1838

The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby: Part 09

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BRITISH COLLEGE OF HEALTH,
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NOTICE.—Whereas a most unjustifiable application is about being made to Parliament by the Medical Profession, for a Medical Inquisition in this Country, which will have for its object to prevent the establishing of any system of Medicine, however beneficial to the Public at large, because such system may militate against the pecuniary interests of the Medical Body; We, the undersigned, being three Medical Practitioners duly licensed, hereby declare, that we have for some years past used ourselves, and administered to others, Morison's Medicines in all cases of disease, and are of opinion, 1st, that they are a cure for all curable diseases; and, 2dly, that the theory upon which such medicines are administered is the only true one; the whole of which we are ready and willing to verify whenever called upon. In conclusion, we cannot but regret that in such an important question to mankind generally, the Medical Profession should cautiously abstain from all fair and impartial investigation on the subject.

ROBERT LYNCH, M.D.
RICHARD TOTHILL, Surgeon to the Exeter Hygeian Dispensary, Heavitree, near Exeter.
JOHNSON LINCOLN, Surgeon, R.N., Northallerton, Yorkshire.

September 21, 1838.

SYNOPSIS OF THE CAUSE AND CURE OF DISEASE,
ACCORDING TO THE HYGEIAN, OR MORISONIAN SYSTEM.

A knowledge of the best means for preserving and restoring health is the most important of human pursuits. This knowledge is only to be acquired by following Nature.

1. All animal bodies consist of fluids and solids.
2. It is from and by the fluids that the solids are formed.
3. The fluids contained in the human body are four times the weight of the solids.
4. The chief of the fluids is the blood, from which all the others are derived and derivable.
5. The blood is the life—the primum mobile—the first agent—from which all others derive their origin.
6. Health depends upon the purity of the blood.
7. The purity of the blood depends upon its having free outlets for its acquired impurities.
8. Disease is induced by the choking up of these outlets in the bowels, by an accumulation of mucus on the inner surface of the intestines, &c.
9. This accumulation is occasioned by anything that weakens the circulation or hurs digestion.
10. The impurities thus detained in the blood occasion every species of disease, according to the particular locality in which they become lodged.
11. All diseases proceed from one source, therefore they may all be cured by one medicine.
12. This medicine must be a purgative, innocuous in itself, yet sufficiently powerful to carry off the above-mentioned mucus, and by improving digestion, improve the blood.
13. This discovery has been made by Mr. James Morison, Hygeian, in the composition of the Universal Medicines.

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Gentlemen accustomed to wear STOCKS, will find those manufactured at this Establishment UNEQUALED in PRICE and DURABILITY, by any in the trade: they also being made on greatly improved PATENT STEIFFNERS. Every size kept constantly on hand, or made to any Fancy Pattern in Two Hours. All new Styles in this Article imported as soon as introduced in PARIS. THE RICH FIGURED SATIN SCARFS in a constant succession of New Patterns; also W. E. W.'s novel article—GERMAN CRAVATS, which, for those Gentlemen who do not wear Stocks, is the best article ever introduced. An unusually large stock of LINEN AND LONG-CLOTH SHIRTS always on hand, or made promptly to measure in a superior manner.

N.B. Outfits to any part of the World, done with the greatest possible despatch and economy.

**CHINA TABLE SERVICES.**

NEWINGTON & SANDER, Nos. 319 and 320, High Holborn, opposite Gray's-Inn, London, have now on view their new Shapes and Patterns in PORCELAIN and STONE CHINA DINNER SERVICES, which, whether in the chaste, but elegant Patterns of European design, or in the more gorgeous Imitations of the Eastern style, possess all the excellences for which the best British Porcelain is so justly celebrated. N. and S. can also offer for selection the greatest choice ever displayed under one roof of GILT DESSERT and TEA SERVICES, in every variety of Shape and Colouring. Deficiencies occasioned by breakage during use can always be supplied.

Rich Cut Glass Dessert Services, and all other Articles in that brilliant material, of pure quality and superior finish. All the Show-Rooms are heated with hot water. Families will be punctually waited upon with Patterns, by addressing as above.

**TUCK AND BECK'S GENTLEMEN'S PERUKES AND LADIES' HEAD-DRESSES, PERFECTED ENTIRELY BY MACHINERY.**

The fabric from which the hair springs, in this beautiful invention, is so soft, and imitative of the scalp of the head, as not only to baffle the scrutiny of the eye, but to deceive the touch also. Finished specimens of every description of ORNAMENTAL HAIR may be inspected at 14, Poultry, near the Mansion House.

**TUCK & BECK'S CELEBRATED VENETIAN POMADE.**

For the Growth and Embellishment of the Hair, so extensively Patronised by the Fashionable World, for its superior Fragrance, Purity, and Efficacy. Sold in jars at 3s. 6d., 5s., 7s. 6d., and 10s. 6d. each.

**EIGHT DAY CLOCK, IN BLACK MARBLE STAND.**

Striking the hours and half hours, Height, twelve inches and a half. Price Eight Guineas. Ditto size smaller, Seven Guineas.

The elegant Flat Gold Watches, on the Horizontal Construction, with Highly Finished Movements, Jewelled; are offered with Ornamental Silver Dials, Price Nine Guineas each; or with Gold Dials, Ten Guineas each, Warranted.

Watches on the Vertical Construction, which is not quite so accurate, are offered one quarter less in price.

N. B. The Horizontal Watches, Silver cases, same as the above in other respects, are Charged 5 Guineas each, warranted, Second-hand Watches, Plate, &c., bought or taken in exchange.

The ground floor, also the first, second, and third floors, are fitted up as Show-rooms, to contain a large stock of Silver and Plated Goods, Jewellery, Watches, &c.; and purchasers will find many advantages, both in respect of Price and Variety, at this Establishment.

A Pamphlet, containing a list of prices of Plate, Plated Goods, Watches, Clocks, &c., may be had gratis, or will be forwarded on an answer to a post-paid application.

T. DOX SAVORY, WORKING SILVERSMITH, GOLDSMITH, AND WATCHMAKER, 47. Cornhill, (Seven doors from Gracechurch Street,) London.
**APSLY PELLATT’S**

**ABRIDGED LIST OF Net Cash Prices for the best Flint Glass Ware.**

### DECANTERS.

25 Strong quart Nelson shape decanters, cut all over, bold flutes and cut brim & stopper, P.M. each 10s. to 12s. 0d.

26 Do. three-ringed royal shape, cut on and between rings, turned out stop, P.M. each 10s. 0d.

27 Do. do. not cut on or between rings, nor turned out stopper, P.M. ea. 8s. to 9s. 0d.

Fancy shapes, cut all over, eight flutes, spire stopper, &c. each, P.M. 16s. to 18s.

Do. six flutes only, each, P.M. 24s. to 27s.

### DISHES.

31 Dishes, oblong, pillar moulded, scolloped edges, cut star.

- 5-in. 7-in. 9-in. 11-in. 13-in. each, P.M. 3s. 6d. to 6s. 6d.

32 Fancy shapes, cut all over, eight flutes, spire stopper, P.M. each 16s. to 18s.

Do. six flutes only, each, P.M. 24s. to 27s.

### FINGER CUPS.

37 Fluted finger-cups, strong, about 14 oz. each.

- P.M. each 2s. 6d.

Do. plain flint, punted, per doz 18s. to 21s.

### PICKLES.

46 Pickles, half fluted for 3 in. holes, R.M. ea. 4s. 6d.

47 Strong, moulded bottom, 3-in. hole, cut all over, flat flutes, R.M. each. 5s.

Best cut star do. for 3½ in. hole, P.M. ea. 7s. 6d.

Very strong and best cut, P.M. each 14s. 0d.

### WATER JUGS.

59 Quarts, neatly fluted and cut rings, each.

- P.M. each 14s. to 18s.

60 Ewer shape, best cut handles, &c. 21s.

61 Silver do. scolloped edges, each, P.M. 36s. 0d.

### WATER BOTTLES.

70 Moulded pillar body, cut neck, each.

- P.M. each 3s.

71 Cut neck and star.

- P.M. each 3s.

72 Double fluted cut rings.

- P.M. each 3s.

73 Very strong pillar, moulded body, cut neck and rings.

- P.M. each 5s.

74 Grecian shape, fluted all over.

- P.M. each 7s.

### TUMBLERS.

- Tale 9s.

Flint 7s. 10s. 12s. 15s. 18s. 19s. 21s. to 23s.

### WINES.

- 8s. to 15s. 18s. 19s. 20s. to 30s.

Glass Blowing, Cutting, and Engraving, may be inspected by Purchasers, at Mr. Pellatt's Extensive Flint Glass and Steam Cutting Works, in Holland Street, near Blackfriars' Bridge, any Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

Merchants and the Trade supplied on equitable Terms.

M. & W. Colli, Printers, 194, Bishopsgate Street Within.
HARRISON'S FAMILY MEDICINES.

ANODYNE LINIMENT,

FOR THE CURE OF

RHEUMATISM, GOUT, LUMBAGO, SCIATICA, TIC DOLOREUX, CROUP, QUINSY, SORE THROAT, STIFF NECK, INFLAMMATION OF THE CHEST, &c. &c.

ADDRESS.—Without pretending to more than he is able to perform; or having the Charlatanism to promulgate a false theory in medicine; or, above all, the desire to impose upon the credulity of the public, the Proprietor of the Anodyne Liniment fearlessly asserts, that this preparation is the most valuable and effective remedy extant, for the relief and cure of the above diseases, and of local pain, in whatever part of the body situate. It is a sedative, and curés by relieving the irritation of the sentient nerves of the diseased part. A single trial will carry conviction of its wonderful remedial virtues to the minds of the most sceptical, and increase the reputation it has already established.

COUGH PILLS,

(WITHOUT OPium, OR ANY OTHER INJURIOUS DRUG).

ADDRESS.—At this season of the year, when Cough is the unwelcome intruder at almost every domestic hearth, public attention cannot be too often or too forcibly drawn to those remedies which assist Nature to rid herself of the baneful effects of that most insidious and dangerous of all diseases,—Cough!—The proprietor of these Pills assures the invalid, that they will be found a most efficient remedy for Cough, Asthma, and all Pulmonary Affections, of however long standing,—performing a cure, by increasing expectoration, and insensible perspiration,—and that they do not cause either Headache, or Constipation of Bowels, the usual effects of remedies for this class of diseases.

APERIENT PILLS,

(WITHOUT CALOMEL, OR ANY DRASTIC DRUG).

ADDRESS.—The utility of aperient medicines is too well known and acknowledged, by every person of common sense in the present day, to require comment. It is not the case, but the abuse of this remedy that is objectionable. There are numberless forms of aperient and antiscious pills, of one kind and another, daily advertised, to all of which some objections may, with truth, be made. The proprietor of these Aperient Pills, however, asserts, with the confidence founded on many years' successful experience of the remedy, that they will be found to possess a decided superiority over all preparations of the kind hitherto brought before the public,—performing, in moderate doses, all that is required of them, without griping, or any inconvenience to the patient, merely unloading the bowels, and keeping up, for a day or two, such gentle action as would be effected by Nature in a healthy state,—differing in this respect from all other Aperient Medicines, which generally leave a state of constipation, requiring a constant repetition of the remedy. They are, indeed, so mild in their operation, that they may be taken by the infant; and are confidently recommended to pregnant women. The proprietor, conscious that they would be sanctioned, is willing to submit his prescriptions to the ordeal of any medical body, except of those visionaries, the Homeopathists, of whose pretended remedies it may be said,

"The effect was great, because the dose was small; 'Twould been greater, had there been none at all!"

NOTE.—Full directions and remarks are enclosed with each packet of these medicines, to which the attention of the invalid is particularly requested.

The above medicines are faithfully prepared by the proprietor from the prescriptions of Mr. HARRISON, Surgeon, late of Blandford, Dorset; and sold wholesale by Barclay and Sons, Farrington Street; Edwards, St. Paul's; Constable and Fidgen, Borough; and retail by Sanger, Oxford Street; Butler, Cheapside; March, Old Patent Medicine Warehouse, Middle Row, Holborn; Priest, Parliament Street; and by all Patent Medicine Vendors throughout the kingdom.
This Institution is so constituted as to afford the benefits of Life Assurance in their fullest extent to Policy holders, and to present greater facilities and accommodation than can be obtained in any similar establishment. Among others, the following improvements on the system usually adopted, are recommended to the attention of the Public.

A most economical set of Tables—computed expressly for the use of this Institution, from authentic and complete data; and presenting the lowest rates of Assurance that can be offered, without compromising the safety of the Institution.

A Table of increasing rates of Premium, on a new and remarkable plan, peculiarly advantageous in cases where Assurances are effected, by way of securing loans or debts, a less immediate payment being required on a policy for the whole term of life, than in any other office; and the holder having the option of paying a periodically-increasing rate; or of having the sum assured diminished, according to an equitable scale of reduction.

A Table of decreasing rates of Premium, also on a novel and remarkable plan; the Policy-holder having the option of discontinuing the payment of all further premiums after twenty, fifteen, ten, and even five years; and the Policy still remaining in force,—in the first case, for the full amount originally assured; and in either of the three other cases, for a portion of the same, according to a fixed and equitable scale, endorsed upon the Policy.

Policies effected by persons on their own lives, not rendered void in case of death by duelling, or the hands of justice. In the event of suicide, if the Policy be assigned to a bond fide creditor, the sum assured paid without deduction; if not so assigned, the full amount of premiums returned to the family of the assured.

Policies revived without the exaction of a fine within twelve months, on the production of satisfactory evidence as to health, and payment of interest on the premiums due.

Age of the assured in every case admitted in the Policy.

All claims payable within one month after proof of death.

A liberal commission allowed to solicitors and agents.

Extract from increasing Rates of Premium for an Assurance of £100, for whole Term of Life.

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PETER MORRISON, Resident Director.
Life Assurance in this Institution than can be obtained at or from the system usually adopted in the use of this Institution, but at a premium that can be afforded, unless

remarkable plan, peculiarly suited to cases of illness or debts, a less immediate payment to the holder; and the holder being a policy diminished, according to a

remarkable plan: the Policy shuts in after twenty-one, on any new one for the full amount originally, for, according to a fixed and equal:

A void in case of death by infirmities added to a break fully endured, the policy's permanence returned to the family

months, on the production of the

In case of death by illness, or by accident, and in the event of death in the first six months, the policy shall be voided.

Table shows the amount of £100, for whole Term of

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Affectionate behaviour of Messrs. Pyke & Pluck
Nicholas hints at the probability of his leaving the Company.
MRS. NICKLEBY BECOMES ACQUAINTED WITH MESSRS. PYKE AND PLUCK, WHOSE AFFECTION AND INTEREST ARE BEYOND ALL BOUNDS.

MRS. NICKLEBY had not felt so proud and important for many a day, as when, on reaching home, she gave herself wholly up to the pleasant visions which had accompanied her on her way thither. Lady Mulberry Hawk—that was the prevalent idea. Lady Mulberry Hawk!—On Tuesday last, at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Right Reverend the Bishop of Llandaff, Sir Mulberry Hawk, of Mulberry Castle, North Wales, to Catherine, only daughter of the late Nicholas Nickleby, Esquire, of Devonshire. "Upon my word!" cried Mrs. Nicholas Nickleby, "it sounds very well."

Having despatched the ceremony, with its attendant festivities, to the perfect satisfaction of her own mind, the sanguine mother pictured to her imagination a long train of honours and distinctions which could not fail to accompany Kate in her new and brilliant sphere. She would be presented at court, of course. On the anniversary of her birth-day, which was upon the nineteenth of July ("at ten minutes past three o'clock in the morning," thought Mrs. Nickleby in a parenthesis, "for I recollect asking what o'clock it was,") Sir Mulberry would give a great feast to all his tenants, and would return them three and a half per cent, on the amount of their last half-year's rent, as would be fully described and recorded in the fashionable intelligence, to the immeasurable delight and admiration of all the readers thereof. Kate's picture, too, would be in at least half-a-dozen of the annuals, and on the opposite page would appear, in delicate type, "Lines on contemplating the Portrait of Lady Mulberry Hawk. By Sir Dingleby Dabber." Perhaps some one annual, of more comprehensive design than its fellows, might even contain a portrait of the mother of Lady Mulberry Hawk, with lines by the father of Sir Dingleby Dabber. More unlikely things had come to pass. Less interesting portraits had appeared. As this thought occurred to the good lady, her countenance unconsciously assumed that compound expression of simpering and sleepiness which, being common to all such portraits, is perhaps one reason why they are always so charming and agreeable.

With such triumphs of aerial architecture did Mrs. Nickleby occupy the whole evening after her accidental introduction to Ralph's titled friends; and dreams, no less prophetic and equally promising, haunted her sleep that night. She was preparing for her frugal dinner next day, still occupied with the same ideas—a little softened down perhaps by sleep and daylight—when the girl who attended her, partly for company, and partly to assist in the household affairs, rushed into the room in unwonted agitation, and announced that two gentlemen were waiting in the passage for permission to walk up stairs.
"Bless my heart!" cried Mrs. Nickleby, hastily arranging her cap and front, "if it should be—dear me, standing in the passage all this time—why don't you go and ask them to walk up, you stupid thing?"

While the girl was gone on this errand, Mrs. Nickleby hastily swept into a cupboard all vestiges of eating and drinking; which she had scarcely done, and seated herself with looks as collected as she could assume, when two gentlemen, both perfect strangers, presented themselves.

"How do you do?" said one gentleman, laying great stress on the last word of the inquiry.

"How do you do?" said the other gentleman, altering the emphasis, as if to give variety to the salutation.

Mrs. Nickleby curtseyed and smiled, and curtseyed again, and remarked, rubbing her hands as she did so, that she hadn't the—really—the honour to—

"To know us," said the first gentleman. "The loss has been ours, Mrs. Nickleby. Has the loss been ours, Pyke?"

"It has, Pluck," answered the other gentleman.

"We have regretted it very often, I believe, Pyke?" said the first gentleman.

"Very often, Pluck," answered the second.

"But now," said the first gentleman, "now we have the happiness we have pined and languished for. Have we pined and languished for this happiness, Pyke, or have we not?"

"You know we have, Pluck," said Pyke, reproachfully.

"You hear him, ma'am?" said Mr. Pluck, looking round; "you hear the unimpeachable testimony of my friend Pyke—that reminds me,—formalities, formalities, must not be neglected in civilized society. Pyke—Mrs. Nickleby."

Mr. Pyke laid his hand upon his heart, and bowed low.

"Whether I shall introduce myself with the same formality," said Mr. Pluck—"whether I shall say myself that my name is Pluck, or whether I shall ask my friend Pyke (who being now regularly introduced, is competent to the office) to state for me, Mrs. Nickleby, that my name is Pluck; whether I shall claim your acquaintance on the plain ground of the strong interest I take in your welfare, or whether I shall make myself known to you as the friend of Sir Mulberry Hawk—these, Mrs. Nickleby, are considerations which I leave to you to determine."

"Any friend of Sir Mulberry Hawk's requires no better introduction to me," observed Mrs. Nickleby, graciously.

"It is delightful to hear you say so," said Mr. Pluck, drawing a chair close to Mrs. Nickleby, and sitting himself down. "It is refreshing to know that you hold my excellent friend, Sir Mulberry, in such high esteem. A word in your ear, Mrs. Nickleby. When Sir Mulberry knows it, he will be a happy man—I say, Mrs. Nickleby, a happy man. Pyke, be seated."

"My good opinion," said Mrs. Nickleby, and the poor lady exulted...
in the idea that she was marvellously sly,—"my good opinion can be of very little consequence to a gentleman like Sir Mulberry."

"Of little consequence!" exclaimed Mr. Pluck. "Pyke, of what consequence to our friend, Sir Mulberry, is the good opinion of Mrs. Nickleby?"

"Of what consequence?" echoed Pyke.

"Aye," repeated Pluck; "is it of the greatest consequence?"

"Of the very greatest consequence," replied Pyke.

"Mrs. Nickleby cannot be ignorant," said Mr. Pluck, "of the immense impression which that sweet girl has—"

"Pluck!" said his friend, "beware!"

"Pyke is right," muttered Mr. Pluck, after a short pause; "I was not to mention it. Pyke is very right. Thank you, Pyke."

"Well now, really," thought Mrs. Nickleby within herself. "Such delicacy as that, I never saw!"

Mr. Pluck, after feigning to be in a condition of great embarrassment for some minutes, resumed the conversation by entreating Mrs. Nickleby to take no heed of what he had inadvertently said—to consider him imprudent, rash, injudicious. The only stipulation he would make in his own favour was, that she should give him credit for the best intentions.

"But when," said Mr. Pluck, "when I see so much sweetness and beauty on the one hand, and so much ardour and devotion on the other, I—pardon me, Pyke, I didn't intend to resume that theme. Change the subject, Pyke."

"We promised Sir Mulberry and Lord Frederick," said Pyke, "that we'd call this morning and inquire whether you took any cold last night."

"Not the least in the world last night, Sir;" replied Mrs. Nickleby, "with many thanks to his Lordship and Sir Mulberry for doing me the honour to inquire; not the least—which is the more singular, as I really am very subject to colds, indeed—very subject. I had a cold once," said Mrs. Nickleby, "I think it was in the year eighteen hundred and seventeen; let me see, four and five are nine, and—yes, eighteen hundred and seventeen, that I thought I should get rid of; actually and seriously, that I thought I never should get rid of. I was only cured at last by a remedy that I don't know whether you ever happened to hear of, Mr. Pluck. You have a gallon of water as hot as you can possibly bear it, with a pound of salt and sixpence'orth of the finest bran, and sit with your head in it for twenty minutes every night just before going to bed; at least, I don't mean your head—your feet. It's a most extraordinary cure—a most extraordinary care. I used it for the first time, I recollect, the day after Christmas Day, and by the middle of April following the cold was gone. It seems quite a miracle when you come to think of it, for I had it ever since the beginning of September."

"What an afflicting calamity!" said Mr. Pyke.

"Perfectly horrid!" exclaimed Mr. Pluck.
"But it's worth the pain of hearing, only to know that Mrs. Nickleby recovered it, isn't it, Pluck?" cried Mr. Pyke.

"That is the circumstance which gives it such a thrilling interest," replied Mr. Pluck.

"But come," said Pyke, as if suddenly recollecting himself; "we must not forget our mission in the pleasure of this interview. We come on a mission, Mrs. Nickleby."

"On a mission," exclaimed that good lady, to whose mind a definitive proposal of marriage for Kate at once presented itself in lively colours.

"From Sir Mulberry," replied Pyke. "You must be very dull here."

"Rather dull, I confess," said Mrs. Nickleby.

"We bring the compliments of Sir Mulberry Hawk, and a thousand entreaties that you'll take a seat in a private box at the play to-night," said Mr. Pluck.

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Nickleby, "I never go out at all, never."

"And that is the very reason, my dear Mrs. Nickleby, why you should go out to-night," retorted Mr. Pluck. "Pyke, entreat Mrs. Nickleby."

"Oh, pray do," said Pyke.

"You positively must," urged Pluck.

"You are very kind," said Mrs. Nickleby hesitating; "but—"

"There's not a but in the case, my dear Mrs. Nickleby," remonstrated Mr. Pluck; "not such a word in the vocabulary. Your brother-in-law joins us, Lord Frederick joins us, Sir Mulberry joins us, Pyke joins us—a refusal is out of the question. Sir Mulberry sends a carriage for you—twenty minutes before seven to the moment—you'll not be so cruel as to disappoint the whole party, Mrs. Nickleby?"

"You are so very pressing, that I scarcely know what to say," replied the worthy lady.

"Say nothing; not a word, not a word, my dearest madam," urged Mr. Pluck. "Mrs. Nickleby," said that excellent gentleman, lowering his voice, "there is the most trifling, the most excusable breach of confidence in what I am about to say; and yet if my friend Pyke there overheard it—such is that man's delicate sense of honour, Mrs. Nickleby—he'd have me out before dinner-time."

Mrs. Nickleby cast an apprehensive glance at the warlike Pyke, who had walked to the window; and Mr. Pluck, squeezing her hand, went on—

"Your daughter has made a conquest—a conquest on which I may congratulate you. Sir Mulberry, my dear ma'am, Sir Mulberry is her devoted slave. Hem!"

"Hah!" cried Mr. Pyke at this juncture, snatching something from the chimney-piece with a theatrical air. "What is this! what do I behold!"

"What do you behold, my dear fellow?" asked Mr. Pluck.

"It is the face, the countenance, the expression," cried Mr. Pyke, falling into his chair with a miniature in his hand; "feebly portrayed, imperfectly caught, but still the face, the countenance, the expression."
I recognise it at this distance!" exclaimed Mr. Pluck in a fit of enthusiasm. "Is it not, my dear madam, the faint similitude of—"

"It is my daughter's portrait," said Mrs. Nickleby, with great pride. And so it was. And little Miss La Creevy had brought it home for inspection only two nights before.

Mr. Pyke no sooner ascertained that he was quite right in his conjecture, than he launched into the most extravagant encomiums of the divine original; and in the warmth of his enthusiasm kissed the picture a thousand times, while Mr. Pluck pressed Mrs. Nickleby's hand to his heart, and congratulated her on the possession of such a daughter, with so much earnestness and affection, that the tears stood, or seemed to stand, in his eyes. Poor Mrs. Nickleby, who had listened in a state of enviable complacency at first, became at length quite overpowered by these tokens of regard for, and attachment to, the family; and even the servant girl, who had peeped in at the door, remained rooted to the spot in astonishment at the ecstasies of the two friendly visitors.

By degrees these raptures subsided, and Mrs. Nickleby went on to entertain her guests with a lament over her fallen fortunes, and a picturesque account of her old house in the country: comprising a full description of the different apartments, not forgetting the little store-room, and a lively recollection of how many steps you went down to get into the garden, and which way you turned when you came out at the parlour-door, and what capital fixtures there were in the kitchen. This last reflection naturally conducted her into the wash-house where she stumbled upon the brewing utensils, among which she might have wandered for an hour, if the mere mention of those implements had not, by an association of ideas, instantly reminded Mr. Pyke that he was "amazing thirsty."

"And I'll tell you what," said Mr. Pyke; "if you'll send round to the public-house for a pot of mild half-and-half, positively and actually I'll drink it."

And positively and actually Mr. Pyke did drink it, and Mr. Pluck helped him, while Mrs. Nickleby looked on in divided admiration of the condensation of the two, and the aptitude with which they accommodated themselves to the pewter-pot; in explanation of which seeming marvel it may be here observed, that gentlemen who, like Messrs. Pyke and Pluck, live upon their wits (or not so much, perhaps, upon the presence of their own wits as upon the absence of wits in other people) are occasionally reduced to very narrow shifts and straits, and are at such periods accustomed to regale themselves in a very simple and primitive manner.

"At twenty minutes before seven, then," said Mr. Pyke, rising, "the coach will be here. One more look—one little look—at that sweet face. Ah! here it is. Unmoved, unchanged!" This by the way was a very remarkable circumstance, miniatures being liable to so many changes of expression—"Oh, Pluck! Pluck!"

Mr. Pluck made no other reply than kissing Mrs. Nickleby's hand with a great show of feeling and attachment; Mr. Pyke having done the same, both gentlemen hastily withdrew.
Mrs. Nickleby was commonly in the habit of giving herself credit for a pretty tolerable share of penetration and acuteness, but she had never felt so satisfied with her own sharp-sightedness as she did that day. She had found it all out the night before. She had never seen Sir Mulberry and Kate together—never even heard Sir Mulberry's name—and yet hadn't she said to herself from the very first, that she saw how the case stood? and what a triumph it was, for there was now no doubt about it. If these flattering attentions to herself were not sufficient proof, Sir Mulberry's confidential friend had suffered the secret to escape him in so many words. "I am quite in love with that dear Mr. Pluck, I declare I am," said Mrs. Nickleby.

There was one great source of uneasiness in the midst of this good fortune, and that was the having nobody by, to whom she could confide it. Once or twice she almost resolved to walk straight to Miss La Creevy's and tell it all to her. "But I don't know," thought Mrs. Nickleby; "she is a very worthy person, but I am afraid too much beneath Sir Mulberry's station for us to make a companion of. Poor thing!" Acting upon this grave consideration she rejected the idea of taking the little portrait-painter into her confidence, and contented herself with holding out sundry vague and mysterious hopes of preferment to the servant girl, who received these obscure hints of dawning greatness with much veneration and respect.

Punctual to its time came the promised vehicle, which was no hackney coach, but a private chariot, having behind it a footman, whose legs, although somewhat large for his body, might, as mere abstract legs, have set themselves up for models at the Royal Academy. It was quite exhilarating to hear the clash and bustle with which he banged the door and jumped up behind after Mrs. Nickleby was in; and as that good lady was perfectly unconscious that he applied the gold-headed end of his long stick to his nose, and so telegraphed most disrespectfully to the coachman over her very head, she sat in a state of much stiffness and dignity, not a little proud of her position.

At the theatre entrance there was more banging and more bustle, and there were also Messrs. Pyke and Pluck waiting to escort her to her box; and so polite were they, that Mr. Pyke threatened with many oaths to "smifligate" a very old man with a lantern who accidentally stumbled in her way—to the great terror of Mrs. Nickleby, who, conjecturing more from Mr. Pyke's excitement than any previous acquaintance with the etymology of the word that smifligation and bloodshed must be in the main one and the same thing, was alarmed beyond expression, lest something should occur. Fortunately, however, Mr. Pyke confined himself to mere verbal smifligation, and they reached their box with no more serious interruption by the way, than a desire on the part of the same pugnacious gentleman to "smash" the assistant box-keeper for having happened to mistake the number.

Mrs. Nickleby had scarcely been put away behind the curtain of the box in an arm chair, when Sir Mulberry and Lord Verisopht arrived, arrayed from the crowns of their heads to the tips of their gloves, and from the tips of their gloves to the toes of their boots, in
the most elegant and costly manner. Sir Mulberry was a little hoarser
than on the previous day, and Lord Verisopht looked rather sleepy
and queer; from which tokens, as well as from the circumstance
of their both being to a trifling extent unsteady upon their legs, Mrs.
Nickleby justly concluded that they had taken dinner.

"We have been—we have been—toastimg your lovely daughter,
Mrs. Nickleby," whispered Sir Mulberry, sitting down behind her.

"Oh, ho!" thought that knowing lady; "wine in; truth out.—
You are very kind, Sir Mulberry."

"No, no, upon my soul!" replied Sir Mulberry Hawk. "It's you
that's kind, upon my soul it is. It was so kind of you to come to-

 Soda very kind of you to invite me, you mean, Sir Mulberry,"
replied Mrs. Nickleby, tossing her head, and looking prodigiously sly.

"I am so anxious to know you, so anxious to cultivate your good
opinion, so desirous that there should be a delicious kind of harmo-

nious family understanding between us," said Sir Mulberry, "that
you mustn't think I'm disinterested in what I do. I'm infernal selfish;
I am—upon my soul I am."

"I am sure you can't be selfish, Sir Mulberry!" replied Mrs.
Nickleby. "You have much too open and generous a countenance
for that."

"What an extraordinary observer you are!" said Sir Mulberry Hawk.

"Oh no, indeed, I don't see very far into things, Sir Mulberry,"
replied Mrs. Nickleby, in a tone of voice which left the baronet to
infer that she saw very far indeed.

"I am quite afraid of you," said the baronet. "Upon my soul,"
repeated Sir Mulberry, looking round to his companions; "I am
afraid of Mrs. Nickleby. She is so immensely sharp."

Messrs. Pyke and Pluck shook their heads mysteriously, and
observed together that they had found that out long ago; upon which
Mrs. Nickleby tittered, and Sir Mulberry laughed, and Pyke and Pluck
roared.

"But where's my brother-in-law, Sir Mulberry?" inquired Mrs.
Nickleby. "I shouldn't be here without him. I hope he's coming."

"Pyke," said Sir Mulberry, taking out his tooth-pick and lolling
back in his chair, as if he were too lazy to invent a reply to this ques-
tion. "Where's Ralph Nickleby?"

"Pluck," said Pyke, imitating the baronet's action, and turning
the lie over to his friend, "where's Ralph Nickleby?"

Mr. Pluck was about to return some evasive reply, when the
bustle caused by a party entering the next box seemed to attract
the attention of all four gentlemen, who exchanged glances of much
meaning. The new party beginning to converse together, Sir Mul-
berry suddenly assumed the character of a most attentive listener, and
imposed his friends not to breathe—not to breathe.

"Why not?" said Mrs. Nickleby. "What is the matter?"

"Hush!" replied Sir Mulberry, laying his hand on her arm.

"Lord Frederick, do you recognize the tones of that voice?"
"Deyvle take me if I didn't think it was the voice of Miss Nickleby."

"Lor, my Lord!" cried Miss Nickleby's mamma, thrusting her head round the curtain. "Why, actually—Kate, my dear, Kate."

"You here, mamma! Is it possible!"

"Possible, my dear? Yes."

"Why who—who on earth is that you have with you, mamma?" said Kate, shrinking back as she caught sight of a man smiling and kissing his hand.

"Who do you suppose, my dear?" replied Mrs. Nickleby, bending towards Mrs. Wititterly, and speaking a little louder for that lady's edification. "There's Mr. Pyke, Mr. Pluck, Sir Mulberry Hawk, and Lord Frederick Verisopht."

"Gracious Heaven!" thought Kate hurriedly. "How comes she in such society!"

Now, Kate thought thus so hurriedly, and the surprise was so great, and moreover brought back so forcibly the recollection of what had passed at Ralph's delectable dinner, that she turned extremely pale and appeared greatly agitated, which symptoms being observed by Mrs. Nickleby, were at once set down by that acute lady as being caused and occasioned by violent love. But, although she was in no small degree delighted by this discovery which reflected so much credit on her own quickness of perception, it did not lessen her motherly anxiety in Kate's behalf; and accordingly, with a vast quantity of trepidation, she quitted her own box to hasten into that of Mrs. Wititterly. Mrs. Wititterly, keenly alive to the glory of having a lord and a baronet among her visiting acquaintance, lost no time in signing to Mr. Wititterly to open the door, and thus it was that in less than thirty seconds Mrs. Nickleby's party had made an irruption into Mrs. Wititterly's box, which it filled to the very door, there being in fact only room for Messrs. Pyke and Pluck to get in their heads and waistcoats.

"My dear Kate," said Mrs. Nickleby, kissing her daughter affectionately. "How ill you looked a moment ago! You quite frightened me, I declare!"

"It was mere fancy, mamma,—the—the—reflection of the lights perhaps," replied Kate, glancing nervously round, and finding it impossible to whisper any caution or explanation.

"Don't you see Sir Mulberry Hawk, my dear?"

Kate bowed slightly, and biting her lip turned her head towards the stage.

But Sir Mulberry Hawk was not to be so easily repulsed, for he advanced with extended hand; and Mrs. Nickleby officiously informing Kate of this circumstance, she was obliged to extend her own. Sir Mulberry detained it while he murmured a profusion of compliments, which Kate, remembering what had passed between them, rightly considered as so many aggravations of the insult he had already put upon her. Then followed the recognition of Lord Verisopht, and then the greeting of Mr. Pyke, and then that of Mr. Pluck, and finally,
to complete the young lady's mortification, she was compelled at Mrs. Wititterly's request to perform the ceremony of introducing the odious persons, whom she regarded with the utmost indignation and abhorrence.

"Mrs. Wititterly is delighted," said Mr. Wititterly, rubbing his hands; "delighted, my Lord, I am sure, with this opportunity of contracting an acquaintance which, I trust, my Lord, we shall improve. Julia, my dear, you must not allow yourself to be too much excited, you must not. Indeed you must not. Mrs. Wititterly is of a most excitable nature, Sir Mulberry. The snuff of a candle, the wick of a lamp, the bloom on a peach, the down on a butterfly. You might blow her away, my Lord; you might blow her away."

Sir Mulberry seemed to think that it would be a great convenience if the lady could be blown away. He said, however, that the delight was mutual, and Lord Verisopht added that it was mutual, whereupon Messrs. Pyke and Pluck were heard to murmur from the distance that it was very mutual indeed.

"I take an interest, my Lord," said Mrs. Wititterly, with a faint smile, "such an interest in the drama."

"Ye—es. It's very interesting," replied Lord Verisopht.

"I'm always ill after Shakspeare," said Mrs. Wititterly. "I scarcely exist the next day; I find the re-action so very great after a tragedy, my Lord, and Shakspeare is such a delicious creature."

"Ye—es!" replied Lord Verisopht. "He was a clayver man."

"Do you know, my Lord," said Mrs. Wititterly, after a long silence, "I find I take so much more interest in his plays, after having been to that dear little dull house he was born in! Were you ever there, my Lord?"

"No, nayver," replied Verisopht. "Then really you ought to go, my Lord," returned Mrs. Wititterly, in very languid and drawling accents. "I don't know how it is, but after you've seen the place and written your name in the little book, somehow or other you seem to be inspired; it kindles up quite a fire within one."

"Ye—es!" replied Lord Verisopht. "I shall certainly go there."

"Julia, my life," interposed Mr. Wititterly, "you are deceiving his lordship—intentionally, my Lord, she is deceiving you. It is your poetical temperament, my dear—your ethereal soul—your fervid imagination, which throws you into a glow of genius and excitement. There is nothing in the place, my dear—nothing, nothing."

"I think there must be something in the place," said Mrs. Nickleby, who had been listening in silence; "for, soon after I was married, I went to Stratford with poor dear Mr. Nickleby, in a post-chaise from Birmingham—was it a post-chaise then?" said Mrs. Nickleby, considering; "yes, it must have been a post-chaise, because I recollect at the time that the driver had a green shade over his left eye;—in a post-chaise from Birmingham, and after we had seen Shakspeare's tomb and birth-place, we went back to the inn there, where we slept that night, and I recollect that all night long I
dreamt of nothing but a black gentleman, at full length, in plaster-of-Paris, with a lay down collar tied with two tassels, leaning against a post and thinking; and when I woke in the morning and described him to Mr. Nickleby, he said it was Shakspeare just as he had been when he was alive, which was very curious indeed. Stratford—Stratford,” continued Mrs. Nickleby, considering. “Yes, I am positive about that, because I recollect I was in the family way with my son Nicholas at the time, and I had been very much frightened by an Italian image boy that very morning. In fact, it was quite a mercy, ma’am,” added Mrs. Nickleby, in a whisper to Mrs. Wititterly, “that my son didn’t turn out to be a Shakspeare, and what a dreadful thing that would have been!”

When Mrs. Nickleby had brought this interesting anecdote to a close, Pyke and Pluck, ever zealous in their patron’s cause, proposed the adjournment of a detachment of the party into the next box; and with so much skill were the preliminaries adjusted, that Kate, despite all she could say or do to the contrary, had no alternative but to suffer herself to be led away by Sir Mulberry Hawk. Her mother and Mr. Pluck accompanied them, but the worthy lady, pluming herself upon her discretion, took particular care not so much as to look at her daughter during the whole evening, and to seem wholly absorbed in the jokes and conversation of Mr. Pluck, who, having been appointed sentry over Mrs. Nickleby for that especial purpose, neglected, on her side, no possible opportunity of engrossing her attention.

Lord Frederick Verisopht remained in the next box to be talked to by Mrs. Wititterly, and Mr. Pyke was in attendance to throw in a word or two when necessary. As to Mr. Wititterly, he was sufficiently busy in the body of the house, informing such of his friends and acquaintance as happened to be there, that those two gentlemen up stairs, whom they had seen in conversation with Mrs. W., were the distinguished Lord Frederick Verisopht and his most intimate friend, the gay Sir Mulberry Hawk—a communication which inflamed several respectable housekeepers with the utmost jealousy and rage, and reduced sixteen unmarried daughters to the very brink of despair.

The evening came to an end at last, but Kate had yet to be handed down stairs by the detested Sir Mulbury; and so skilfully were the manoeuvres of Messrs. Pyke and Pluck conducted, that she and the baronet were the last of the party, and were even—without an appearance of effort or design—left at some little distance behind.

“Don’t hurry, don’t hurry,” said Sir Mulberry, as Kate hastened on, and attempted to release her arm.

She made no reply, but still pressed forward.

“Nay, then—” coolly observed Sir Mulberry, stopping her outright.

“You had best not seek to detain me, sir!” said Kate, angrily.

“And why not?” retorted Sir Mulberry. “My dear creature, now why do you keep up this show of displeasure?”

“Show!” repeated Kate, indignantly. “How dare you presume to speak to me, Sir—to address me—to come into my presence?”
"You look prettier in a passion, Miss Nickleby," said Sir Mulberry Hawk, stooping down, the better to see her face.

"I hold you in the bitterest detestation and contempt, sir," said Kate. "If you find any attraction in looks of disgust and aversion, you—let me rejoin my friends, sir, instantly. Whatever considerations may have withhold me thus far, I will disregard them all, and take a course that even you might feel, if you do not immediately suffer me to proceed."

Sir Mulberry smiled, and still looking in her face and retaining her arm, walked towards the door.

"If no regard for my sex or helpless situation will induce you to desist from this coarse and unmanly persecution," said Kate, scarcely knowing, in the tumult of her passions, what she said,—"I have a brother who will resent it dearly, one day."

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed Sir Mulberry, as though quietly communing with himself; passing his arm round her waist as he spoke, "she looks more beautiful, and I like her better in this manner, than when her eyes are cast down, and she is in perfect repose!"

How Kate reached the lobby where her friends were waiting she never knew, but she hurried across it without at all regarding them, and disengaged herself suddenly from her companion, sprang into the coach, and throwing herself into its darkest corner burst into tears.

Messrs. Pyke and Pluck, knowing their cue, at once threw the party into great commotion by shouting for the carriages, and getting up a violent quarrel with sundry inoffensive bystanders; in the midst of which tumult they put the afflicted Mrs. Nickleby in her chariot, and having got her safely off, turned their thoughts to Mrs. Witterley, whose attention also they had now effectually distracted from the young lady, by throwing her into a state of the utmost bewilderment and consternation. At length, the conveyance in which she had come rolled off too with its load, and the four worthies, being left alone under the portico, enjoyed a hearty laugh together.

"There," said Sir Mulberry, turning to his noble friend. "Didn't I tell you last night that if we could find where they were going by bribing a servant through my fellow, and then established ourselves close by with the mother, these people's honour would be our own? Why here it is, done in four-and-twenty hours."

"Ye-es," replied the dupe. "But I have been tied to the old woman all night."

"Hear him," said Sir Mulberry, turning to his two friends. "Hear this discontented grumbler. Isn't it enough to make a man swear never to help him in his plots and schemes again? Isn't it an infernal shame?"

Pyke asked Pluck whether it was not an infernal shame, and Pluck asked Pyke; but neither answered.

"Isn't it the truth?" demanded Verisopht. "Wasn't it so?"

"Wasn't it so!" repeated Sir Mulberry. "How would you have had it? How could we have got a general invitation at first sight—come when you like, go when you like, stop as long as you like, do
what you like—if you, the lord, had not made yourself agreeable to the foolish mistress of the house? Do I care for this girl, except as your friend? Haven't I been sounding your praises in her ears, and bearing her pretty sulk and peevishness all night for you? What sort of stuff do you think I'm made of? Would I do this for every man—Don't I deserve even gratitude in return?"

"You're a deyvlish good fellow," said the poor young lord, taking his friend's arm. "'Upon my life, you're a deyvlish good fellow, Hawk."

"And I have done right, have I?" demanded Sir Mulberry.

"Quite ri-ght."

"And like a poor, silly, good-natured, friendly dog as I am, eh?"

"Ye-es, ye-es—like a friend," replied the other.

"Well then," replied Sir Mulberry, "I'm satisfied. And now let's go and have our revenge on the German baron and the Frenchman, who cleaned you out so handsomely last night."

With these words the friendly creature took his companion's arm and led him away, turning half round as he did so, and bestowing a wink and a contemptuous smile on Messrs. Pyke and Pluck, who, cramming their handkerchiefs into their mouths to denote their silent enjoyment of the whole proceedings, followed their patron and his victim at a little distance.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MISS NICKLEBY, RENDERED DESPERATE BY THE PERSECUTION OF SIR MULBERRY HAWK, AND THE COMPLICATED DIFFICULTIES AND DISTRESSES WHICH SURROUND HER, APPEALS, AS A LAST RESOURCE, TO HER UNCLE FOR PROTECTION.

The ensuing morning brought reflection with it, as morning usually does; but widely different was the train of thought it awakened in the different persons who had been so unexpectedly brought together on the preceding evening, by the active agency of Messrs. Pyke and Pluck.

The reflections of Sir Mulberry Hawk—if such a term can be applied to the thoughts of the systematic and calculating man of dissipation, whose joys, regrets, pains, and pleasures, are all of self, and who would seem to retain nothing of the intellectual faculty but the power to debase himself, and to degrade the very nature whose outward semblance he wears—the reflections of Sir Mulberry Hawk turned upon Kate Nickleby, and were, in brief, that she was undoubtedly handsome; that her coyness must be easily conquerable by a man of his address and experience, and that the pursuit was one which could not fail to redound to his credit, and greatly to enhance his reputation with the world. And lest this last consideration—no mean or secondary one with Sir Mulberry—should sound strangely in the ears of
made yourself equal to my care for this pit; care for your praises to be sung all night for you! What could I do this for you next?"

In the poor young lad, who is a dryish gold little chap, I am satisfied. And the baron and the Frequentia can't.

Some, let it be remembered that most men live in a world of their own, and that in that limited circle alone are they ambitious for distinction and applause. Sir Mulberry's world was peopled with profligates, and he acted accordingly.

Thus, cases of injustice, and oppression, and tyranny, and the most extravagant bigotry, are in constant occurrence among us every day. It is the custom to trumpet forth much wonder and astonishment at the chief actors therein setting at defiance so completely the opinion of the world; but there is no greater fallacy; it is precisely because they do consult the opinion of their own little world that such things take place at all, and strike the great world dumb with amazement.

The reflections of Mrs. Nickleby were of the proudest and most complacent kind; and under the influence of her very agreeable delusion she straightway sat down and indited a long letter to Kate, in which she expressed her entire approval of the admirable choice she had made, and extolled Sir Mulberry to the skies; asserting, for the more complete satisfaction of her daughter's feelings, that he was precisely the individual whom she (Mrs. Nickleby) would have chosen for her son-in-law, if she had had the picking and choosing from all mankind. The good lady then, with the preliminary observation that she might be fairly supposed not to have lived in the world so long without knowing its ways, communicated a great many subtle precepts applicable to the state of courtship, and confirmed in their wisdom by her own personal experience. Above all things she commended a strict maidenly reserve, as being not only a very laudable thing in itself, but as tending materially to strengthen and increase a lover's ardour. "And I never," added Mrs. Nickleby, "was more delighted in my life than to observe last night, my dear, that your good sense had already told you this." With which sentiment, and various hints of the pleasure she derived from the knowledge that her daughter inherited so large an instalment of her own excellent sense and discretion (to nearly the full measure of which she might hope, with care, to succeed in time), Mrs. Nickleby concluded a very long and rather illegible letter.

Poor Kate was well nigh distracted on the receipt of four closely-written and closely-crossed sides of congratulation on the very subject which had prevented her closing her eyes all night, and kept her weeping and watching in her chamber; still worse and more trying was the necessity of rendering herself agreeable to Mrs. Wititterly, who, being in low spirits after the fatigue of the preceding night, of course expected her companion (else wherefore had she board and salary?) to be in the best spirits possible. As to Mr. Wititterly, he went about all day in a tremor of delight at having shaken hands with a lord, and having actually asked him to come and see him in his own house. The lord himself, not being troubled to any inconvenient extent with the power of thinking, regaled himself with the conversation of Messrs. Pyke and Pluck, who sharpened their wit by a plentiful indulgence in various costly stimulants at his expense.

It was four in the afternoon—that is, the vulgar afternoon of the sun and the clock—and Mrs. Wititterly reclined, according to custom,
on the drawing-room sofa, while Kate read aloud a new novel in three volumes, entitled "The Lady Flabella," which Alphonse the doubtful had procured from the library that very morning. And it was a production admirably suited to a lady labouring under Mrs. Wititterly's complaint, seeing that there was not a line in it, from beginning to end, which could, by the most remote contingency, awaken the smallest excitement in any person breathing.

Kate read on.

"'Cherizette,' said the lady Flabella, inserting her mouse-like feet in the blue satin slippers, which had unwittingly occasioned the half-playful half-angry altercation between herself and the youthful Colonel Befillaire, in the Duke of Mincefeille's salon de danse on the previous night. 'Cherizette, ma chère, donnez-moi de l'eau-de-Cologne, s'il vous plaît, mon enfant.'

"'Mercie—thank you,' said the Lady Flabella, as the lively but devoted Cherizette plentifully besprinkled with the fragrant compound the Lady Flabella's mouchoir of finest cambric, edged with richest lace, and emblazoned at the four corners with the Flabella crest, and gorgeous heraldic bearings of that noble family; 'Mercie—that will do.'

"'At this instant, while the Lady Flabella yet inhaled that delicious fragrance by holding the mouchoir to her exquisite, but thoughtfully-chiselled nose, the door of the boudoir (artfully concealed by rich hangings of silken damask, the hue of Italy's firmament) was thrown open, and with noiseless tread two valets-de-chambre, clad in sumptuous liversies of peach-blossom and gold, advanced into the room followed by a page in bas de soie—silk stockings—who, while they remained at some distance making the most graceful obeisances, advanced to the feet of his lovely mistress, and dropping on one knee presented, on a golden salver gorgeously chased, a scented billet.

"'The Lady Flabella, with an agitation she could not repress, hastily tore off the envelope and broke the scented seal. It was from Befillaire—the young, the slim, the low-voiced—her own Befillaire.'

"'Oh, charming!' interrupted Kate's patroness, who was sometimes taken literary; "Poetic, really. Read that description again, Miss Nickleby.'

Kate complied.

"Sweet, indeed!' said Mrs. Wititterly, with a sigh. "So voluptuous, is it not—so soft?"

"Yes, I think it is," replied Kate, gently; "very soft."

"Close the book, Miss Nickleby," said Mrs. Wititterly. "I can hear nothing more to-day; I should be sorry to disturb the impression of that sweet description. Close the book."

Kate complied, not unwillingly; and, as she did so, Mrs. Wititterly raising her glass with a languid hand, remarked, that she looked pale.

"It was the fright of that—that noise and confusion last night," said Kate.

"How very odd!" exclaimed Mrs. Wititterly, with a look of surprise. And certainly, when one comes to think of it, it was very odd that anything should have disturbed a companion. A steam-engine,
or other ingenious piece of mechanism out of order, would have been nothing to it.

"How did you come to know Lord Frederick, and those other delightful creatures, child?" asked Mrs. Wititterly, still eyeing Kate through her glass.

"I met them at my uncle's," said Kate, vexed to feel that she was colouring deeply, but unable to keep down the blood which rushed to her face whenever she thought of that man.

"Have you known them long?"

"No," rejoined Kate. "Not long."

"I was very glad of the opportunity which that respectable person, your mother, gave us of being known to them," said Mrs. Wititterly, in a lofty manner. "Some friends of ours were on the very point of introducing us, which makes it quite remarkable."

This was said lest Miss Nickleby should grow conceited on the honour and dignity of having known four great people (for Pyke and Pluck were included among the delightful creatures), whom Mrs. Wititterly did not know. But as the circumstance had made no impression one way or other upon Kate's mind, the force of the observation was quite lost upon her.

"They asked permission to call," said Mrs. Wititterly. "I gave it them of course."

"Do you expect them to-day?" Kate ventured to inquire.

Mrs. Wititterly's answer was lost in the noise of a tremendous rapping at the street-door, and, before it had ceased to vibrate, there drove up a handsome cabriolet, out of which leaped Sir Mulberry Hawk and his friend Lord Verisopht.

"They are here now," said Kate, rising and hurrying away.

"Miss Nickleby!" cried Mrs. Wititterly, perfectly aghast at a companion's attempting to quit the room, without her permission first had and obtained. "Pray don't think of going."

"You are very good!" replied Kate. "But—"

"For goodness' sake, don't agitate me by making me speak so much," said Mrs. Wititterly, with great sharpness. "Dear me, Miss Nickleby, I beg—"

It was in vain for Kate to protest that she was unwell, for the footsteps of the knockers, whoever they were, were already on the stairs. She resumed her seat, and had scarcely done so, when the doubtful page darted into the room and announced, Mr. Pyke, and Mr. Pluck, and Lord Verisopht, and Sir Mulberry Hawk, all at one burst.

"The most extraordinary thing in the world," said Mr. Pluck saluting both ladies with the utmost cordiality; "the most extraordinary thing. As Lord Frederick and Sir Mulberry drove up to the door, Pyke and I had that instant knocked."

"That instant knocked," said Pyke.

"No matter how you came, so that you are here," said Mrs. Wititterly, who, by dint of lying on the same sofa for three years and a half, had got up quite a little pantomime of graceful attitudes, and
now threw herself into the most striking of the whole series, to astonish
the visitors. "I am delighted, I am sure."

"And how is Miss Nickleby?" said Sir Mulberry Hawk, accosting
Kate, in a low voice—not so low, however, but that it reached the ears
of Mrs. Wititterly.

"Why, she complains of suffering from the fright of last night," said the lady. "I am sure I don't wonder at it, for my nerves are
quite torn to pieces."

"And yet you look," observed Sir Mulberry, turning round; "and
yet you look—"

"Beyond everything," said Mr. Pyke, coming to his patron's assist-
ance. Of course Mr. Pluck said the same.

"I am afraid Sir Mulberry is a flatterer, my Lord," said Mrs.
Wititterly, turning to that young gentleman, who had been sucking
the head of his cane in silence, and staring at Kate.

"Oh, deyvlish!" replied Verisopht. Having given utterance to
which remarkable sentiment, he occupied himself as before.

"Neither does Miss Nickleby look the worse," said Sir Mulberry,
bending his bold gaze upon her. "She was always handsome, but,
upon my soul, ma'am, you seem to have imparted some of your own
good looks to her besides."

To judge from the glow which suffused the poor girl's countenance
after this speech, Mrs. Wititterly might, with some show of reason,
have been supposed to have imparted to it some of that artificial bloom
which decorated her own. Mrs. Wititterly admitted, though not
with the best grace in the world, that Kate did look pretty. She began
to think too, that Sir Mulberry was not quite so agreeable a creature
as she had at first supposed him; for, although a skilful flatterer is a
most delightful companion if you can keep him all to yourself, his
taste becomes very doubtful when he takes to complimenting other
people.

"Pyke," said the watchful Mr. Pluck, observing the effect which
the praise of Miss Nickleby had produced.

"Well, Pluck," said Pyke.

"Is there anybody," demanded Mr. Pluck, mysteriously, "anybody
you know, that Mrs. Wititterly's profile reminds you of?"

"Reminds me of!" answered Pyke. "Of course there is."

"Who do you mean?" said Pluck, in the same mysterious manner.

"The D. of B."

"The C. of B.," replied Pyke, with the faintest trace of a grin
lingering in his countenance. "The beautiful sister is the countess;
not the duchess."

"True," said Pluck, "the C. of B. The resemblance is won-
derful!"

"Perfectly startling," said Mr. Pyke.

Here was a state of things! Mrs. Wititterly was declared, upon the
testimony of two veracious and competent witnesses, to be the very
picture of a countess! This was one of the consequences of getting
into good society. Why, she might have moved among grovelling
people for twenty-years, and never heard of it. How could she, indeed? what did they know about countesses!

The two gentlemen having by the greediness with which this little bait was swallowed, tested the extent of Mrs. Wititterly’s appetite for adulation, proceeded to administer that commodity in very large doses, thus affording to Sir Mulberry Hawk an opportunity of pestering Miss Nickleby with questions and remarks to which she was absolutely obliged to make some reply. Meanwhile, Lord Verisopht enjoyed unmolested the full flavour of the gold knob at the top of his cane, as he would have done to the end of the interview if Mr. Wititterly had not come home, and caused the conversation to turn to his favorite topic.

"My Lord," said Mr. Wititterly, "I am delighted—honoured—proud. Be seated again, my Lord, pray. I am proud, indeed—most proud.

It was to the secret annoyance of his wife that Mr. Wititterly said all this, for, although she was bursting with pride and arrogance, she would have had the illustrious guests believe that their visit was quite a common occurrence, and that they had lords and baronets to see them every day in the week. But Mr. Wititterly’s feelings were beyond the power of suppression.

"It is an honour, indeed!" said Mr. Wititterly. "Julia, my soul, you will suffer for this to-morrow."

"Suffer!" cried Lord Verisopht.

"The reaction, my Lord, the reaction," said Mr. Wititterly. "This violent strain upon the nervous system over, my Lord, what ensues? A sinking, a depression, a lowness, a lassitude, a debility. My Lord, if Sir Tumley Snuffim was to see that delicate creature at this moment, he would not give—a—a—this for her life." In illustration of which remark, Mr. Wititterly took a pinch of snuff from his box and jerked it lightly into the air as an emblem of instability.

"Not that," said Mr. Wititterly, looking about him with a serious countenance. "Sir Tumley Snuffim would not give that for Mrs. Wititterly’s existence."

Mr. Wititterly told this with a kind of sober exultation, as if it were no trifling distinction for a man to have a wife in such a desperate state, and Mrs. Wititterly sighed and looked on, as if she felt the honour, but had determined to bear it as meekly as might be.

"Mrs. Wititterly," said her husband, "is Sir Tumley Snuffim’s favourite patient. I believe I may venture to say, that Mrs. Wititterly is the first person who took the new medicine which is supposed to have destroyed a family at Kensington Gravel Pits. I believe she was. If I am wrong, Julia, my dear, you will correct me."

"I believe I was," said Mrs. Wititterly, in a faint voice.

As there appeared to be some doubt in the mind of his patron how he could best join in this conversation, the indefatigable Mr. Pyke threw himself into the breach, and, by way of saying something to the point, inquired—with reference to the aforesaid medicine—whether it was nice.
"No, Sir, it was not. It had not even that recommendation," said Mr. W.

"Mrs. Wititterly is quite a martyr," observed Pyke, with a complimentary bow.

"I think I am," said Mrs. Wititterly, smiling.

"I think you are, my dear Julia," replied her husband, in a tone which seemed to say that he was not vain, but still must insist upon their privileges. "If anybody, my Lord," added Mr. Wititterly, wheeling round to the nobleman, "will produce to me a greater martyr than Mrs. Wititterly, all I can say is, that I shall be glad to see that martyr, whether male or female—that's all, my Lord."

Pyke and Pluck promptly remarked that certainly nothing could be fairer than that; and the call having been by this time protracted to a very great length, they obeyed Sir Mulberry's look, and rose to go. This brought Sir Mulberry himself and Lord Verisoplit on their legs also. Many protestations of friendship, and expressions anticipative of the pleasure which must inevitably flow from so happy an acquaintance, were exchanged, and the visitors departed, with renewed assurances that at all times and seasons the mansion of the Wititterlys would be honoured by receiving them beneath its roof.

That they came at all times and seasons—that they dined there one day, supped the next, dined again on the next, and were constantly to and fro on all—that they made parties to visit public places, and met by accident at lounges—that upon all these occasions Miss Nickleby was exposed to the constant and unremitting persecution of Sir Mulberry Hawk, who now began to feel his character, even in the estimation of his two dependants, involved in the successful reduction of her pride—that she had no intervals of peace or rest, except at those hours when she could sit in her solitary room and weep over the trials of the day—all these were consequences naturally flowing from the well-laid plans of Sir Mulberry, and their able execution by the auxiliaries, Pyke and Pluck.

And thus for a fortnight matters went on. That any but the weakest and silliest of people could have seen in one interview that Lord Verisoplit, though he was a lord, and Sir Mulberry Hawk, though he was a baronet, were not persons accustomed to be the best possible companions, and were certainly not calculated by habits, manners, tastes, or conversation, to shine with any very great lustre in the society of ladies, need scarcely be remarked. But with Mrs. Wititterly the two titles were all-sufficient; coarseness became humour, vulgarity softened itself down into the most charming eccentricity; insolence took the guise of an easy absence of reserve, attainable only by those who had had the good fortune to mix with high folks.

If the mistress put such a construction upon the behaviour of her new friends, what could the companion urge against them? If they accustomed themselves to very little restraint before the lady of the house, with how much more freedom could they address her paid dependent! Nor was even this the worst. As the odious Sir Mulberry Hawk attached himself to Kate with less and less of disguise, Mrs.
Nicholas Nickleby.

Witterly began to grow jealous of the superior attractions of Miss Nickleby. If this feeling had led to her banishment from the drawing-room when such company was there, Kate would have been only too happy and willing that it should have existed, but unfortunately for her she possessed that native grace and true gentility of manner, and those thousand nameless accomplishments which give to female society its greatest charm; if these be valuable anywhere, they were especially so where the lady of the house was a mere animated doll. The consequence was, that Kate had the double mortification of being an indispensable part of the circle when Sir Mulberry and his friends were there, and of being exposed, on that very account, to all Mrs. Witterly's ill-humours and caprices when they were gone. She became utterly and completely miserable.

Mrs. Witterly had never thrown off the mask with regard to Sir Mulberry, but when she was more than usually out of temper, attributed the circumstance, as ladies sometimes do, to nervous indisposition. However, as the dreadful idea that Lord Verisopht also was somewhat taken with Kate, and that she, Mrs. Witterly, was quite a secondary person, dawned upon that lady's mind and gradually developed itself, she became possessed with a large quantity of highly proper and most virtuous indignation, and felt it her duty, as a married lady and a moral member of society, to mention the circumstance to “the young person” without delay.

Accordingly, Mrs. Witterly broke ground next morning, during a pause in the novel-reading.

“Miss Nickleby,” said Mrs. Witterly, “I wish to speak to you very gravely. I am sorry to have to do it, upon my word I am very sorry, but you leave me no alternative, Miss Nickleby.” Here Mrs. Witterly tossed her head—not passionately, only virtuously—and remarked, with some appearance of excitement, that she feared that palpitation of the heart was coming on again.

“Your behaviour, Miss Nickleby,” resumed the lady, “is very far from pleasing me—very far. I am very anxious indeed that you should do well, but you may depend upon it, Miss Nickleby, you will not, if you go on as you do.”

“Ma’am!” exclaimed Kate, proudly.

“Don't agitate me by speaking in that way, Miss Nickleby, don't,” said Mrs. Witterly, with some violence, “or you'll compel me to ring the bell.”

Kate looked at her, but said nothing.

“You needn't suppose,” resumed Mrs. Witterly, “that your looking at me in that way, Miss Nickleby, will prevent my saying what I am going to say, which I feel to be a religious duty. You needn't direct your glances towards me,” said Mrs. Witterly, with a sudden burst of spite; “I am not Sir Mulberry, no nor Lord Frederick Verisopht, Miss Nickleby; nor am I Mr. Pyke, nor Mr. Pluck either.”

Kate looked at her again, but less steadily than before; and resting her elbow on the table, covered her eyes with her hand.

“If such things had been done when I was a young girl,” said Mrs.
Wititterly (this, by the way, must have been some little time before),
"I don't suppose anybody would have believed it."
"I don't think they would," murmured Kate. "I do not think anybody would believe, without actually knowing it, what I seem doomed to undergo!"

"Don't talk to me of being doomed to undergo, Miss Nickleby, if you please," said Mrs. Wititterly, with a shrillness of tone quite surprising in so great an invalid. "I will not be answered, Miss Nickleby. I am not accustomed to be answered, nor will I permit it for an instant. Do you hear?" she added, waiting with some apparent inconsistency for an answer.

"I do hear you, Ma'am," replied Kate, "with surprise—with greater surprise than I can express."

"I have always considered you a particularly well-behaved young person for your station in life," said Mrs. Wititterly; "and as you are a person of healthy appearance, and neat in your dress and so forth, I have taken an interest in you, as I do still, considering that I owe a sort of duty to that respectable old female, your mother. For these reasons, Miss Nickleby, I must tell you once for all, and begging you to mind what I say, that I must insist upon your immediately altering your very forward behaviour to the gentlemen who visit this house. It really is not becoming," said Mrs. Wititterly, closing her chaste eyes as she spoke; "it is improper—quite improper."

"Oh!" cried Kate, looking upwards and clasping her hands, "is not this, is not this, too cruel, too hard to bear! Is it not enough that I should have suffered as I have, night and day; that I should almost have sunk in my own estimation from very shame of having been brought into contact with such people; but must I also be exposed to this unjust and most unfounded charge!"

"You will have the goodness to recollect, Miss Nickleby," said Mrs. Wititterly, "that when you use such terms as 'unjust,' and 'unfounded,' you charge me, in effect, with stating that which is untrue."

"I do," said Kate, with honest indignation. "Whether you make this accusation of yourself, or at the prompting of others, is alike to me. I say it is vilely, grossly, wilfully untrue. Is it possible!" cried Kate, "that any one of my own sex can have sat by, and not have seen the misery these men have caused me! Is it possible that you, ma'am, can have been present, and failed to mark the insulting freedom that their every look bespoke? Is it possible that you can have avoided seeing, that these libertines, in their utter disrespect for you, and utter disregard of all gentlemanly behaviour and almost of decency, have had but one object in introducing themselves here, and that the furtherance of their designs upon a friendless, helpless girl, who, without this humiliating confession, might have hoped to receive from one so much her senior something like womanly aid and sympathy? I do not—I cannot believe it!"

If poor Kate had possessed the slightest knowledge of the world, she certainly would not have ventured, even in the excitement into
which she had been lashed, upon such an injudicious speech as this. Its effect was precisely what a more experienced observer would have foreseen. Mrs. Wititterly received the attack upon her veracity with exemplary calmness, and listened with the most heroic fortitude to Kate's account of her own sufferings. But allusion being made to her being held in disregard by the gentlemen, she evinced violent emotion, and this blow was no sooner followed up by the remark concerning her seniority, than she fell back upon the sofa, uttering dismal screams.

"What is the matter!" cried Mr. Wititterly, bouncing into the room. "Heavens, what do I see! Julia! Julia! look up, my life, look up!"

But Julia looked down most perseveringly, and screamed still louder! so Mr. Wititterly rang the bell, and danced in a frenzied manner round the sofa on which Mrs. Wititterly lay; uttering perpetual cries for Sir Tumley Snuffim, and never once leaving off to ask for any explanation of the scene before him.

"Run for Sir Tumley," cried Mr. Wititterly, menacing the page with both fists. "I knew it, Miss Nickleby," he said, looking round with an air of melancholy triumph, "that society has been too much for her. This is all soul, you know, every bit of it." With this assurance Mr. Wititterly took up the prostrate form of Mrs. Wititterly, and carried her bodily off to bed.

Kate waited until Sir Tumley Snuffim had paid his visit and looked in with a report, that, through the special intercession of a merciful Providence (thus spake Sir Tumley), Mrs. Wititterly had gone to sleep. She then hastily attired herself for walking, and leaving word that she should return within a couple of hours, hurried away towards her uncle's house.

It had been a good day with Ralph Nickleby,—quite a lucky day; and as he walked to and fro in his little back room with his hands clasped behind him, adding up in his own mind all the sums that had been, or would be, netted from the business done since morning, his mouth was drawn into a hard, stern smile; while the firmness of the lines and curves that made it up, as well as the cunning glance of his cold, bright eye, seemed to tell, that if any resolution or cunning would increase the profits, they would not fail to be excited for the purpose.

"Very good!" said Ralph, in allusion, no doubt, to some proceeding of the day. "He defies the usurer, does he? Well, we shall see. 'Honesty is the best policy,' is it? We'll try that, too.'

He stopped, and then walked on again.

"He is content," said Ralph, relaxing into a smile, "to set his known character and conduct against the power of money—dross, as he calls it. Why, what a dull blockhead this fellow must be! Dross too—dross!—Who's that?"


"What of her?" asked Ralph sharply.

"She's here."
"Here!"

Newman jerked his head towards his little room, to signify that she was waiting there.

"What does she want?" asked Ralph.

"I don't know," rejoined Newman. "Shall I ask?" he added quickly.

"No," replied Ralph. "Show her in—stay." He hastily put away a padlocked cash-box that was on the table, and substituted in its stead an empty purse. "There," said Ralph. "Now she may come in."

Newman, with a grim smile at this manoeuvre, beckoned the young lady to advance, and having placed a chair for her retired; looking stealthily over his shoulder at Ralph as he limped slowly out.

"Well," said Ralph, roughly enough; but still with something more of kindness in his manner than he would have exhibited towards anybody else. "Well, my—dear. What now?"

Kate raised her eyes, which were filled with tears; and with an effort to master her emotion strove to speak, but in vain. So drooping her head again, she remained silent. Her face was hidden from his view, but Ralph could see that she was weeping.

"I can guess the cause of this!" thought Ralph, after looking at her for some time in silence. "I can—I can guess the cause. Well! Well! Well!"—thought Ralph—for the moment quite disconcerted, as he watched the anguish of his beautiful niece. "Where is the harm? only a few tears; and it's an excellent lesson for her—an excellent lesson."

"What is the matter?" asked Ralph, drawing a chair opposite, and sitting down.

He was rather taken aback by the sudden firmness with which Kate looked up and answered him.

"The matter which brings me to you, sir," she said, "is one which should call the blood up into your cheeks, and make you burn to hear, as it does me to tell. I have been wronged; my feelings have been outraged, insulted, wounded past all healing, and by your friends."

"Friends!" cried Ralph, sternly. "I have no friends, girl."

"By the men I saw here, then," returned Kate, quickly. "If they were no friends of yours, and you knew what they were,—oh, the more shame on you, uncle, for bringing me among them. To have subjected me to what I was exposed to here, through any misplaced confidence or imperfect knowledge of your guests, would have required some strong excuse; but if you did it—as I now believe you did—knowing them well, it was most dastardly and cruel."

Ralph drew back in utter amazement at this plain speaking, and regarded Kate with his sternest look. But she met his gaze proudly and firmly, and although her face was very pale, it looked more noble and handsome, lighted up as it was, than it had ever appeared before.

"There is some of that boy's blood in you, I see," said Ralph, speaking in his harshest tones, as something in the flashing eye reminded him of Nicholas at their last meeting.
“I hope there is!” replied Kate. “I should be proud to know it. I am young, uncle, and all the difficulties and miseries of my situation have kept it down, but I have been roused to-day beyond all endurance, and, come what may, I will not, as I am your brother’s child, bear these insults longer.”

“What insults, girl?” demanded Ralph, sharply.

“Remember what took place here, and ask yourself,” replied Kate, colouring deeply. “Uncle, you must—I am sure you will—release me from such vile and degrading companionship as I am exposed to now. I do not mean,” said Kate, hurrying to the old man, and laying her arm upon his shoulder; “I do not mean to be angry and violent—I beg your pardon if I have seemed so, dear uncle—but you do not know what I have suffered, you do not indeed. You cannot tell what the heart of a young girl is—I have no right to expect you should; but when I tell you that I am wretched, and that my heart is breaking, I am sure you will help me. I am sure, I am sure you will!”

Ralph looked at her for an instant; then turned away his head, and beat his foot nervously upon the ground.

“I have gone on day after day,” said Kate, bending over him, and timidly placing her little hand in his, “in the hope that this persecution would cease; I have gone on day after day, compelled to assume the appearance of cheerfulness, when I was most unhappy. I have had no counsellor, no adviser, no one to protect me. Mamma supposes that these are honourable men, rich and distinguished, and how can I—how can I undeceive her—when she is so happy in these little delusions, which are the only happiness she has? The lady with whom you placed me, is not the person to whom I could confide matters of so much delicacy, and I have come at last to you, the only friend I have at hand—almost the only friend I have at all—to entreat and implore you to assist me.”

“How can I assist you, child?” said Ralph, rising from his chair, and pacing up and down the room in his old attitude.

“You have influence with one of these men, I know,” rejoined Kate, emphatically. “Would not a word from you induce them to desist from this unmanly course?”

“No,” said Ralph, suddenly turning; “at least—that—I can’t say it, if it would.”

“Can’t say it!”

“No,” said Ralph, coming to a dead stop, and clasping his hands more tightly behind him. “I can’t say it.”

Kate fell back a step or two, and looked at him, as if in doubt whether she had heard aright.

“We are connected in business,” said Ralph, poised himself alternately on his toes and heels, and looking coolly in his niece’s face, “in business, and I can’t afford to offend them. What is it all after? We have all our trials, and this is one of yours. Some girls would be proud to have such gallants at their feet.”

“Proud!” cried Kate.

“I don’t say,” rejoined Ralph, raising his fore-finger, “but that you
do right to despise them; no, you show your good sense in that, as
indeed I knew from the first you would. Well. In all other respects
you are comfortably bestowed. It's not much to bear. If this young
lord does dog your footsteps, and whisper his drivelling inanities in
your ears, what of it? It's a dishonourable passion. So be it; it
won't last long. Some other novelty will spring up one day, and you
will be released. In the mean time—"

"In the mean time," interrupted Kate, with becoming pride and
indignation, "I am to be the scorn of my own sex, and the toy of
the other; justly condemned by all women of right feeling, and
despised by all honest and honourable men; sunken in my own esteem,
and degraded in every eye that looks upon me. No, not if I work
my fingers to the bone, not if I am driven to the roughest and hardest
labour. Do not mistake me. I will not disgrace your recommendation.
I will remain in the house in which it placed me, until I am entitled
to leave it by the terms of my engagement;—though, mind, I see these
men no more. When I quit it, I will hide myself from them and you,
and, striving to support my mother by hard service, I will live at
least, in peace, and trust in God to help me."

With these words, she waved her hand, and quitted the room,
leaving Ralph Nickleby motionless as a statue.

The surprise with which Kate, as she closed the room-door, beheld,
close beside it, Newman Noggs standing bolt upright in a little niche
in the wall like some scarecrow or Guy Faux laid up in winter quar-
ters, almost occasioned her to call aloud. But, Newman laying his
finger upon his lips, she had the presence of mind to refrain.

"Don't," said Newman, gliding out of his recess, and accompanying
her across the hall. "Don't cry, don't cry." Two very large tears,
by-the-bye, were running down Newman's face as he spoke.

"I see how it is," said poor Noggs, drawing from his pocket what
seemed to be a very old duster, and wiping Kate's eyes with it, as
gently as if she were an infant. "You're giving way now. Yes,
yes, very good; that's right, I like that. It was right not to give
way before him. Yes, yes! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, yes. Poor thing!"

With these disjointed exclamations, Newman wiped his own eyes
with the afore-mentioned duster, and, limping to the street-door, opened
it to let her out.

"Don't cry any more," whispered Newman. "I shall see you soon.
Ha! ha! ha! And so shall somebody else too. Yes, yes. Ho! ho!"

"God bless you," answered Kate, hurrying out, "God bless you."

"Same to you," rejoined Newman, opening the door again a little
way, to say so. "Ha, ha, ha! Ho! ho! ho!"

And Newman Noggs opened the door once again to nod cheerfully,
and laugh—and shut it, to shake his head mournfully, and cry.

Ralph remained in the same attitude till he heard the noise of the
closing door, when he shrugged his shoulders, and after a few turns
about the room—hasty at first, but gradually becoming slower, as he
relapsed into himself—sat down before his desk.

It is one of those problems of human nature, which may be noted
down, but not solved;—although Ralph felt no remorse at that moment for his conduct towards the innocent, true-hearted girl; although his libertine clients had done precisely what he had expected, precisely what he most wished, and precisely what would tend most to his advantage, still he hated them for doing it, from the very bottom of his soul.

"Ugh!" said Ralph, scowling round, and shaking his clenched hand as the faces of the two profligates rose up before his mind; "you shall pay for this. Oh! you shall pay for this!"

As the usurer turned for consolation to his books and papers, a performance was going on outside his office-door, which would have occasioned him no small surprise, if he could by any means have become acquainted with it.

Newman Noggs was the sole actor. He stood at a little distance from the door, with his face towards it; and with the sleeves of his coat turned back at the wrists, was occupied in bestowing the most vigorous, scientific, and straightforward blows upon the empty air.

At first sight, this would have appeared merely a wise precaution in a man of sedentary habits, with the view of opening the chest and strengthening the muscles of the arms. But the intense eagerness and joy depicted in the face of Newman Noggs, which was suffused with perspiration; the surprising energy with which he directed a constant succession of blows towards a particular panel about five feet eight from the ground, and still worked away in the most untiring and persevering manner, would have sufficiently explained to the attentive observer, that his imagination was threshing; to within an inch of his life, his body's most active employer, Mr. Ralph Nickleby.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF NICHOLAS, AND CERTAIN INTERNAL DIVISIONS IN THE COMPANY OF MR. VINCENT CRUMMLES.

The unexpected success and favour with which his experiment at Portsmouth had been received, induced Mr. Crummles to prolong his stay in that town for a fortnight beyond the period he had originally assigned for the duration of his visit, during which time Nicholas personated a vast variety of characters with undiminished success, and attracted so many people to the theatre who had never been seen there before, that a benefit was considered by the manager a very promising speculation. Nicholas assenting to the terms proposed, the benefit was had, and by it he realized no less a sum than twenty pounds.

Possessed of this unexpected wealth, his first act was to inclose to honest John Browdie the amount of his friendly loan, which he accompanied with many expressions of gratitude and esteem, and many cordial wishes for his matrimonial happiness. To Newman Noggs he
forwarded one half of the sum he had realized, entreating him to take
an opportunity of handing it to Kate in secret, and conveying to
her the warmest assurances of his love and affection. He made no
mention of the way in which he had employed himself; merely
informing Newman that a letter addressed to him under his assumed
name at the Post Office, Portsmouth, would readily find him, and
entreating that worthy friend to write full particulars of the situation
of his mother and sister, and an account of all the grand things that
Ralph Nickleby had done for them since his departure from London.

"You are out of spirits," said Smike, on the night after the letter
had been despatched.

"Not I!" rejoined Nicholas, with assumed gaiety, for the confession
would have made the boy miserable all night; "I was thinking about
my sister, Smike."

"Sister!"

"Aye."

"Is she like you?" inquired Smike.

"Why, so they say," replied Nicholas, laughing, "only a great deal
handsomer."

"She must be very beautiful," said Smike, after thinking a little
while with his hands folded together, and his eyes bent upon his
friend.

"Anybody who didn't know you as well as I do, my dear fellow,
would say you were an accomplished courtier," said Nicholas.

"I don't even know what that is," replied Smike, shaking his head.

"Shall I ever see your sister?"

"To be sure," cried Nicholas; "we shall all be together one of
these days—when we are rich, Smike."

"How is it that you, who are so kind and good to me, have nobody
to be kind to you?" asked Smike. "I cannot make that out."

"Why, it is a long story," replied Nicholas, "and one you would
have some difficulty in comprehending, I fear. I have an enemy—you
understand what that is?"

"Oh, yes, I understand that," said Smike.

"Well, it is owing to him," returned Nicholas. "He is rich, and
not so easily punished as your old enemy, Mr. Squeers. He is my
uncle, but he is a villain, and has done me wrong."

"Has he thought?" asked Smike, bending eagerly forward. "What
is his name? Tell me his name."

"Ralph—Ralph Nickleby."

"Ralph Nickleby," repeated Smike. "Ralph. I'll get that name
by heart."

He had muttered it over to himself some twenty times, when a
loud knock at the door disturbed him from his occupation. Before
he could open it, Mr. Folair, the pantomimist, thrust in his head.

Mr. Folair's head was usually decorated with a very round hat,
unsusually high in the crown, and curled up quite tight in the brims.
On the present occasion he wore it very much on one side, with the
back part forward in consequence of its being the least rusty; round
his neck he wore a flaming red worsted comforter, whereof the straggling ends peeped out beneath his threadbare Newmarket coat, which was very tight and buttoned all the way up. He carried in his hand one very dirty glove, and a cheap dress cane with a glass handle; in short, his whole appearance was unusually dashing, and demonstrated a far more scrupulous attention to his toilet, than he was in the habit of bestowing upon it.

"Good evening, sir," said Mr. Folair, taking off the tall hat, and running his fingers through his hair. "I bring a communication. Hem!"

"From whom, and what about?" inquired Nicholas. "You are unusually mysterious to-night."

"Cold, perhaps," returned Mr. Folair; "cold, perhaps. That is the fault of my position—not of myself, Mr. Johnson. My position as a mutual friend requires it, sir." Mr. Folair paused with a most impressive look, and diving into the hat before noticed, drew from thence a small piece of whit-y-brown paper curiously folded, whence he brought forth a note which it had served to keep clean, and handing it over to Nicholas, said—

"Have the goodness to read that, sir."

Nicholas, in a state of much amazement, took the note and broke the seal, glancing at Mr. Folair as he did so, who, knitting his brow and pursing up his mouth with great dignity, was sitting with his eyes steadily fixed upon the ceiling.

It was directed to blank Johnson Esq., by favour of Augustus Folair Esq.; and the astonishment of Nicholas was in no degree lessened, when he found it to be couched in the following laconic terms:

"Mr. Lenville presents his kind regards to Mr. Johnson, and will feel obliged if he will inform him at what hour to-morrow morning it will be most convenient to him to meet Mr. L. at the Theatre, for the purpose of having his nose pulled in the presence of the company.

"Mr. Lenville requests Mr. Johnson not to neglect making an appointment, as he has invited two or three professional friends to witness the ceremony, and cannot disappoint them upon any account whatever.

"Portsmouth, Tuesday night."

Indignant as he was at this impertinence, there was something so exquisitely absurd in such a cartel of defiance, that Nicholas was obliged to bite his lip and read the note over two or three times before he could muster sufficient gravity and sternness to address the hostile messenger, who had not taken his eyes from the ceiling, nor altered the expression of his face in the slightest degree.

"Do you know the contents of this note, sir?" he asked, at length.

"Yes," rejoined Mr. Folair, looking round for an instant, and immediately carrying his eyes back again to the ceiling.

"And how dare you bring it here, sir?" asked Nicholas, tearing it into very little pieces, and jerking it in a shower towards the messenger.

"Had you no fear of being kicked down stairs, sir?"
Mr. Folair turned his head—now ornamented with several fragments of the note—towards Nicholas, and with the same imperturbable dignity briefly replied "No."

"Then," said Nicholas, taking up the tall hat and tossing it towards the door, "you had better follow that article of your dress, sir, or you may find yourself very disagreeably deceived, and that within a dozen seconds."

"I say, Johnson," remonstrated Mr. Folair, suddenly losing all his dignity, "none of that, you know. No tricks with a gentleman's wardrobe."

"Leave the room," returned Nicholas. "How could you presume to come here on such an errand, you scoundrel?"

"Pooh! pooh!" said Mr. Folair, unwinding his comforter, and gradually getting himself out of it. "There—that's enough."

"Enough!" cried Nicholas, advancing towards him. "Take yourself off, sir."

"Pooh! pooh! I tell you," returned Mr. Folair, waving his hand in depreciation of any further wrath; "I wasn't in earnest. I only brought it in joke."

"You had better be careful how you indulge in such jokes again," said Nicholas, "or you may find an allusion to pulling noses rather a dangerous reminder for the subject of your facetiousness. Was it written in joke too, pray?"

"No no, that's the best of it," returned the actor; "right down earnest—honour bright."

Nicholas could not repress a smile at the odd figure before him, which, at all times more calculated to provoke mirth than anger, was especially so at that moment, when with one knee upon the ground Mr. Folair twirled his old hat round upon his hand, and affected the extremest agony lest any of the nap should have been knocked off—an ornament which, it is almost superfluosus to say, it had not boasted for many months.

"Come, sir," said Nicholas, laughing in spite of himself. "Have the goodness to explain."

"Why, I'll tell you how it is," said Mr. Folair, sitting himself down in a chair with great coolness. "Since you came here, Lenville has done nothing but second business, and, instead of having a reception every night as he used to have, they have let him come on as if he was nobody."

"What do you mean by a reception?" asked Nicholas.

"Jupiter!" exclaimed Mr. Folair, "what an unsophisticated shepherd you are, Johnson! Why, applause from the house when you first come on. So he has gone on night after night, never getting a hand and you getting a couple of rounds at least, and sometimes three, till at length he got quite desperate, and had half a mind last night to play Tybalt with a real sword, and pink you—not dangerously, but just enough to lay you up for a month or two."

"Very considerate," remarked Nicholas.

"Yes, I think it was under the circumstances; his professional repu-
tion being at stake," said Mr. Folair, quite seriously. "But his heart failed him, and he cast about for some other way of annoying you, and making himself popular at the same time—for that's the point. Notoriety, notoriety, is the thing. Bless you, if he had pinked you," said Mr. Folair, stopping to make a calculation in his mind, "it would have been worth—aah, it would have been worth eight or ten shillings a week to him. All the town would have come to see the actor who nearly killed a man by mistake; I shouldn't wonder if it had got him an engagement in London. However, he was obliged to try some other mode of getting popular, and this one occurred to him. It's a clever idea, really. If you had shown the white feather, and let him pull your nose, he'd have got it into the paper; if you had sworn the peace against him, it would have been in the paper too, and he'd have been just as much talked about as you—don't you see?"

"Oh certainly," rejoined Nicholas; "but suppose I were to turn the tables, and pull his nose, what then? Would that make his fortune?"

"Why, I don't think it would," replied Mr. Folair, scratching his head, "because there wouldn't be any romance about it, and he wouldn't be favourably known. To tell you the truth though, he didn't calculate much upon that, for you're always so mild-spoken, and are so popular among the women, that we didn't suspect you of showing fight. If you did, however, he has a way of getting out of it easily, depend upon that."

"Has he?" rejoined Nicholas. "We will try, to-morrow morning. In the meantime, you can give whatever account of our interview you like best. Good night."

As Mr. Folair was pretty well known among his fellow-actors for a man who delighted in mischief, and was by no means scrupulous, Nicholas had not much doubt but that he had secretly prompted the tragedian in the course he had taken, and, moreover, that he would have carried his mission with a very high hand if he had not been disconcerted by the very unexpected demonstrations with which it had been received. It was not worth his while to be serious with him, however, so he dismissed the pantomimist, with a gentle hint that if he offended again it would be under the penalty of a broken head; and Mr. Folair, taking the caution in exceedingly good part, walked away to confer with his principal, and give such an account of his proceedings as he might think best calculated to carry on the joke.

He had no doubt reported that Nicholas was in a state of extreme bodily fear; for when that young gentleman walked with much deliberation down to the theatre next morning at the usual hour, he found all the company assembled in evident expectation, and Mr. Lenville, with his severest stage face, sitting majestically on a table, whistling defiance.

Now the ladies were on the side of Nicholas, and the gentlemen (being jealous) were on the side of the disappointed tragedian; so that the latter formed a little group about the redoubtable Mr. Lenville, and the former looked on at a little distance in some trepidation and anxiety. On Nicholas stopping to salute them, Mr. Lenville laughed
a scornful laugh, and made some general remark touching the natural history of puppies.

"Oh!" said Nicholas, looking quietly round, "are you there?"

"Slave!" returned Mr. Lenville, flourishing his right arm, and approaching Nicholas with a theatrical stride. But somehow he appeared just at that moment a little startled, as if Nicholas did not look quite so frightened as he had expected, and came all at once to an awkward halt, at which the assembled ladies burst into a shrill laugh.

"Object of my scorn and hatred!" said Mr. Lenville, "I hold ye in contempt."

Nicholas laughed in very unexpected enjoyment of this performance; and the ladies, by way of encouragement, laughed louder than before; whereat Mr. Lenville assumed his bitterest smile, and expressed his opinion that they were "minions."

"But they shall not protect ye!" said the tragedian, taking an upward look at Nicholas, beginning at his boots and ending at the crown of his head, and then a downward one, beginning at the crown of his head, and ending at his boots—which two looks, as everybody knows, express defiance on the stage. "They shall not protect ye—boy!"

Thus speaking, Mr. Lenville folded his arms, and treated Nicholas to that expression of face with which, in melo-dramatic performances, he was in the habit of regarding the tyrannical kings when they said, 'Away with him to the deepest dungeon beneath the castle moat;' and which, accompanied with a little jingling of fetters, had been known to produce great effects in its time.

Whether it was the absence of the fetters or not, it made no very deep impression on Mr. Lenville's adversary, however, but rather seemed to increase the good humour expressed in his countenance; in which stage of the contest, one or two gentlemen, who had come out expressly to witness the pulling of Nicholas's nose, grew impatient, murmuring that if it were to be done at all it had better be done at once, and that if Mr. Lenville didn't mean to do it he had better say so, and not keep them waiting there. Thus urged, the tragedian adjusted the cuff of his right coat sleeve for the performance of the operation, and walked in a very stately manner up to Nicholas, who suffered him to approach to within the requisite distance, and then, without the smallest discomposure, knocked him down.

Before the discomfited tragedian could raise his head from the boards, Mrs. Lenville (who, as has been before hinted, was in an interesting state) rushed from the rear rank of ladies, and uttering a piercing scream threw herself upon the body.

"Do you see this, monster? Do you see this?" cried Mr. Lenville, sitting up, and pointing to his prostrate lady, who was holding him very tight round the waist.

"Come," said Nicholas, nodding his head, "apologize for the insolent note you wrote to me last night, and waste no more time in talking."
“Never!” cried Mr. Lenville.

“Yes—yes—yes!” screamed his wife. “For my sake—for mine, Lenville—forego all idle forms, unless you would see me a blighted corse at your feet.”

“This is affecting!” said Mr. Lenville, looking round him, and drawing the back of his hand across his eyes. “The ties of nature are strong. The weak husband and the father—the father that is yet to be—relents. I apologize.”

“Humbly and submissively?” said Nicholas.

“Humbly and submissively,” returned the tragedian, scowling upwards. “But only to save her—for a time will come——”

“Very good,” said Nicholas; “I hope Mrs. Lenville may have a good one; and when it does come, and you are a father, you shall retract it if you have the courage. There. Be careful, sir, to what lengths your jealousy carries you another time; and be careful, also, before you venture too far, to ascertain your rival’s temper.” With this parting advice Nicholas picked up Mr. Lenville’s ash stick which had flown out of his hand, and breaking it in half, threw him the pieces and withdrew, bowing slightly to the spectators as he walked out.

The profoundest deference was paid to Nicholas that night, and the people who had been most anxious to have his nose pulled in the morning, embraced occasions of taking him aside, and telling him with great feeling, how very friendly they took it that he should have treated that Lenville so properly, who was a most unbearable fellow, and on whom they had all, by a remarkable coincidence, at one time or other contemplated the infliction of condign punishment, which they had only been restrained from administering by considerations of mercy; indeed, to judge from the invariable termination of all these stories, there never was such a charitable and kind-hearted set of people as the male members of Mr. Crummles’s company.

Nicholas bore his triumph, as he had his success in the little world of the theatre, with the utmost moderation and good humour. The crest-fallen Mr. Lenville made an expiring effort to obtain revenge by sending a boy into the gallery to hiss, but he fell a sacrifice to popular indignation, and was promptly turned out without having his money back.

“Well, Smike,” said Nicholas when the first piece was over, and he had almost finished dressing to go home, “is there any letter yet?”

“Yes,” replied Smike, “I got this one from the post-office.”

“From Newman Noggs,” said Nicholas, casting his eye upon the cramped direction; “it’s no easy matter to make his writing out. Let me see—let me see.”

By dint of poring over the letter for half an hour, he contrived to make himself master of the contents, which were certainly not of a nature to set his mind at ease. Newman took upon himself to send back the ten pounds, observing that he had ascertained that neither Mrs. Nickleby nor Kate was in actual want of money at the moment, and that a time might shortly come when Nicholas might want it more. He entreated him not to be alarmed at what he was about to
say;—there was no bad news—they were in good health—but he thought circumstances might occur, or were occurring, which would render it absolutely necessary that Kate should have her brother’s protection, and if so, Newman said, he would write to him to that effect, either by the next post or the next but one.

Nicholas read this passage very often, and the more he thought of it the more he began to fear some treachery upon the part of Ralph. Once or twice he felt tempted to repair to London at all hazards without an hour’s delay, but a little reflection assured him that if such a step were necessary, Newman would have spoken out and told him so at once.

“At all events I should prepare them here for the possibility of my going away suddenly,” said Nicholas; “I should lose no time in doing that.” As the thought occurred to him, he took up his hat and hurried to the green-room.

“Well, Mr. Johnson,” said Mrs. Crummles, who was seated there in full regal costume, with the phenomenon as the maiden in her maternal arms, “next week for Ryde, then for Winchester, then for ——”

“I have some reason to fear,” interrupted Nicholas, “that before you leave here my career with you will have closed.”

“Closed!” cried Mrs. Crummles, raising her hands in astonishment.

“Closed!” cried Miss Snevellicci, trembling so much in her tights that she actually laid her hand upon the shoulder of the manageress for support.

“Why, he doesn’t mean to say he’s going!” exclaimed Mrs. Grudden, making her way towards Mrs. Crummles. “Hoity toity! nonsense.”

The phenomenon, being of an affectionate nature and moreover excitable, raised a loud cry, and Miss Belvawney and Miss Bravassa actually shed tears. Even the male performers stopped in their conversation, and echoed the word “Going!” although some among them (and they had been the loudest in their congratulations that day) winked at each other as though they would not be sorry to lose such a favoured rival; an opinion, indeed, which the honest Mr. Folair, who was ready dressed for the savage, openly stated in so many words to a demon with whom he was sharing a pot of porter.

Nicholas briefly said that he feared it would be so, although he could not yet speak with any degree of certainty; and getting away as soon as he could, went home to con Newman’s letter once more, and speculate upon it afresh.

How trifling all that had been occupying his time and thoughts for many weeks seemed to him during that sleepless night, and how constantly and incessantly present to his imagination was the one idea that Kate in the midst of some great trouble and distress might even then be looking—and vainly too—for him!
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