor Pip passed a wretched night, thinking of the dreadful promise he had made, and as soon as it was beginning to get light outside he got up and crept downstairs, fancying that every board creaked out "Stop thief!" and "Get up, Mrs Joe!"

As quickly as he could, he took some bread, some rind of cheese, about half a jar of mince-meat, which he tied up in a handkerchief, with the slice of bread and butter, some brandy from a stone bottle, a meat bone with very little on it, and a pork pie, which he found on an upper shelf. Then he got a file from among Joe's tools, and ran for the marshes.

It was a very misty morning, and Pip imagined that all the cattle stared at him, as if to say, "Halloa young thief!" and one black ox with a white cravat on that made Pip think of a clergyman, looked so accusingly at him, that Pip blubbered out, "I couldn't help it, sir! It wasn't for myself I took it."

PIP and the CONVICT.

Upon which the ox put down his head, blew a cloud of smoke out of his nose, and vanished with a kick-up of his hind legs and a flourish of his tail.

Pip found the man waiting for him, half dead with cold and hunger, and he ate the food in such a ravenous way that Pip, in spite of his terror, was quite pitiful over him, and said, as he stood watching the wretched man eat, "I am glad you enjoy it."

"Thankee, my boy, I do."

Pip watched him trying to file the iron off his leg, and then, being afraid of stopping longer away from home, he ran off.

Pip passed a wretched morning expecting every moment that the disappearance of the pie would be found out. But Mrs Joe was too much taken up with preparing the dinner, for they were expecting visitors, and were to have a superb dinner, consisting of a leg of pickled pork, and greens, and a pair of roast stuffed fowls, a mince pie, and a pudding.

Just at the end of the dinner Pip thought his time had come to be found out, for his sister said graciously to her guests—

"You must taste a most delightful and delicious present I have had. It's a pie, a savoury pork pie."

Pip could bear it no longer, and ran for the door, and there ran head foremost into a party of soldiers with their muskets, one of whom held out a pair of handcuffs to him saying—"Here you are, look sharp, come on." But they had not come for him, they only wanted Joe to mend the handcuffs, for they were on the search for two convicts who had escaped and were somewhere hid in the marshes. This turned the attention of Mrs Joe from the disappearance of the pie without which she had come back, in great astonishment. When the handcuffs were mended the soldiers went off, accompanied by Joe and one of the visitors, and Joe took Pip and carried him on his back.

Pip whispered, "I hope, Joe, we shan't find them," and Joe answered "I'd give a shilling if they had cut and run, Pip."

But the soldiers soon caught them, and one was Pip's miserable acquaintance, and once when the man looked at Pip, the child shook his head to try and let him know he had said nothing.

But the convict, without looking at anyone, told the Sergeant he

Pip and the Convict

wanted to say something to prevent other people being under suspicion, and said he had taken some "wittles" from the blacksmith's. "It was some broken wittles, that's what it was, and a dram of liquor, and a pie."

"Have you happened to miss such an article as a pie, blacksmith?" enquired the Sergeant.

"My wife did, at the very moment when you came in. Don't you know, Pip?"

"So," said the convict, looking at Joe, "you're the blacksmith, are you? Then I'm sorry to say, I've eat your pie."

"God knows you're welcome to it," said Joe. "We don't know what you have done, but we wouldn't have you starved to death for it, poor miserable fellow creature. Would us, Pip?"

Then the boat came, and the convicts were taken back to their prison, and Joe carried Pip home.

* * * * * * *

Some years after, some mysterious friend sent money for Pip to be educated and brought up as a gentleman, but it was only when Pip was quite grown up that he discovered this mysterious friend was the wretched convict who had frightened him so dreadfully that cold, dark Christmas Eve.

The End.

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