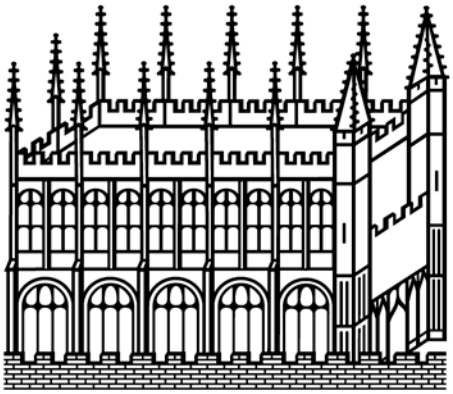

JACK OF ALL TRADES

THOMAS MILLER

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LONDON :
WYMAN AND SONS, PRINTERS, GREAT QUEEN STREET.
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" Jack, Jack—there are so many Jacks—what Jack is it? "—P. 155.

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BY

THOMAS MILLER,

AUTHOR OF "THE BRITISH WOLF-HUNTERS," "MY FATHER'S GARDEN," ETC. ETC.

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CONTENTS.

JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I WAS PAWNED TO PAY MY POOR NURSE.

IT was Betty Blackman who told me, when I was about seven years old, what she did with me when I was quite a little baby, when she pawned me for twenty-five shillings at Old Pettinger's in the Borough, to save me from the workhouse. I was put out to nurse when only three weeks old, through a fire breaking out in the house where I was born; but I was quite a big boy when I first heard of this accident, and it will be time enough to speak of it when I come to tell how I first became acquainted with old Grizzy. The woman who attended on my mother was intrusted with money enough to pay for my nursing for several months, all of which she kept, excepting one week's payment, which was all my poor nurse ever received until Betty Blackman pawned me to make up the deficiency, when I was

about six weeks old. The poor woman could not nurse me upon nothing, for she trusted to me for support, and I trusted to her for support, having nothing I suppose to sustain myself upon, except sucking my thumb, which was but a poor repast I imagine. So there being nothing coming in to support either of us, my nurse thought the best thing we could do was to get into the workhouse. But Betty Blackman happened to come in—she was as deep as Garrick, and had just come up from Yorkshire—and she said what a pity it would be to send such a fine little fellow as I was to the workhouse, so many people as there were who had plenty of money and no children of their own, and who would jump at such a good-looking baby as I was. Then she told her that she had heard how old Pettinger, the pawnbroker's wife—who was much younger than her husband, though they had been married a good many years—was always wishing she had a baby; and what a good thing it would be if they could manage to take me to old Pettinger's and pawn me, as he was very rich, and his wife would be sure to take to me, and who could tell but what they might make me their heir when they died? and that then I might, perhaps, do something, for both her and the nurse, there was no knowing. All this Betty told me when I went to live with her,

and first started in business as a Jack-of-all-Trades, by hawking and selling things in the streets.

Betty said she left my poor nurse sixpence, after comforting her by telling her how easy the thing could be done, and what a deal better it would be for us both; and how happy it would make Mrs. Pettinger, who was one of the kindest-hearted creatures that ever broke bread, for she had heard a good deal of her through Mary, a conntrywoman of her own, who was servant at the pawnbroker's; and that she would trust her with the secret, for being a Yorkshire woman, Mary would sooner die than betray a friend.

So Betty succeeded in persuading my poor nurse to let her take me to the pawn-shop as a bundle of linen, and said that she would run all the risk, which would not be much, as very few knew her; and she would so disguise herself as to be able to go into the shop on the day after she had pawned me, without being discovered. How she did it will be best made known in her own words, as I put them down when I had learnt to write.

"I first went to a laundress, a very feeling woman who washed for several genteel families," said Betty, "and told her how badly your nurse was off, and how badly you were off too, and also how badly Mrs. Pettinger wanted a baby, and how well she could afford to keep one. It was on a Saturday when I called on

her, Jack, a busy day at the laundry, and a busy day at the pawn-shop, as I well knew. The laundress had a great quantity of nice clean linen about ready to take home at night, and I persuaded her to lend and make me up a large bundle of sheets, counterpanes, and table-cloths, promising faithfully that she should have them back that night, as I intended to ask more money on them than I knew old Pettinger would lend; so that whether I succeeded in pawning you or not the laundress would come to no harm, but have her bundle returned.

"When I got this bundle home, I put a time-piece in the middle of it, so as to leave an opening at each end, and then I made another bundle up exactly like it, with paper shavings, and old book-covers, nice and flat, and a clean sheet outside, with you in the middle, and both bundles so much alike, and the same weight and size, that you couldn't tell one from the other without undoing them. Before pinning you up, Jack, I gave you a good dose of Godfrey's cordial, which I knew would make you sleep like a top, and do you no harm when you awoke, as you had been pretty well used to it, for your poor nurse found it much cheaper to buy stuff that would send you to sleep, than to keep you awake and be constantly feeding you, when she could hardly get a mouthful of anything for herself. I left plenty of room open at the end for you to

breathe when you awoke, and in the bundle of linen there was put just another opening, caused by the time-piece. It was a busy time at the pawn-shop through poor people getting out their clothes for Sunday, so no notice was taken of two of us being in the same box. Your nurse laid you on the floor inside the box where we stood, while I threw the bundle of clean linen on the pawn-shop counter with a bang. It was old Pettinger who attended to me, and who didn't know me, though I knew him by sight well enough.

"'How much?' he said, after undoing the bundle, counting what it contained, and examining the time-piece.

"'I want five-and-thirty shillings on the things, if you please, Mr. Pettinger,' I said, speaking as if I was very intimate with him, and an old customer, though I had never been inside his shop before in my life.

"'Can't do it,' he said, 'lend you twenty-five.'

"I said that wouldn't do, as I wanted to make up my rent. So he did up the bundle again as neatly as before, then took something in pledge from a poor woman in the next box.

"It was done in a moment, while he was writing out the woman's ticket; the bundles were changed, and there you lay on the counter.

"'Well, as it's so late, Mr. Pettinger, I must take it,'

I said, and 'see if I can't make up the rest of the money with something or other on Monday.'

"Without speaking excepting to ask me whether there were five or six tablecloths, he wrote out the two tickets, pinning one on you, Jack, and giving me the other, along with the sovereign and five shillings, for I laid down a penny to pay for the ticket.

"'You'll be sure and not throw the bundle about,' I said, 'for fear of breaking the time-piece.'

"'I'll take care of it for my own sake,' he said, placing you rather carefully on the floor. 'Does it go?'

"'It goes beautifully,' I said, 'and there's a 'larum inside will waken the whole house when it's once set a-going.' And so there was, for I never see such a baby to cry in my life as you was, Jack, when you once begun. Oh dear! oh dear! what pipes you had.

"'When my wife comes down to assist,' he said, 'I'll get her to take it out, and stand it in our bedroom, to waken my lazy people a little sooner of a morning; it will be all the better for going.'

"'So it will, sir,' I said, 'and keep you all alive.'

"So the laundress had her bundle back, and your nurse got her money; and a pretty to do there was when Mrs. Pettinger undid the bundle, and you began to squall. The shop was crowded at the time, and it was soon the talk of the whole Borough. 'Old Pet-

tinger,' they said, 'had got a fine pledge this time.' Nanny Pearson was in the shop, and told me all about it, little dreaming that I had pawned you. She said what with your squalling, and old Pettinger growling, and his wife walking up and down behind the counter, hushing and trying to quiet you, while the shop full of people were laughing until they were almost black in the face, she never heard such a hubbub in her life. 'Call in the police! Take the brat to the workhouse,' roared out the old pawnbroker, as he went stamping and howling up and down the shop, with his fingers in his ears, for you were crying with all your might. Mrs. Pettinger, who was master when she pleased, kept on crying, 'Hush! hush! baby; shan't be sent away, but have some nice tops-and-bottoms for its supper—and if he turns you out I'll go too, for if he's an unfeeling old brute I am not.' Then she hugged you to her, and began a-see-sawing you about in her arms, when you put your little thumb in your mouth, and all at once was as quiet as a lamb. But the worst of it was that no sooner had Mrs. Pettinger gone out of the shop with you than the people began to make game of the old pawnbroker. 'The child's the very image of him,' said one; 'it's as like him as two peas.' Another said, 'It screwed its dear little mouth up just as old Pettinger does when he's writing out a pawn-ticket, a making his up and down

strokes.' But one woman, who had heard him tell his wife to undo the bundle and take the time-piece out and set it a-going, and set the 'larum every night, so that it would strike at six and wake them all up—went on so with the old pawnbroker about his new 'larum, and how it would go, and keep them all alive, and wake up the whole house, that he fairly lost his temper, and said 'the child was more likely to be hers than anybody's he knew; and that he shouldn't at all wonder if she hadn't sent somebody with it, to rob him out of five-and-twenty shillings, for he believed she was quite capable of doing anything to get money.'

"Nanny Pearson said that the woman, who had just got her fire-irons out of pledge, threatened to give the old pawnbroker a good thrashing for saying the child was hers; and that no sooner were the words out of her lips than she aimed a blow at him across the counter, where he stood tying up a book that he had just taken in pawn. Pettinger sprang back as if he had been shot, and held up the book to parry the blow and save his own head—that he succeeded in saving, but at the expense of his window and many of the valuable articles it contained; for the woman struck with such force that she hit the book as a cricketer would have done a ball, and sent it flying through the window into the street, carrying with it

the loose brass rod, on which was suspended a whole row of unredeemed trinkets, which fell with a loud clatter on the pavement.

"Betty heard that the old pawnbroker sent for the police, but his wife wouldn't even allow them to see me; that Mary praised me, and her mistress kissed me, and was quite as proud of me as a little girl is of her first doll, and declared that if he took me away from her she would leave him, and go home and live with her old mother. Then, to make it up with his wife, he promised I should not be sent away; and so the police ceased making inquiry after the woman who had pawned me, and my poor nurse obtained employment through working for a slop-shop, which Betty said was as bad, or worse, than nursing me for nothing —as it was killing work, and nursing wasn't." As to the woman who had put me out to nurse, and kept the money my mother had given her to pay for my support, it was a long time before she was seen again; and, when found, she said she knew nothing of my parents. So I became Mrs. Pettinger's pet, and was allowed to do pretty well what I liked, for Mary was quite as fond of me as her mistress; and Betty Blackman often visited the servant in the kitchen, and I have no doubt that at last the pawnbroker's wife knew all about me that could be known.

CHAPTER II.

MY EDUCATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS.

FROM what I have heard since that time, everybody about the place was fond of me and kind to me, excepting the old pawnbroker; and he—when his wife was not present—would point at me, and tell people how much there was owing on me, at 20 per cent. interest, which, in five years, amounted to double the sum he had lent on me when I was first pledged. Mrs. Pettinger was like a mother to me, and delighted in dressing me in the richest things that she could fish out from among the unredeemed pledges; and I recollect having a coral whistle and silver bells on which, Mrs. Pettinger told me long afterwards, nineteen shillings had been lent. I can remember how delighted I was when they let me sit astride the bundles, and drew me up and down the spout as they took in and gave out the pledges—I holding on by the ropes they raised or lowered me with, like a little sailor. And sometimes, when I came down astride a bundle, and the man opened the door to take it out, I could hear the women in the pawn-shop say, "There he is inside

the spout, riding up and down. Bless him! I can see his dear little legs." And when I got bigger, and began to talk, I used to poke my head out of the door at the bottom of the spout, and say, "Here we are again!" and they used to laugh, and clap their hands at me; but if old Pettinger saw me, he would take up his yard-wand, or anything he found handy, and give me a crack with it if I didn't get into the spout again and shut the door. But he never offered to touch me, and hardly dared to say his soul was his own, if his wife was by. He used to look as if he would have liked to kill some of his customers at times, when Mrs. Pettinger let me stand on the counter, and they took hold of my hand, and said "I grew more like Mr. Pettinger every day;" and asked her "if she had heard anything of my good-for-nothing mother as yet?" When there was nobody by, he used to shake his fist, and make faces at me, and threaten what he would do if ever he had me to himself, when he would have the interest I owed him out of my bones; and I used to grin and make faces at him again, for she spoilt me.

Mrs. Pettinger sent me to a dame school, but I learnt nothing there compared with what Bill the apprentice taught me in the room upstairs, where he was always kept to draw up and let down the pledges. Through his instructions I was soon able

to read the printing on the pawn-tickets, and, after a time, the writing; then to make out the figures which showed how much the article was pledged for. Bill would say, pointing to the writing on the ticket, "What letter's that, Jack?" Then I used to look, and say "S." Then he would ask me what S stood for over a one; and I used to say, "a shilling." Then he taught me to spell the writing, and would say, "Now go to the shelf, Jack, and get me out, 'Shirt; a shilling.'" And so I went on from trousers to coats, and up through almost everything that was in pawn; and by the time I was seven years old I could make out all the people's names on the tickets—and funny names some of them were. Though they pawned everything that can be mentioned, they never sent in another baby, excepting one in spirits, that had three legs—the bottle of which I broke in getting it out, and spoilt a piece of silk which old Pettinger had lent two pounds on. Bill, the apprentice, was very proud of my progress, and it soon became the talk of the poor women and children in the neighbourhood that, though I was such a little fellow, I could find any pledge in the warehouse, and send it down the spout as well as any of the men. And some of the little girls that went to school with me would say, "Jack, get me my frock for Sunday; mother pawned it

for a shilling, and I'll bring it back on Monday, and nobody will know." And sometimes I used to say, "Wait till Bill goes down to get his dinner; then I'll throw it out of the back window into the court." So they used to give me the tickets, so that I might find the right parcels; and when Bill went downstairs to dinner I used to throw the pledges out of the little window into the court, so that they might have them to look decent in on a Sunday, for their parents had often no money to give them to get the things out of pawn on Saturday night. And I used to feel quite proud on a Sunday when I saw them going to church, and think that but for me they would not have been able to go to a place of worship at all. And I know the poor things were honest, and that their mothers brought the pledges back again on Monday as they promised, because when they wanted them again they used to give me the fresh tickets. And Mrs. Pettinger laughed when I told her about their honesty, and said they were great cheats; and that if they had given me the parcels back again at the side door, to have put them in their places, without borrowing more money on them as they did, she should have thought something of them. She used to tell me to be sure and mind her husband did not see me.

I saw it all clear enough when she told me, and

said to them, "You ought to have brought the frocks and things back on a Monday, and tied them to a string, and not have gone into the shop and got more money on them, because that was cheating, and it would not have been if I had hoisted them in at the little window again." I threw them out again into the court, when Bill was having his dinner. But one little girl with long auburn hair, and blue eyes, the prettiest of them all, though one of the poorest, used always to bring her frocks and things back for me to hoist in at the window again when I let her have them. One day I was throwing out her boots, when Mr. Pettinger happened to be going into the warehouse at the end of the court, where he kept the furniture that was pledged, when they struck him on the head; but the little girl picked them up and ran off with them, leaving the old pawnbroker to look up and around in astonishment, without being able to make out where they came from, as I thought,—but he did, though, and told me of it afterwards.

Pettinger's wife was taken ill and died, almost suddenly: the doctor said it was owing to his having taken so much bedding into pawn that it left no room for the air to circulate in the chamber where she slept; for she had a separate chamber after I slept with her, and her husband had a room to himself;

but he took good care not to cram his full of pledged bedding. Her death was my first great trouble, and I do not think he grieved so much for her as he might have done, had it not been for the pleasure it gave him to know he could then get rid of me; for only the day after the funeral he shook his fist at me, and said, "Now I'll pay you off for all old scores."

Then he took away all the nice clothes I used to wear, and put me into a suit of corduroy that had been pledged for one-and-six, and made me go into the kitchen and clean shoes and knives as well as I could, and never allowed me to do anything in the shop or among the pledges again. One day when the servant was out he came down into the kitchen with a leather strap in his hand, to punish me for something I had done, and then he mentioned my throwing the pledges out of the window into the court. He stood over me with the strap, and asked me how many pledges I had thrown out, and I told him all their names, and spoke the truth, and said that Mrs. Pettinger knew all about it, and that I never did anything I didn't tell her. Then he said, "She knew all about it, did she?" and went up the kitchen stairs without beating me. And when he had gone I began to cry, which I wouldn't have done if he had beaten me to death; but I couldn't help it when I thought how good she was to me when alive, and that she had saved me from a

thrashing after she was dead, and how I should never have been shoved into the dark back kitchen, among blackbeetles, spiders, and mice, and made to clean shoes and knives, if she had been living. I hated old Pettinger.

While I sat on the kitchen stairs crying, Mary, the servant, that was always as kind to me as her mistress, now came down and wiped my face, and gave me something nice to eat, and called old Pettinger everything she could lay her tongue to. She said he dared not put his head into the shop when they were busy, for all the poor women in the neighbourhood had heard how ill he was treating me; that the police wouldn't take any more of them in charge, nor the magistrate grant old Pettinger another summons; that some of them came in purposely to abuse him; that they had broken no end of china ornaments, and one woman had smashed a great looking-glass through throwing her flat-iron at him, and that he had said, "If it wasn't for the pledges he would put his shutters up, as he had saved enough to live upon." She also said that "the poor women were getting up a penny subscription for me; that they were going to buy me a basket and stock it, and make me a regular Jack-of-all-trades; and that they would all deal with me, and I should be much happier picking up a living in the streets than cleaning shoes and knives in that dark back kitchen."

CHAPTER III.

I DO A LITTLE IN THE FISH LINE.

THOUGH so little, I was determined that I would not go sneaking out of the house like a thief, but face the old pawnbroker like a man, and tell him I was going to leave. So the day after Betty Blackman had shouted to me through the grating into the dark kitchen window to tell me that they had bought me a nice strawberry basket, and raised five shillings to start me as a Jack-of-all-trades, I went upstairs, and, walking boldly into the parlour, said, "I'm going to leave."

"I'm glad of it," said the pawnbroker; "and hope those blackguard women will let me have a little peace when you are gone. What are you going to do?"

"Going to be Jack-of-all-trades; and those women that you call blackguards have bought me a basket and set me up," I said, as bold as brass.

"'Jack-of-all-trades and master of none,' as the old saw says, I suppose?" he replied. "They ought to do something for you, and for me, too, so far as that goes, for I've lost enough by you. Seven years'

interest on one pound five is a deal more than double; but I'll do something for you to give you a fair start in life," he said, and unlocking his desk he took out the pawn-ticket he had pinned on me when he took me in pledge, and said, "I'll make you a present of the ticket; you shan't go out as an unredeemed pledge; you'll find every year's interest added up at the back, and if you are ever rich enough, I hope you'll have the honesty to pay again what I lent on you."

"I didn't ask you to lend nothing on me," I said, I fear impudently. "How could I when I had no sense, and couldn't talk, nor do nought, only suck my thumb?"

"Except throw my pledges out of the window and let the people have them back without either principal or interest. You could do that soon enough," he said, looking about, as I thought, for something to beat me with. So I shot out with the ticket in my hand, and that was all I had of my own to start in life with, saving the poor little suit of clothes I stood in. Still I felt happy I was out of pledge, and that he couldn't call to me when I passed his door, and tell me to go up the spout, and lay down on the racks among the rest of his pledges, with a ticket pinned on me, and stay there until the money was paid.

When I reached Betty Blackman's, and showed her

the ticket, she said, "I'm sure, Jack, you ought to feel quite proud at having so much lent on you when you was only a little baby. I shall call and ask old Pettinger how much he will lend on you now, as you have grown big enough to be made useful."

It was not until some time after this that Betty told me it was she who pawned me, and how poor my nurse was, and a deal more of it, and showed me the ticket she had kept ever since. Betty had a room to herself, and as the house was full of lodgers, all of whom knew me, it was soon arranged that I should sleep with All-alive-o, and pay sevenpence a week for part of his bed, living the rest of my time with Betty Blackman, and paying nothing. All-alive-o, as he was called, sold fish, and were it only red herrings he hawked, he used to call out "Fresh red-herrings, all-alive-o;" the same with whelks or shrimps; and that was how he got his name.

All-alive-o was sitting in Betty's room smoking his pipe and broiling a few sprats on her gridiron—for Betty took in washing, and often had a fire when every other lodger in the house was without one. He had heard all about me, and had given a penny towards the five shillings that had been subscribed for me, so, as Betty said, "He has a right to advise you, Jack; and will see that you lay out your little capital to the best advantage."

"In course I will," he said, placing three of the sprats on half a slice of bread and handing them to me; and, though they were so hot they burnt my fingers, I quite enjoyed them. "You'd best first begin in the fish line; that's quick returns, pretty fair profits, and no losses—'cause why? What you can't sell you can eat, and sell a good deal that you do eat at times, so far as that goes."

"Come, come, 'Live-o, that's pitching it a little too strong!" said Betty, taking her iron out of the fire and holding it very near her cheek, which was her way of testing its heat. "You can't go and sell what you've eaten; that's impossible."

"Well, ma'am, in one sense it is; and in another it isn't," replied All-alive-o. "Pray, ma'am, did you never buy a penn'orth of periwinkles, and find half the shells empty sometimes? Or a penn'orth of shrimps, and find that they were half heads, and had no bodies at all to 'em."

"That I have, many's the time," answered Betty, ironing away while she talked, "and never could make it out, especially the shrimps; because, as I used to say, the heads must have had tails to them at one time or another. And they were mostly such large heads, too."

"In course they were, ma'am," said 'Live-o; "we always picks out the finest for our own eating. When

my customers complain, I say it's a strange fact in natural history that you never find no little heads amongst them, which is accounted for in this way—the little ones are very artful, and bite the tails off the big ones, then eat out all the inside, as you may see by often finding the skins or shells, as well as the heads, of the big ones. As for the little ones, they can turn round in less than half the time it takes the others, so that, before the big ones can get a fair bite at 'em, they dive under and are off like one o'clock. As to the winkles, why, we just take a pin, pick out as many as we can eat, then throw back the shells among the full ones, and give them a good shaking."

"But isn't this cheating?" asked Betty.

"Not exactly, in a bad sense," answered All-alive-o. "'Cause, you see, the poor people will have lumping penn'orths, and the shells do for the little ones to play with. As for the shrimps' heads, I think the children are fonder of 'em than the tails, when the horns are chopped off. And they are very relishing, if you don't swallow 'em, for there's a good deal of moisture in 'em when they're big—brains and tongues and such like, I suppose, beside the tid-bits they call Adam and Eve. Shrimps' heads are very nice, ma'am, for those who like 'em. But put aside your ironing for a bit; I've picked you out half-a-dozen of the finest sprats, and they are nice and brown, and just done to a turn."

"I don't mind if I do," said Betty, "for my iron's getting cold." So, putting it in the fire to lose no time, she got out her own loaf, and ate the sprats with a relish. She was a halfpenny to 'Live-o's penny, and, reaching down a jug, I went for a pint of beer, out of which I had a drink.

"Buying the sprats as I do, by the peck or half-bushel," said 'Live-o, wiping his mouth with his hand, after having finished the beer, "I don't think all we've eaten stood me in above a halfpenny, and I'm sure we haven't—the three of us—eaten more than a penn'orth of bread; so that, with beer and all, our dinner hasn't cost above a penny a head."

"But sprats and white herrings isn't always in to help poor people to get so cheap a dinner," said Betty; "and meat's meat, if it only be half a sheep's head, and you make broth of it. I know I find it so."

Though I was so young, I had been a good deal among the old pawnbroker's shopmen, and behind the counter when the poor people came to pawn things; and I had heard them tell a many stories about the pledges they brought, when they tried to get a few more pence than was offered on the pawns; and, by looking in their faces and listening to what they said, I used to fancy I could tell when they were speaking the truth and when they were telling falsehoods; and, for my age, was a pretty good judge of what was right

and what was wrong. I listened attentively to what All-alive-o said, and watched him as he screwed his eyes up and made them little, and looked out at the corners, which were puckered full of cunning wrinkles, and I thought to myself, "You are not a truth-teller; and if you serve your customers as you say you do, you are a cheat, and, as Betty says, 'it is cheating.'"

When he went to his own room, Betty said, "'Live-o isn't a bad sort, Jack, so long as he keeps off drink; but when he breaks out on the loose, there's no knowing what he won't do for drink. I've known him come home without either coat or waistcoat, and even borrow money on his basket for it. And when he comes round again, he'll sit down and keep on hitting his head as hard as he can with his fist, and calling himself all the fools he can think of."

'Live-o, as he was called for short, bought my goods for me at the market, and I found it easy enough to make a shilling, or more sometimes, in a day's profit out of the periwinkles, shrimps, haddocks, and herrings I sold. I was known everywhere as the little boy who had been pawned when a baby, and I found my best customers amongst those who had often laughed at me when I dived down the spout, pushed open the door to let out the pledges, and poking my head forward into the shop, exclaimed, "There you are again!" I went with my basket up courts and alleys that led

only to high dead walls, or some manufactory perhaps long since shut up, and not a whole pane in a single window. Many of the houses I went into were in a state of decay, and some of the staircases so dark and rotten that, unless the women had shouted to me, and told me on which side to keep, and to be careful before I put my foot down, I should either have broken my leg or put my ankle out of joint; the doors were half off the hinges; the window-shutters broken up and burnt long ago; as for paint, not a brushful had touched the woodwork for years, so that the doors, and joists, and sashes looked like grey, dry bones—and they are the same now, as I have more than once, since I arrived at manhood, visited my old walks and ancient neighbourhood. Sweeps and nightmen, and those who sold cheap pennyworths on the edge of the pavement, or hawked such articles as I then vended, were the inhabitants I lived among when first I became a Jack-of-all-trades. It was nothing unusual of a night to be awoke out of my sleep by the cry of "Stop thief!" or "Police!" as those who had stopped and robbed the passengers in the main thoroughfares of the Borough invariably made their escape through these intricate and unlighted courts, which went winding into the Southwark Bridge Road, or through the Mint, or down to Bankside, and higher up into the back of Blackfriars Road, and, as 'Live-o said, "The devil

himself only knew where to beside, for he seemed to have a good deal to do with them."

Though herrings were scarce and salt, and, as some of my customers said, had about as much nourishment in them as Lot's wife, and were of the same flavour, shrimps were plentiful, and now and then I did a little in plaice and soles—when they were very cheap, and 'Live-o picked up what he called a "job lot"—and so I managed to get on pretty well, and had saved a little money by the time the mackerel season commenced.

"How much money have you got, Jack?" said 'Live-o, one night, as he sat smoking his pipe while I was in bed. I think he had been on the loose a little for a day or two, though he had not neglected attending market, and bringing me home my supply of fish.

"Fifteen and sevenpence-halfpenny," I said. "I should have had above a pound, only I bought myself a pair of second-hand boots, a new cap, and a shirt. Betty has got it all but the five shillings I have in my pocket."

"Then jump out of bed and go into her room and get it," said 'Live-o; "mackerel's in, and I intend going to market with a truck to-morrow; and I think you may clear half-a-crown before night, if you look bright."

Betty was in bed; but I lit a match and told her what I wanted, when she said, "Get a chair, and look into that white jam-pot on the top shelf in the cupboard. You'll find your money there. And let me have a fine mackerel, Jack, when he comes from market. I don't mind going as far as threepence, because what I can't eat I can put into vinegar, and it's beautiful with an onion. I'll do you one in the same way."

So I gave 'Live-o all the money I had in the world to buy mackerel for me; and as he said I needn't get up so early as he did, as he didn't want me to go to market with him, I slept until rather late, and never heard him go out in the morning. When I got up I tumbled out one of Nanny's large washing-tubs, and filled it full of clean water, to keep the mackerel in that I couldn't take with me on the first round, and which would keep nice and fresh until night, to sell for supper, if I didn't clear all out in the morning. Then I went and looked out at the end of the court for 'Live-o and the truck, and there I stood for an hour at least without seeing him. While I was leaning against the post at the end of the court, and looking, no doubt, as sorrowful as I felt, the little girl with the auburn hair and beautiful blue eyes, who used to bring back her frock, and boots, and things, for me to hoist up to the

window again and take them in, after I had thrown them out so that she might be able to go to church with me on a Sunday, came up to me, and, putting her hand gently in mine, asked me what was amiss. When I told her she began to cry.

She was in the habit of going round with me, at times, and many a customer did she get through her sweet face, when she would come running up with her bare feet, and put the penny she had taken into my jacket pocket—then lay another herring or two, or whatever it might be, on the old basket-lid she carried, and run off again to find me fresh customers. Had we been brother and sister, our affection for each other could not have been greater. She used to say that she was never so happy as when with me and Betty Blackman, and we both knew what a comfortless home she had with her drunken mother, who seemed to care nothing about what little Emma did or might do, so long as she earned a few halfpence to purchase spirits for her when she had spent all her money in drink. Yet that drunken mother could do the most beautiful of needlework when sober, and earn a great deal of money at it. The neighbours said she was a lady by birth, but had killed her husband through the mental anguish her drunken habits caused him; that her mother, who was wealthy, was compelled to turn her back

on her, and that she herself had vowed never to hold communication with her mother again until a messenger was sent with the tidings of her own death. Such was the mother of dear little Emma.

After holding my hand a minute or two, and drying her large, bright blue eyes, she said I had better go in and tell Betty.

CHAPTER IV.

I TRY ALL SORTS OF THINGS.

BETTY BLACKMAN was a woman of action, and when we went in to tell her that we could neither see nor hear anything of All-alive-o from any of the costermongers who had been to Billingsgate-market, she left off washing in a moment, passed first one hand, then the other down her great bare arms, to wipe off the soapsuds, then drying them on her coarse apron, said: "He's gone on the loose, as sure as I'm alive, and all your money will be gone too, unless I find him pretty quick."

It was tea-time when Betty returned. She had heard of 'Live-o at last. He got to drinking with some costers at the market-house, and as fewer mackerel had come in than was expected, and the price was beyond the reach of hawkers, he had gone along with several others to see a donkey-race on Blackheath. The next day Betty heard that he had lost every farthing he had on the donkey-races; that he refused to return to London, and that they left him staggering about the heath, "as drunk as Davy's

sow." Weeks after he was seen at Gravesend, very ragged and very dirty, with about a pint of shrimps in the lid of an old hat-box, and that was the last I heard of him for many a long month. And so went every farthing of the capital I had saved to invest in mackerel!

Betty was very poor at this time, and hadn't even a single shilling to lend me, through having become security to the Heart-and-Hand Loan Society for one pound, for the poor woman who had nursed me, and who had pawned the shirts she was making at a penny three-farthings each, for a slop-shop, and finding her own thread. But for Betty obtaining the loan, and redeeming the shirts for her, the woman would have been sent to prison, for, as the magistrate said, though the proprietor of the slop-shop ought to be ashamed to show his head in the streets after paying such starvation wages, yet the law must be obeyed. He gave her a trifle from the poor-box, and Betty got her the loan, well aware that she should have to pay every farthing of it back at a shilling a week.

I had still my basket, and as I knew it would only make bad worse if I remained idle, and that as Live-o had lost all the capital I intrusted him with on donkey-races, and it was as unlikely ever to be got back as if he had thrown it overboard in the middle of the Atlantic, I made up my mind that I would get

Betty to pawn my boots and cap, and try to do a little in the cat's-meat way, as I could start with two or three pounds' weight of meat.

"I'm afraid you'll often lose a customer, Jack," said Betty, "if anybody asks for half a pound or a pound, as you have neither weights nor scales."

"I've thought all about that, Betty," I said, "for besides cutting up my halfpennyworths very thin, and sticking them on skewers, I shall carry with me a pound or two in the lump, which they'll weigh for me where I buy. If they want a pound I give them a whole lump, if half a pound I cut a lump in two, and let 'em pick."

The profits were well enough in ha'porths, when you paid at the rate of three halfpence a pound at first hand, and made fourpence a pound of it. But it was what the cats stole that made it a losing game, especially with a basket. You put it on the ground to give a body change for a threepenny or fourpenny bit, or whatever it may be, while little Emma had gone away to supply somebody else's cats, and there are three or four hungry cats, all mewing round you, not one of which is a regular customer. And what do they do? Why, one nips up a ha'porth, and is over the area rails with it before you have time to see what colour it is, and while you are looking at him, a second has helped himself, and bolted into a kitchen

window, and out at the back, and, as the people inside say, gone "to nobody knows where." It's very different when you have a deep barrow standing at the door, for they can only get on that when the lid is down. I've had a cat on a window-ledge whip its claws out when I've been going by, and run off with a skewer full of meat, almost before I had time to turn my head, and if I knocked at the door and told the people, and they were civil enough to tell me to come in and look for the meat, why the cat would swear at me as it flew upstairs with it, else scratch me dreadfully if I offered to take it away. I found cat's meat a bad game in a small way, with only a basket and no capital, for many of them told me they only paid once a month, and these I found were mostly weekly lodgers, who never stayed so long as that in a place. One old lady who had four cats was a goodish customer, but she would only pay a halfpenny a pound more than cost price, and she always brought her own weights and scales to the door, though she made up sometimes by giving little Emma and me plenty of cold victuals.

Then there used to be such disputes. "Throw it down, my lad," some lady would say, which of course I did, when some other cat on the look-out, and twice as sharp as her cat, would make a spring and carry it off. Then I got nothing, for she would say, "I'm not

going to pay you for feeding other people's cats." And if I tried to give the cat that stole the meat a kick, likely enough I got a crack on the head with a broom-handle, or they threatened to give me in charge of the police, and I used to think myself very fortunate indeed if I only got off with a good blowing up. Then some wanted it underdone, and without gristle, and no outside, and when I told the people this at the boiling-house where I bought it, they used to laugh and say—"They'll want it cutting with a hammy knife next, Jack, to give it a fine flavour." But the worst of all was when they had got little kittens that were just beginning to eat, for they would take up three or for ha'porths and pinch a bit off every one, and pay nothing at all, only saying—"I want these nice tender little bits for my pretty kitten. Isn't it a beauty, Jack?"

Sometimes a great dog—quite as high as I was—would come shogging up, put his nose in the basket, open his mouth, and help himself, and growl and show his teeth at me, if I only offered to touch him. I did once hit one on the head with my basket, and knocked all my meat out, when he set up such a howl that half a dozen other dogs came running up to see what was the matter, and every one helped himself to a bunch of meat and ran off with it. Then there used to be such terrible fights among the cats and dogs for

the meat I threw down, that if I tried to get it back and give it to the right one, I only got accused of setting them to fight, and they threatened to take me before the Lord President of the Royal Suppression Society for cruelty to animals.

Then there were men who dealt in cat-skins, and who were always lounging about penny pie-shops, who wanted me to steal this lady's tabby or that gentleman's tom, because they were fine cats, and their skins were so beautifully marked. But instead of doing so, I always told the owners, so as to put them on their guard, though I wouldn't give up the names of the cat dealers, for as Betty Blackman said when I told her they had offered to give me sixpence a head for so-and-so's cats, "Not to do wrong, Jack, when you're tempted and are poor, is to do what's right, but you get no respect for telling the names of those who wanted you to do wrong. For why, my lad? Because it does you no credit to know them."

After giving up the cat's-meat business, I went into the hearth-stone trade, and soon found that much the worst of the two, as I had to carry such heavy loads. They wanted about seven or eight pounds of hearth-stone for a halfpenny, so that three penn'orth was as much as I was able to carry about with me, and that was a good deal to hang at the back of a little fellow only eight years of age. Then other boys were able

to undersell me, and they did it by cheating; for they would go to a stone-mason's yard, where the men were glad to get rid of the great pieces they had chipped off, take up as much as they could carry in their arms, and sell the whole lot for a halfpenny. Of course it wasn't hearthstone at all, and they might just as well have rubbed the hearth with a flat-iron in the hope of making it white, as with those chippings off Portland stone. I showed the people the difference, and how beautiful and white mine made their doorsteps where I rubbed them; and the consequence was that, when the cheats of boys found they could no longer sell their rubbish, they set to and pelted me with the pieces, and I couldn't afford to pelt them back again, because my hearthstone was genuine and cost money, while they could have a waggon-load of what they tried to sell, only for the asking. So I used to have to run for it, with two stone, very often, at my back, though I was all right when I came up to a policeman.

I tried firewood, and lemons, oranges, and lucifers; then I got a regular situation as a newsboy, which I kept for above a year, and I learnt a good many things during that time. "Jack, my lad, put this bottle and money in your jacket pocket," some old housekeeper or servant would say, "and, when you call for the paper, bring me in half a quartern of gin; but be

sure and don't let anybody see it. Doctor recommends it as a good thing for my complaint." So I used to get many a penny in that and such-like ways, besides my regular wages. And through all these changes and trials, little Emma accompanied me, running here and there and everywhere, whenever she could make herself useful to me, often bonnetless and barefooted, for we both deprived ourselves of many things that we needed, so that she might take money home with her at night to buy her mother drink; for at last the child dreaded entering her cheerless home unless she brought something with her to procure spirits, which her mother looked for regularly. So two more years rolled away, only varied pleasantly by spring and summer, when we arose early, and went out into the fields about Battersea, beyond Camberwell, and all around Dulwich, where we gathered groundsell and chickweed for birds; and, as we got nearer home, cut out a few sods with daisies on them, for skylarks, beside picking up worms and snails, all of which I could sell at the bird-shops for a certain price, after we had done hawking, and supplied our private customers. And greatly did I enjoy those morning rambles in spring, as I listened to the singing of birds, and thought that I was taking back with me something that would pleasantly remind those that were imprisoned in cages of the green places I

had visited. When May was in bloom, I brought armfuls of hawthorn-blossom, and sold them in the streets; for everybody who had a halfpenny to spare liked to purchase a sprig of May to look at, and perfume their rooms. As summer advanced, I gathered the broad-leaved ferns, and the foliage of limes, maples, sycamores, and horse-chestnuts, for which I found a ready sale in the markets and at the fruiterers'; as they bought them to place over the fruit, and to lay in the punnets, to give them a green look, and make them appear as if fresh gathered, though the articles had been brought over the sea, and stowed in the holds of vessels. I also brought home the long plantain, which was now brown and ripe, and, if taken care of, might be preserved throughout the winter on the stems. And while alone, I often wondered to myself who were my parents, and why they left me, and if they would ever inquire after me; but as to their being poor or rich, I never thought about that, but should have been glad to have met with my father and mother if even they had been sweeps.

As I had no capital to commence business for myself, and there was no longer anything to be found in the fields I could make money of until blackberries were ripe, I got a situation as call-boy to a costermonger, and used to walk beside his donkey and

truck in the streets, crying what he had got to sell. Sometimes I loaded myself with what we were hawking and went up the courts and alleys, where there was not room for the truck, crying, "Onions, a penny a measure," or "Turnips, twopence a bunch," or whatever it might be, and though he could only afford to give me a few pence now and then, I got plenty to eat and drink, for, as he used to say, "I shouldn't have strength to shout loud enough if I didn't live well."

I then got a situation as pot-boy, but disliked it worse than crying goods about the streets, as I had nowhere to sit when I had done my work excepting in the taproom or skittle-ground, where everything smelt of beer and tobacco. I didn't mind going out and crying "Beer-o," and supplying the customers at their own houses, but it was very trying to always have the smell of it under my nose, and to be compelled to drink it whenever I was asked, for fear of giving offence to the customers. Setting up the skittles for the players was a little more amusing, and when I was very cold and there was no fire in the tap-room, I used to go and have a game to myself to warm me, for throwing that heavy ball as hard and as quick as I could was capital exercise. Still I picked up many things among the tap-room customers, through listening to their conversation, which before I had no knowledge of, and among them an insight into the

many ways there were open of gaining a living. Left so much to myself I also took to reading the newspaper, and as some of our customers could not read, they used to get me to sit down when I was not busy, and "give them a bit of news," as they called it. Police intelligence, accounts of murders and robberies, and trials at the Old Bailey, were their favourite subjects. They used to say I read beautifully, and I am sure their encouragement caused me to improve myself, much more than I should have done had they only found fault with me.

I managed to save enough as pot-boy to go into the every-article-on-the-board-a-penny line, and got back again to Betty Blackman's, where I was more at home than anywhere else. I was rather tall of my age, and had what Betty called a good figure, which proved useful to me after I had been in the Jack-of-all-trades line some little time, selling my penny articles, which I carried before me on a large tea-tray, the principal weight resting on a strap that went behind my neck. Little Emma had by this time got a situation, where she had her meals for wages.

My stock consisted of balls, combs, china dolls, and dogs, tin plates, containing the alphabet, so that children while eating their dinners might learn their letters at the same time, mugs with names on them, graters, tin pepper-boxes, tin cans, little cups-and-

saucers, velvet cats and donkeys, knives and forks, boxes of paints, and other articles too numerous to mention, while a neatly-written label, in which I had imitated printed capitals, stated that every article on the board was only one penny.

It was a business that recommended itself; a customer saw what he had for his money, took it up, examined it, and, if it suited, threw down a penny on the tea-board, and asked no questions. Whenever I saw a lady with a lot of children, I always drew up to them, well knowing that they would be sure to fall in love with the toys, and that I might depend upon one at least being a spoilt child, who would cry, and scream, and stamp, and refuse to go on until it got what it wanted. It was Betty Blackman who put me up to these little dodges, for she would say, "A Jack-of-all-trades ought to be well up in all the weak points of human nature, 'cause he wasn't like one who kept a shop; there people came in for what they wanted, while those in the streets bought what they didn't want, and would never have thought of wanting, if they hadn't have been so much in their way that they could hardly get past without tumbling over them. It's just like sin, Jack," added Betty, "it lies in your way, and you like turn to it."

While thus occupied one day, a tailor and outfitter in a large way of business called to his

brother, who was a partner, to come out and look, saying, "That's the boy; he's got a capital figure to fit. Shall I call him?" Seeing no other boy about, and always having my ears open to a chance of doing a little business, I stopped, without turning round, for I had passed their shop.

"Hi! ho! you Jack-of-all-trades, come here, I want you!" shouted one of the brothers. And when I went up, he turned me round, told me to put my arms down, held my head up, spanned me across the shoulders with his fingers, and said to his brother, "They will require very little padding to give them a nice fall;" and then took me into the shop, where I placed my stock and board on the counter. Then they got me to march up and down the shop, showing me how to carry my arms, turn out my toes, and lean back; and they made me put on several boys' coats and jackets, and what they called their "Two-Guinea Suit," which was a tunic and trousers, the coat braided all down the front, like an officer's. Then they told me to make haste and sell out my stock, and come with Betty Blackman in the evening, and they would engage me as their boy model, to walk up and down before their shop in the Borough, distribute bills, and wear such boys' suits as they were anxious to make up in the best style, do a pushing trade, and get orders for; that I was a capital

figure, and a coat fitted my back as tight as a kid glove.

So I sold out cheap that afternoon, and Betty came in the evening, and told them all about me, and they were quite satisfied, and agreed to give me a shilling a day, and my victuals; for they said they wished to diet me themselves, and prevent me from getting stout, for fear I should spoil my figure, then the suits would not sit so nicely upon me. I told them, that until lately, I had been in the cat's-meat, hearthstone, and lucifer line, and that it had kept me very thin, as I couldn't afford more than a couple of polonies a week, and those were all the joints I had purchased for three months or more. They said I should live well, though I mustn't get fat, for it spoilt a coat to burst the buttons, and I should have to be done up very tight now and then, especially in the young gentlemen's tunics, or when I went out as a model page, spotted all over with buttons. "Now and then," said the elder brother to Betty, who had been interceding for me to have plenty to eat, as I was a growing lad; "now and then he may stuff himself like a turkey, when we rig him out in one of our sailor-boy suits, or as a little midshipman; nor shall he be restricted to pudding when in the knickerbocker line. But we can't allow him very hearty meals when we go into

the two-guinea tunic trade, for the frock coat must sit on his back as if it were glued to it. We hope, with such a figure as he's got, to do a good stroke of business in that line."

Betty would have me sleep at home, for she had bought a sofa-bedstead, that stood in her room, and towards which I paid sixpence a week, when I could, for she had got it by a promise of weekly payments. "I shall pay you a shilling a week for my lodgings now," I said to Betty that night; "and sixpence a week for my washing, for this way I must keep myself very smart, and that can't be done without clean things."

CHAPTER V.

I START IN "THIS STYLE AT 8*s.* 6*d.*"

ON the following morning I was standing outside the door before the shop was opened, and was called "a good boy" for being so punctual. I swept the shop out, after sprinkling the floor very carefully, and also got praised for making so little dust; nor did I leave anything among the sweepings worth picking up, as the children who were on the look-out soon found to their regret, for after hunting over the refuse, one of them said,—"That new boy hasn't left nowt: not a pin nor a bit of string."

After oiling and polishing the brass that ornamented the window-frame outside, I washed myself, then had my breakfast.

"You may eat as much as you like at present, Jack," said one of my masters, "as we don't intend to send you out in the tip-top, slap-bang, gentleman's-son style at first, for we want to clear out a lot of common boys' suits before we do the elegant fits."

So they put me into a cheap suit of corduroy jacket and trousers, all looking like one piece when buttoned

up, and a bit of a pocket cut into the seam of the trousers, just large enough to hold a few marbles; for if you put a peg-top in, you were sure to tear the pocket in getting it out. A neat coloured label covered my back, on which was written,—"This Style, only 8*s.* 6*d.*"

"And quite enough too," as one woman said, after turning me round, and placing her boy, who had no shoes on, beside me. Very little notice was taken of me in that style as I walked up and down the pavement, giving bills to such as would accept of them.

One boy came up to me and said, if I would get him three or four good handfuls of the bills, he could get a ha'porth of sweet-stuff for them at a shop where he went, and he would give me half. I told him that wasn't my style at all.

I felt rather more humbled than otherwise in corduroy attire, as it reminded me of the suit the old pawnbroker had put on me after his wife's death, when he made me do the drudgery in his dark damp kitchen. I had a capital dinner,—meat, potatoes, pudding, and a glass of beer, which they got in by the cask, and which the apprentice told me cost about eightpence a gallon. I think the brewery did a little in our way, as, after delivering the beer, I sometimes saw the men take parcels out of the shop. It was the same with the butcher and other tradesmen, who were continually calling for orders; in short, the apprentice

told me that our employers only dealt with people who took clothes in exchange for their goods. "And a good job too," added the youth, as we sat by ourselves at dinner, "for you seem to have a jolly appetite. But you mustn't have too much corporation when you go into the tunic style. You are nice and thin at present."

I finished his pudding, which he couldn't eat, and said,—"So would you be thin, if you only went into the hearthstone business and water-cress line, and you went to your butcher and only ordered a couple of penny polonies a week, and carried a lump of salt in your jacket pocket to nibble at, so as to make you dry, that you might go and have a good blow-out at the pump, which was the only tuck-out you ever got."

He said he shouldn't like that at all; and as his parents made him a pretty liberal allowance of pocket-money, which he never went of an errand without spending some of it in pastry, confectionery, or fruit, I often had to help him to finish what was cut for his dinner, and in about a fortnight I got too stout for a suit of corduroy at 8*s.* 6*d.*

I had plenty of room to move about when they put me into the Elegant Negligée Style at 10*s.* 6*d.*, though it was rather too cool, and I never could get to know what the blouse was made of. Some who felt it said

it was wrapping, others towelling; all I know is, when I held it up I could see through it, and that I found nothing warm about the whole suit excepting the belt, that looked like leather, but wasn't. I know when they wanted dusters for the shop, they cut them off the same pieces that they used for the Boy's Negligée. I had a beautiful buckle in front, and looked nice and easy and free and cool, with my turn-down collar and tie, though I felt as if I had nothing on; and the apprentice told me that my whole suit didn't weigh more than two pounds, and that the cost of the material by the piece was about 1*s.* 3*d.*

Betty called, and said I should leave, if they didn't let me wear my old clothes under the Negligée suit, as there was no more warmth in it than there was in a sheet of tissue-paper.

The Graceful Zouave Suit, 12*s.* 6*d.*, was precious cool, but there was a good deal of braid about it, which it wouldn't do to touch, as it was tacked on so slightly. But I knew I looked smart in it, so didn't mind the cold so much, especially when I used to see the ladies in their gossamers with their teeth chattering in their heads, when the wind was in the east; and I used to think,—"If they pinch themselves through coming out so thinly clad, only to be admired, I mustn't mind it, as I am paid for walking about in my thin things, and get admired into the

bargain." And I know when people used to say,—"How beautifully that boy is dressed!" it made me feel all of a glow at times, and I suppose the same praise made the ladies warm.

I was a Picturesque Knickerbocker at 16*s.* 6*d.*, and those who handled the material said it was only "devil's-dust." They put me into Genteel Mourning at one pound one, "to be made up at the shortest notice, and guaranteed a perfect fit;" and I thought, though it was so long after her death, I was in mourning for Mrs. Pettinger, who had been so good to me, and for whom I had never before worn anything but the bit of crape Mary sewed on my cap, when the old pawnbroker put me into a second-hand suit of corduroy; and as I walked up and down the pavement in that style, I felt very grave and thoughtful, and though my masters didn't know the cause, they were pleased to see me look so serious, which they said "was quite as becoming as when I stood at the door in my knickerbocker suit, holding a hoop or a cricket-bat in my hand."

I suffered a good deal in doing the "Young Gentleman's Suit at Two Guineas," in a tight-fitting velvet tunic which they had made up for me, as instead of a waistcoat, they laced me up tight in a corset, as they called it, though Betty said it was a pair of old stays which they had altered to fit me. They

creaked and whistled and made quite a noise if I twisted myself about, and hurt me dreadfully every time I stooped. You might have written a note on my back, it was so smooth, and tight, and level, that as one of my masters said, "it fitted me like my skin." Then I had a splendid cap that hung down like a silk bag on one side, and had a tassel at the end. And some days I had a little riding-whip in my hand, and spurs on my boots, though I didn't like them, as I often pricked my ankles while walking, and that was the "Young Gentleman's Riding Suit," and the boys used to get round me and say,—"Oh, crikee! what a swell!"

When they laced me so tight in the stays, and spoke pleasantly to me, and said, "they knew I didn't mind a bit of pinching, as I had been used to it when in the hearthstone and lucifer line," I smiled and said, "I didn't mind it a bit;" but I did, though, because on the "Young Gentleman's" days I had neither beer nor pudding, and they weighed my meat, and neither let me have bread nor potatoes, only greens, and were always looking at some book printed by another tailor, which told all about making people thin and genteel, if they were ever so stout. But I liked plenty of sugar, and beer, and bread and butter, and potatoes, and didn't like that tailor's style at all; for after I had eaten all he allowed

for dinner, I felt somehow a greater craving after food than I did before. It was just like going to receive a promised debt and only getting half, when you had made so sure of it that you had an appointment with one of your own creditors and couldn't pay him. Such was the half-satisfied appetite made worse through the other half waiting, and then not getting enough. I got them a good many orders in the "Young Gent's Style," though many of the customers complained dreadfully that the tunics didn't fit like mine. Of course they were kept in the dark about the stays I wore, and the padding that gave me such a full chest, and a beautiful roundness about the shoulders.

One day Pettinger's apprentice—who taught me to read the pawn-tickets, and used to draw me up and down the spout on the pledges—was out for a holiday, and knowing something of the parties who employed me (as most tailors scrape an acquaintance with pawnbrokers, so that they may know what customers pawn the new suits they have ordered for that purpose on credit, and never intend paying for), he asked them to let me go with him for half an hour or so, and they did.

As I have said before, Bill had always been exceedingly kind to me, and I was delighted at being allowed to go with him, especially in my "Young Gent's Style, at Two Guineas."

"We'll have such a jolly dinner, Jack," he said, taking me into a great cook-shop, where the joints were just up, and all smoking, and many not yet cut. Bill pointed to a beautiful round of boiled beef, which the carver had just begun to cut, so handed him a thin slice on his fork to let him taste how nicely it had taken the salt.

"That's the chap for me," said Bill; "never tasted a finer flavour in my life, Jack. Let's have two large plates, pease-pudding, carrots, mashed potatoes, greens, and a pot of porter."

So we went into a little box, and when there I told Bill how tight I was laced, and how much I should enjoy my dinner if I was unloosed a bit. And in less than a minute Bill unbuttoned my tunic, and unlaced the stays, and I think I never enjoyed a dinner so much in my life, especially the college-pudding we finished up with, and which I had never tasted before.

"I mustn't stop long, Bill," I said, thanking him and shaking his hand, after he had buttoned up my velvet tunic, which he had great difficulty in doing; for he wouldn't lace me up again, as he said, "after having had such a tightener."

So I went back to the shop, popped my head in, and said, "I had had my dinner with William," and began marching up and down again in the Young

Gent's Style, and delivering the bills as usual. All at once I felt as if I was crammed into something that was too little for me by half, and I began to fancy that I could feel the beer swelling the bread, and the pease-pudding and the college-pudding and the mashed potatoes all fermenting and rising, and I tried to undo a button, but couldn't get my fingers in anyhow; then I drew in a great draft of air, and bang went a couple of buttons as clean off as if they had been fired out of a rifle. I heard one strike the window, but being plate-glass, it did not break. A minute after, a third button went in the same way, and the one that was left pinched as if I had been screwed up in a vice, and I was compelled to tear it off. Fortunately at that moment I was before our own shop, when one of my masters came to the door, and seeing that my stays were unlaced, and my tunic without buttons, he dragged me in, when I told him what a dinner Bill had treated me to. My offence was pardoned on condition that I never indulged to such an extent again while in the Young Gent's Style; and I was put into an elegant Negligée Suit, in which I found plenty of room for digestion, and the coolness quite refreshing after the hot, heavy meal I had eaten.

So I went on for above a year, making myself useful in many ways, especially in taking home things that had been ordered, and going very often a great

distance, yet always finding the right place, and coming back safe. When spring returned, and the fine weather came, I again did the walking-boy model, and wore every suit that showed the last new fashion, the most theatrical of which was that of the Gallant Sailor Boy at 18*s.* 6*d.* I had got stouter, stronger, bolder, and began to think something of myself; I had also been to the theatre and seen the British sailor played; and I resolved to come out in that style on the pavement before the shop, and to look every inch a sailor.

I knew how to hitch up my trowsers, fold my arms, rock about as I walked, leave loose the ends of my black neck-tie, so as to let the wind blow them out, and if a boy ran against me would say, "Avast heaving, mate," as well as the sailor I saw on the stage. How proud the little auburn-haired maiden was of walking beside me.

One day nearly a whole ship's crew, who had come up for a spree, in an omnibus, from Greenwich, came rolling along the pavement in the Borough, and seeing me in my dress of the Jolly Sailor Boy, they surrounded me in a moment, when one great tall bronzed fellow mounted me on his shoulders, amid the loud cheers of his shipmates. They carried me into a public-house parlour, ordered a great bowl of rum-punch, placed me on the table, and made me box

the compass—made me drink—made me huzza, and do the British sailor, even to getting me to put a quid of tobacco in my cheek, and squirting out the juice as they did. I do believe they made me drink to the name of every British admiral that had ever been famous, and I did everything they wished me. They sang, and I joined in the chorus—sent out and got a fiddler, and danced hornpipes; then, when they were so drunk they could scarcely stagger, and I was quite speechless and senseless, two carried me on their shoulders, and the rest followed in procession, dancing as they went, while the fiddler led the way, playing, right into the shop, followed by a crowd, where they placed me on the counter, and swore they would come next day for an outfit, and see how I was.

That was a finisher. I lost my situation as a living model, not so much through the sailors having made me drunk, as the illness that followed. The doctor said I had had a narrow escape from poisoning through the quantity of tobacco-juice I had swallowed. I had the taste of that and rum in my mouth for days after. When I recovered they had got another boy, and I sighed as I saw him marching up and down in the velvet tunic I had worn, and wondered what would be my next venture. One thing I resolved upon, and that was never to enact the part of the jolly sailor again, box the compass, drink the health of British admirals,

nor try to chew tobacco. I thought if All-alive-o ever suffered so much as I had done, he would never have got drunk a second time.

I had frequently seen my pretty sweetheart, as Betty Blackman always called little Emma, while I was a walking model at the tailor's. She used to come up with a pleasant smile, and her beautiful auburn hair all down and blowing about her face, and say,—"Bless me, Jack, how smart you are to-day; why there's hardly any knowing you," especially when I was doing the "Young Gent's Equestrian Suit," with spurs on and a little riding-whip in my hand. She was out at service now, and as she sometimes took a few turns up and down the pavement beside me, used to tell me what a hard place she had, and show me her little hands made coarse and rough through hard work, and tell me how late she went to bed of a night, and how early she had to get up of a morning, and all they made her do, but end by saying she liked that better than living with her drunken mother. And I used to look at her sweet good-natured face and clear blue eyes, and wish she could live with Betty Blackman, and help her, and lie in bed as long as she liked, and not have so much hard work to do. And I used to tell her, when I got big enough and could earn plenty of money, she should come and live with Betty, and not work very hard,

nor sit up late, nor get up so early ; for I always liked Emma, and Mrs. Pettinger often said she was the best of any of the poor children I knew, as she used to give me her frock and things back at the side door of a Monday after I had thrown them out of the window for her. Then Mrs. Pettinger used to let me sit beside her at church, and she found the lessons for me in the Prayer Book, and first told me about Joseph and his brethren, and how they sold him for a slave, and how rich he became, and how good he was to them after. And she used to look at me sometimes with the tears in her eyes, and ask me, if I ever became rich, if I should still be as kind to her as I was then. And I used to wish all sorts of misfortunes might befall me if I was not, because she was so good, so pretty, and so poor, and I liked her so very much.

Neither the greengrocer nor his wife, with whom she now lived, was unkind to her ; but he liked to have his breakfast of a morning before he went to market, and as they sold oysters they kept open very late, in the hope of supplying their customers for supper. After I left the tailors' I used to help her to carry out vegetables that were ordered ; for they didn't mind hanging a heavy basket that contained greens and potatoes, and other things for half a dozen customers or more, on each of her little arms ; and

though they were a mere feather-weight to such a strong boy as I had grown, they were too heavy for her to carry far.

Betty once told me that the little maiden had a grandmother who was well off, and lived in a house of her own somewhere by Clapham Common, but who wouldn't look on Emma's mother, because she had married some master from a school, who was poor. That my little sweetheart's father had long been dead, and her mother was a proud-spirited woman, who would sooner die than apply to her own mother for assistance. That she had got to live among low people, and into their low ways. That nothing would induce her either to apply to or see her mother, for she used to say,—"When I am dead, you can send for her to come to my funeral if you like, for then I shall know nothing about it. But she once shut her door in my face, and she shall never have the chance of doing it a second time." That she had never once named her grandmother to her little daughter, and begged of me that I would not. Betty knew I could keep a secret.

I knew the little maiden's mother was looked up to in the court in which she lived, though she was as poor as the rest of her neighbours; that the women got patterns to show her before they bought themselves a new cotton dress; that she used to cut it out for

them, and assist in making it up; and that she would pledge her daughter's clothes rather than go without drink. Yet her poor neighbours never forgot that she had been brought up a lady, and grieved over her fallen state. "We have been used to hardships all our lives," they used to say one to another, "and never knew any difference; but she hasn't, poor thing! and there's no wonder she flies to a drop of drink to comfort her." How charitable the poor are to one another's failings!

CHAPTER VI.

I GO INTO LODGINGS.

I WAS too big and strong a boy to be long without a situation, and I soon found that the tailors would have no objection to take me back, for they hinted as much to Betty, when she called and asked them if they would give me a character. But I didn't care about walking up and down ticketed at so much; I'd had enough of that, and it reminded me of old Pettinger pinning a pawn-ticket on me when I was a little baby. There were advertisements for boys in the papers every day, and if I had only been a better writer, I should have made application to some of the city offices; but I was afraid of my penmanship, though I found afterwards I need not have been.

A strong, willing lad was wanted at a large lodging-house to make himself generally useful, and I was snapped up the moment I showed myself. I was a general slave in the morning, and page in the afternoon, wearing five rows of plated buttons, which all but touched one another, they were sewed on so close together.

I think my mistress was one of the sharpest women I ever saw, and one of the greatest cheats that ever lived. I once saw a hawk at a bird-shop, and it was just like her—the same quick, round eye, and bent beak, and, when at rest, the very same expression of countenance. Her eyes were never still; they were here, there, and everywhere, and excepting when in the presence of her lodgers, her tongue was ever going. All the servants lived well, but it was at the expense of the lodgers, and if they made any complaint of their joints being so much reduced, she would say,—"I was compelled to take off the outside as it was fly-blown, and was not fit to send to table, but perhaps you would like it untrimmed."

Then she would say to me,—"Jack, put that grumbling fellow's joint of meat out in the sun, and see the cats don't run away with it."

And sure as I'm alive, though there wasn't a single bluebottle to be seen anywhere when I obeyed her orders, as I was bound to do, and first took the joint out of the safe, yet no sooner had I set it down in the sun, on the top of the dust-bin or on the lid of the water-butt than it would be covered with great buzzing flies. Where did they come from? How did they first see it? How did one tell another it was there? These were the questions I used to ask myself, as I stood and guarded the meat from the cats; and I think I

found it out at last, and it was this way : I used to see one fly pretty near the safe, quite still, but keeping a sharp look-out. Then I saw another a yard or two off, and he was watching the nearest fly ; further off I found another, who had no doubt his eyes on the second fly, while a fourth was standing somewhere so that he could see the third, and so on to any number. Then when No. 1 made a move, No. 2 followed, and so on up to hundreds ; and that was how the meat came to be covered with great bluebottle flies in about a minute. Then they sucked all the moisture out of the meat, and laid thousands of eggs on it, and next day, when brought up, it was all alive on the outside, and my mistress received orders never to send a joint up in such a state again. So we used to have our dinner cut off the lodgers' meat as usual. Cold ham puzzled her ; except a few thin slices for herself. The flies couldn't spoil that.

What a woman she was for parsley when it was plentiful. She sent it up with everything, for she persuaded her lodgers that butter, cheese, German sausage, tongue, fowl, or ham even, kept much better, and was harder and sweeter in her cool safe, than it would be in their own cupboards. So she cut off and sent up little or much, according to the stock in the larder, and I used to feel quite ashamed at times when placing the things on the table ; for you had to peep

among the parsley, to see what there was inside, just as I used to peep in the nests I sometimes saw brought to Covent Garden Market, to see the eggs. Sometimes a lodger would say,—"Tell your mistress, Jack, to send a little more butter (or whatever it might be) and a little less parsley next time." But if she sent more than they ate at one meal, it amounted to just the same thing, excepting that what we got wasn't quite so fresh, for she never sent up what was left a second time, after she had buried it in parsley. "If lodgers won't board with me and pay well for it," she used to say, "why I must board with them, and so must my servants for that matter."

Every morning she used to have what she called a "general muster," when all the meat that belonged to the lodgers was set out on the dresser to be placed on fresh dishes. What a beautiful carver she was, and so quick over it, too. She used to place a great oval flat dish before her, and looking at each joint, would say,—"First-floor right will never eat half that roast sirloin while it is sweet," and down the whole length her knife would go, such slices! they reached half across the big dish. "First-floor left is very foolish to order such a large fillet of veal. Reach me another dish, Jack, and tell cook we'll have this minced." So she ran on through second-floor's lamb or mutton, though a fowl used to bother her, and I've seen her

turn it over with the fork such a many times; but there was no doing anything with it unless it had been cut, then she used to shave beautiful thin slices off the breast.

How she hated the lodgers who only brought in chops or steaks, for there was no nibbling at a single chop or half a pound of rump-steak. But she didn't get much by overdoing it, for if she sent me up to some of the lodgers to say,—"Please you are out of so-and-so," perhaps the lodger would say,—"Am I, Buttons, or Jack (whichever name I was called by)? then I must go without;" and some of them would, or else bring in a little themselves to go on with; so that, as the cook used to say,—"They're willing to be robbed of half of what they pay for, and missus ought to be satisfied with that, without wanting to sell them their own things over again."

Why they stayed with her to be plundered in the way they did I couldn't make out at all at first, but I did when I came to take notes and messages to other lodging-houses, and saw how sweet and clean ours was compared to some others. I have seen my mistress take her clean cambric handkerchief and rub it along the edge of the mantelpiece, table, or moulding that ran round the room, and if there was the least mark of dust on it, she would call in the servant and show it to her; and so it was with everything,

for, though a bigger thief never lived, she was clean over it, I will say that for her.

What soda-water and brandies, lemonade and seidlitz powders, the gentlemen used to send me for sometimes of a morning after they had been out on the spree. There used to be popping in every bedroom, and the corks flying in all directions. Then they "never minded the change out," and that was what I liked. Then they gave me such lots of cast-off clothes, and when I found mistress wanted me to go halves, I used to get the old woman who was always employed in the back kitchen to sell them for me, and give her enough out to get herself a drop of gin, which was all she cared for.

That little old woman, who went blinking and winking about the kitchen, and could see best when it was nearly dark, knew Betty Blackman, and also something more about myself, I often thought, than anybody else knew. I used to clean my shoes and knives in the half-lighted back kitchen, where Old Grizzy, as she was called (her proper name was Griselda), did her work; and, dark as the place was, there wasn't a dirty corner in it. Old Grizzy had a habit of talking to herself and me at the same time, without speaking to me in any other way than what is dramatically called "aside," and it was in these soliloquies—for I know not what other name to give

them—I found out that she knew something of my parents.

Sitting beside the fire, which she never allowed to get low in the hottest and longest day of summer, soaking her bread in a glass of neat gin, which was her chief support—for she had half a pint a day allowed her, and seldom tasted any other liquid excepting beer—she would wink and blink in the fire-light, looking up at me as I got on with my work, then down at her neat gin, in which she kept slowly stirring her bread, saying,—

"Great shame—put him in pop—gentleman's son—mother not well—didn't set house on fire—fools to run away—knowed all about it."

"What! did somebody accuse my father and mother of setting their house on fire, Grizzy?" I said, having heard her use the very same words once before, and feeling certain they alluded to myself. "Tell me all about it, old girl—then I'll treat you to a bottle of gin." For I knew that her "put him in pop" meant that I was pawned when a baby—a circumstance that could not be applied to many children.

"Get on with your work. Don't mind an old woman talking to herself," replied Grizzy. And I always found it was best to let her have her own way, for her thoughts were sure to flow in the same channel, and she would answer my question to herself gene-

rally, though sometimes she stopped short, and pressed her lips tightly together until I was gone; for she would begin talking to herself again the very instant I was out of the back kitchen, as I well knew through lingering a few moments at the door while I brushed away at the lodgers' boots, and soon heard Grizzy say—

"Passionate man — father was—knocked down Insurance Office-man when he came—knocked down other man when he came with police-court summons for knocking down Insurance-man.—Oh dear! used to swear shocking—good to old Grizzy, though—had gin from distillery, such big bottles, so good—used to say, 'Old girl, go load pocket-pistol'—little bottle in my pocket—fool for going away—it was all right—had me up—I proved how fire happened—clothes-horse falling into it—saw it—ready to pay, Insurance said they was—couldn't find him anywhere—never found yet—wife just confined—took her away—left money for child to pay nurse with—bad woman—spent it—put baby in pop—yes, all true!" And she finished her bread and gin.

When I told Betty Blackman what I had heard old Grizzy say, she sat silent for two or three minutes; then said—

"Old Grizzy's memory, as regards names and dates, is quite gone. She must be nearly eighty. About

the woman money was left with to pay for your nursing monthly, is old news. But she has been dead years, and denied ever having received any beyond the first month's payment. Nor would she ever tell the name of your father. All that I could get out of her was that he got into trouble, and went away, taking your mother with him. She wouldn't even tell me where they lived, and I'm sure Grizzy couldn't if she tried."

"I know twelve years is a long time to go back, Betty," I said, "but there is something tangible in the fire, and the inquiry, and my father knocking down the man who came to see about the salvage, and also the policeman who served him with the summons, to which, it seems, he never appeared. Also in his never having come to claim the insurance-money when the office was ready to pay it. As to myself, I suppose he would never have dreamed of looking for me at a pawnshop, if ever he had inquired after me?"

"Your nurse never knew anything about your father and mother, Jack," answered Betty, "nor any one connected with you in any way, excepting the woman who is dead, and whom we did not meet with again until long after we pawned you at old Pettinger's. She was with your mother during her confinement, and that was all we could get her

to acknowledge, excepting that there was a warrant out against your father; but she never alluded to the fire. I will get old Grizzy to my room, and see what I can make of her, though I fear it will not be much, for she is always in a muddled state."

And Betty got old Grizzy to her room, made her a strong cup of tea, half-filled with gin, but could obtain no information—could not even get a direct answer from her, though in her maundering way she did say, "Fine house—fine gentleman—very fiery—pretty young wife—frightened of him—all furniture burnt—helped fireman—worked engine—held hose—lots of gin—swearing all the time—beautiful pictures—fine library—gentleman come with papers—looked about—asked questions—master told him to go to —— oh dear! very shocking—angry words—knocked gentleman down—called him scoundrel——"

Nor did I succeed any better with old Grizzy, though she always seemed glad when I sat down in the back kitchen with her, and offered me her bottle, which I used to put to my lips without tasting its contents; and very often I brought her in a quartern or half a pint of her favourite liquor, and always felt a kindness for the poor old soul who had known my parents. Sometimes she tried to understand me, but I think never did clearly, for her own thoughts were enveloped in such a thick cloud of

"muddlings," that nothing from without could penetrate the ginny vapour. Her mental faculties, like her sight, had an inner light which she only could see by. At night, in the dark kitchen, she rarely lighted a candle, as she could see best by the fire-light, and would pick up a pin in a shadowy corner where I could scarcely see the colour of the wall. When I entered the kitchen, she would begin to move her tubs, pans, and pails, and I had grazed my ankles so many times that, after calling out "Grizzy!" I used to stand on the bottom step until she made a clear road for me, which she always did, muttering to herself, "Jack's good lad—good to Grizzy."

I noticed that when she went out in the day-time she moved along very cautiously, putting out her hand every now and then, as if she felt safest while feeling the wall, against which she would sometimes place her back, if there were many people passing. But at night, when she went out for her walk up and down the street, she moved along fearlessly; and, though I often watched her, she never either ran against the lamp-posts or the passengers, as she used to do in the day-time. Though Grizzy was only the scullion, she took quite a pride in keeping bright her tin and copper utensils, which made a sunny light as they flashed back the fire on

the walls of the dark kitchen; and though she was slow over her work, no plates and dishes were ever washed cleaner than those that passed through her hands. I could hear her say to herself, as she brightened the metal vessels used for cooking, "Do your duty, Grizzy—not a spot of dirt—all clean—then care for nobody." And she would turn them round by the light of the fire, examining them every way, and begin polishing again if she saw a dull spot that had before escaped her dim vision. I used to watch the old woman, and think to myself, "She finds happiness in doing her duty, and neither covets praise nor cares for blame; for both would fall on her dull ear alike disregarded; her great reward is in her own approval of having done what is right." "Do your duty, Grizzy!" often fell unaware upon my ear in other years, when she lay asleep in the arms of her mother earth, when I felt idly disposed and inclined to shirk or do slovenly the work I was allotted to do, even at times while in the lodging-house.

CHAPTER VII.

I WEAR MY BUTTONS LOOSELY.

ON and off, I remained at the lodging-house until I was turned fourteen, though I had many ups and downs before I reached that age; and it happened in this way. There was a lodger who did pretty well what he liked. He was a relation of my mistress's, some said her brother. He was a great speculator, in a small way, a kind of Jack-of-all-trades, like myself, with only this difference,—he was always able to raise the money, by some means or another, to commence what he undertook, and in which he never succeeded. He often persuaded some of the other lodgers to join him in his undertakings, in which they were sure to lose their money, as I lost my capital through putting my trust in All-alive-o. As our head waiter used to say, "He was the very deuce to talk, and could persuade people to do almost anything." When he lost their money he was always cheerful, used to send me out for champagne, and say to the lodgers, "Never mind, my boys; better luck next time. I've got a few nuggets in my head yet, and you shall have your share

of them." He took quite a fancy to me, and as he did pretty well what he liked about the house, he took me with him when he wanted me, and brought me back after the next failure, so that I was office-boy one week, clerk another, then came back again as if nothing had happened to be Buttons at the lodging-house. I think old Grizzy missed me more than anybody. How they managed while I was away I never inquired, though I found a boy came of a morning to clean the shoes and knives, but did not remain there during the day. The head waiter, as William was always called, was the chief manager, and all the rest of the servants took their orders from him. Some of the lodgers used to call him the Butoon, same as they called me Buttons, and I supposed it meant something a little higher than the page, as my mistress called me when I had my tight-fitting suit on.

His great speculation was in the ice-trade,—for, excepting that which was rough and not very clean, and was sold by fishmongers, there was scarcely a shop anywhere that dealt in the article, which was more talked about than used. He had been down to the Docks and seen some ice that had been brought over the sea in tanks, and for clearness could only be compared to plate-glass. It was in great blocks, and as he was very clever at inventing names, he called it North Pole ice. The first thing was to find a shop in

a central situation. It hardly mattered how small, he said, but it must be in a leading thoroughfare. That I was sent out to look for, and I soon found it. It was only half a shop; the other half was a baker's. It had a separate entrance, plate-glass window, and might be taken by the quarter, month, or week, even; for as the baker said, he had had several tenants who had gone away without paying at all. He came and looked at it, said, "It was just the thing," and paid a week's rent in advance. All the questions the baker asked was, "You are not going to open it in the baking-trade?" When convinced that it was quite a different line, that was sufficient. There was a beautiful counter, and, as he said, all we wanted was a saw, and scales and weights, and these he got from the lodging-house. He had a large quantity of bills printed, and sent several men out to deliver them at all the hotels, gin-shops, public-houses, and all other kinds of houses for a mile or two round the neighbourhood. He came in at night with one or two friends, who seemed rather tol-lol-ish, and said they had been into no end of bars or parlours, and that everybody was talking of the North Pole ice establishment which was about to be opened, and they all said, "It would do." As there was no cellar, he didn't lay in a very great stock, not above some two hundredweight, which was kept wrapped in a blanket, borrowed of

my mistress. I was to open shop next morning, and serve out as fast as I could, for he was not an early riser, especially when he brought friends home with him, for they would often sit up singing in what was called the commercial-room hours after I had gone to bed. He had shown me how to saw the ice overnight, and told me not to be at all particular to half a pound, if it was a nice square lump, as it left more than cent. per cent. profit. I quite liked the business, as the weather was very hot, and made up my mind I would have a pottle of strawberries, and a pen'orth of new milk, with a great lump of ice in it for a cooler. He had ordered my dinner to be sent in from a neighbouring tavern, and when the waiter brought it he was to take ten pounds of North Pole back with him, for by that name it was to be entered in the ledger he had bought for me. "You'll have a first-rate dinner, Jack," he said, "and plenty of it. I don't know what time I shall be with you, my lad, as I am going to the wine-docks with some friends who have got a tasting-order. But don't quite sell all out, as we shall call at the shop when we come back, for I daresay our coppers will be hot, and a little iced soda-and-brandy will be quite the cheese." He was a good-hearted fellow, and everybody liked him, and that was just the way he talked.

I was the last in the shop overnight, arranging a

piece of plate-glass in the window, on which in the morning I was to place a large lump of North Pole, and I was rather surprised to hear the chirruping of crickets. "They'll soon go away," I said to myself, "for they are fond of warmth, and having so much North Pole here as we shall have, will set every tooth they have got a chattering." My master said, if he could pick up a live Polar bear at the Docks, cheap, he would turn the plate-glass window into a salt-water aquarium, and keep him in it among blocks of ice, as it would draw crowds to the window; for he had always something or another in his brain that nobody else would ever have thought of. He had given an order for a nice desk to be made for me, and I am sure if I had said I should have liked an easy chair, with spring seat and back, he would have bought me one. It was through his influence my situation at the lodging-house was made so easy.

Next morning I dressed myself as much in the style of a young gentleman-tradesman as my wardrobe permitted, though I am afraid there was a little too much of the walking model about me, when I proceeded up and down the rough pavement, marked, "This style two guineas." Still, as Rosmond said, "You look quite smart, Jack, and some young lady's sure to fall in love with you, in your new shop," and she pulled up my collar and arranged the pin in my

smooth stock, told me not to get sucking the nasty cold ice, and away I went.

I soon had the door open and the shutters down, and great was my amazement to find the shop full of steam and the floor all of a swim. The blanket that had covered the great lumps of ice lay on the counter as flat as the door-mat on the floor, and equally as wet. I might as well have looked for a piece of ice in a kettle of boiling water as in that hot, steaming shop. I rushed into the baker's shop—our landlord's—the next door, and told him what had happened. He was serving out hot rolls for the breakfasts of his customers.

"All melted is it, my lad?" said he, rubbing his hand slowly across his unshaven chin. "I was afraid it would hardly do for the ice trade, as it always was rather close." And that was all the answer I got.

I mopped down the counter, put the shop-shutters on the wet floor to place my feet upon, and patiently waited the return of my employer. Very few customers called, and when they asked for ice, I said we had sold out. I had a famous dinner, and, soon after, my new master, and two or three of his friends, came in.

"Sold all out, Jack, my lad?" said he, looking round in his usual cheerful way. How he stared, and

his friends laughed, when I told them what had happened.

"I've seen the baker's apprentice," I said, "and he says their oven goes under the shop; and when I put down my hand I found the floor was quite hot."

He went out to give the baker what he called a "hot 'un," then went to the police-court for a summons; but the magistrates said it was a matter for the county court, so there was no redress. On inquiry he found that, excepting an eel-pieman, nobody had ever remained in the shop a week. One man had tried it in the lemonade, soda-water, and ginger-beer line, and had found all his corks blown out, his bottles empty, and many of them broken. A confectioner had it, but all his sweetmeats melted in the glasses, or stuck so fast to the sides that he broke no end of glass jars in trying to get them out. Then came an Alton ale and sandwich man, and burst every barrel, the bungs flying out and hitting the ceiling, and the ale spouting out like water from the hose of a fire-engine. My master said it might do in the baked-potato trade, if the old landlord made an opening through the floor, so that they could be handed up hot out of the oven; and on a cold winter's night they might bake their feet on the hot shop floor while eating their suppers.

My master *pro tem.*, for such he was, was not the

man to throw away money in law, nor yet to pay rent for a shop and make no use of it. So he went about among his large circle of acquaintance, and asked them what he should do. No one could advise him, until he came to a publican, who said, "I have got a score of barrels of ale in my cellar that's as dead as ditch-water; and as the brewer I bought it of cheap is a bankrupt, I can't return it. I have also a hundred dozen or more of empty bottles. Now, if the ale were bottled, and were to stand one night in your hot shop, well corked and tied down, it would either be up one way or another, though it burst the bottles, and made holes through the ceiling."

"That's the ticket!" exclaimed my master, slapping the publican on the back; "and as I have a famous connection among the stewards of the steamboats, I'll get them to take it cheap, and have it fresh every morning out of my oven—as I may call my shop—before it's well cold. I'll get rid of your ale if you've a hundred barrels."

And so he did; for we filled the shop every night with bottled ale, and emptied it every morning, when it was carted to the Thames steamers, and never was so much popping heard all down the river to Southend and Herne Bay as while that ale lasted. It was well up, and that was everything, though there were many complaints afterwards among the passengers,

when they had drunk it, as they didn't well catch the flavour in the froth. Some it griped terribly, and others it made awfully sick, while one or two said they felt as if they had swallowed a live monkey, and for hours after could feel it running about in their insides, and trying to poke its tail up their throats.

We did a brisk business in the bottled-ale line for nearly the whole summer, clearing no end of publicans' cellars of flat, stale, bad stock; for, as we got back the "empties" every morning when we delivered a fresh supply, we were never short of bottles. As for rent, my master used to present him with a bill for the loss he had sustained in his stock of ice, and the expense he had been at in printing and circulating bills. So, when the old baker found there was never anything to seize upon beyond one day's supply of bottled ale, which would have exploded and knocked out any man in possession had he remained there beyond a given number of hours, he made a fair allowance for the loss of the ice; and, when our summer trade was over, and there was no more ale to bake, said "he was sorry to lose so good a tenant."

Though I never heard of one case of drunkenness through our brisk, weak ale, there were rumours of several persons having burst themselves through partaking of it too freely while it was in a powerful state of effervescence. One man, it was said, who drank

eight bottles, exploded on the bridge that went across the paddle-boxes on the steamer, one-half of him going larboard and the other starboard. But these were my employer's jokes over his glass, and when among his boon companions, for he was a merry man, and would have had his joke, I do believe, had he stood on the scaffold to be hanged.

After this, he set up a catsup manufactory, going round to all the villages within ten miles of London to contract for every mushroom they could gather; for he believed there was nothing easier to be done than supply all England, through London, with catsup. He took an empty brewhouse, with large coppers in it, and I was pay-clerk to the country people who brought in the mushrooms. It was very fortunate, before we sent out our first order, that an eminent naturalist happened to come one day, while we were busy manufacturing. He went into the corner, where a load of mushrooms had been shot that very morning—some of the finest we had ever had, and, turning them over, said there wasn't a real mushroom in the whole heap, which consisted of toadstools and other deadly fungi.

It was a narrow escape, and, but for the great naturalist coming in as he did, there is but little doubt that thousands of persons would have been made very ill, if not poisoned to death. That was

another of his bad speculations, and I was again "Buttons" for several weeks after it, at the lodging-house, during which time he didn't seem to have heart enough to launch into anything fresh. "The mush-rooms," he said, "had disagreed with him."

CHAPTER VIII.

I FIND A FATHER WHO IS OF NO ACCOUNT.

ALTHOUGH I was now called Waiter instead of Buttons on my return to the lodging-house, after having acted as clerk, and I know not what besides, to the speculating brother of my mistress—who, amongst his friends, always went by the name of Jimmy—still I felt that I was a "Jack-of-all-trades, and master of none," as old Pettinger had said I should be when he presented me with the ticket that was pinned on me when I was pawned, as his contribution towards starting me in life.

I will not say I was not proud of the progress I had made, able as I was at this time to dress well, and with money in my possession, after having even paid the premium for little Emma to be apprenticed to the bonnet and millinery business at a large establishment in the Borough; for she still looked up to me as she would have done to an affectionate brother, and I was as true to her, knowing all she had to put up with from her drunken mother. Emma, and Betty Blackman, I always managed to visit once or twice a week,

however busy I might be, for I had only to speak to Jimmy, and permission was obtained at once from my mistress. I was tall of my age, and having lived well at the lodging-house—too often, I fear, at the expense of the boarders—was well filled out, and might have passed for a youth of sixteen or seventeen, though I was still a year or more under that age. I hope I shall be forgiven for saying that I was rather vain of my personal appearance, especially after people began to address me as "young man," and when one morning, in a very strong sunlight, while looking in the glass, I fancied I saw a pale downy streak along my cheeks, which I thought in a few years might turn out to be whiskers. I know I could not help cocking my hat on one side, and flourishing the nobby little cane I carried, when I passed the old pawnbroker's shop in the Borough, and thought what an alteration there was in my circumstances since the day he first shoved me into a second-hand suit of corduroy, and made me go and work in his underground kitchen. Then what a triumph it was to enter the old familiar court where I first lodged with Betty Blackman! and to hear myself praised by the neighbours, as one noticed what a fine, handsome young man I was growing; while another whispered that I had got a real watch that ticked; and a third remarked how nice and tight my trousers were strapped down, and what a beautiful

neck-tie I had got on, and such costly-looking shirt-studs. Betty took a pride in repeating these praises to me, though I sometimes fancied there was a sly, wicked light in pretty Emma's large blue eyes, when she was by and heard these praises, and that she had often great difficulty to prevent herself from laughing at us both. Sometimes I heard the neighbours say, "What a pity it is that he has neither father nor mother to be proud of him, such a smart young man as he has grown." And when I could not avoid replying to them, I used to say, "I wish I had; for were they sweeps or crossing-sweepers, I should be as proud of owning them as if they belonged to the noblest families in the land." Then they would say, "Such a feeling does you credit, and shows that success hasn't altered you a bit, and proves what a good heart you have."

But my boasted humility was soon to be put to the test in such a way as I never expected; for there are always people on the look-out to take advantage of human weakness, and make it subservient to their own ends. It is the same in business: whenever there is a demand for anything, it is sure to be supplied in some way or another, though the real article required may not be forthcoming; and no one knew better than I did what a "duffer" was, having sold a good many while Jack-of-all-trades. Those suits I

used to wear when a walking-model—that looked so well on the back, but would neither wear long nor give warmth—were "duffers." Such was the man who turned up, and said "He was my father;" for I soon heard it whispered that he wasn't at all a credit to me; but, on the contrary, "quite a disgrace to such a smart young man as I was."

When I began to make inquiries, I found that he was called Dirty Jack, and that sometimes he was not permitted to enter even a common tap-room until he had been sluiced.

"I've seen him, Jack," said Betty, one day when I called, "and I don't like him a bit, though I believe he is your father, else he couldn't know all about the fire, and the insurance, and the woman who took you to your nurse, and old Grizzy, and everything. He says your mother has been dead about ten years, and that it's your duty to do all you can for him. I think he is one of the dirtiest fellows I ever clapped eyes on. He must have altered greatly since old Grizzy first knew him, ever to have been a fine-looking man. I would rather a thousand times you had never found a father at all, Jack, than have had such a dirty one as this turn up."

"There are many occupations which the cleanest of men could not follow without being dirty," I said. "Perhaps he is a nightman, or employed in the sewers.

I was not over clean when in the fish and hearthstone line, at times, and considering what I have been myself, though I am called a waiter now, I am not one to despise my father because he follows a humble and dirty calling. What is he?"

"What is he?" exclaimed Betty. "It would puzzle me to tell you what he isn't where there's dirt anywhere to be found. He has a sack sometimes, and goes puddling about among the barges, at low water, picking up coal, and up the sewers to see what he can find there—bones, rags, or anything. They say he never seems so happy as when he is up to the knees and elbows in mud, excepting it be in some low, dark, close tap-room. When they open the ground to lay down or repair the gas or water pipes, he looks after the lanterns of a night while the men employed for the purpose sleep. He seems to be a cad even to cadgers, Jack, and I wish he had gone up some sewer and remained there for ever, instead of finding his way out to disgrace us all. His clothes were all in rags, and those only held together by pins and bits of string; and I am sure if he were to take them off, it would be harder to do than a Chinese puzzle if he tried to get them on again. I think one patch on his knee was of brown paper."

"I'll do what I can for him, poor fellow," I said, "though he isn't a father I should be very proud of

walking arm-in-arm with along Oxford Street, or taking to the National Gallery or British Museum, in his present costume. And I am afraid Emma would not receive him with open arms, if he's so very ragged."

"Open arms! I should think not, indeed," said Betty, quite indignantly, "such a neat, clean, handsome young woman as she is. I should say if she took up the tongs, and gave him one end to touch, that would be quite as near as she would be able to get to him, unless he was first rubbed all over with musk. I hope before you bring him here, Jack, you'll put him in a copper, with plenty of soft soap, and keep him there until it quite boils, then scrub him from head to foot with a good hard brush, for he smells fusty as well as sour. If he walked through Covent Garden Market, he would destroy the smell of all the flowers, and nobody would be able to breathe there again until full an hour after he had gone. If all the common sewers ran into one, and that one was stopped at the end with a big bung, when you pulled it out it would just smell like your dirty old father, Jack."

"He can't be quite so bad as you make him out, Betty," I said. "But whatever he may be I will see him, and judge for myself. There is no necessity for me making myself known at first. Where can I find him?"

"You won't have to go far," said Betty. "Once find your way to the sign of the 'Pig and Tinder-box,' and you'll soon smell him out. He'll do anything, they tell me, for drink, or a few halfpence, and there is generally a tap-room full of low fellows to witness the performances of Dirty Jack."

Betty's bark was always worse than her bite. I could find some excuse for her speaking as she did of my dirty old father, for she was remarkably clean herself, and I often heard her say "that dirt was a greater proof of laziness than poverty."

I knew the "Pig and Tinder-box" quite well, having often called there when I sold shrimps and winkles, and though it certainly would have afforded me greater pleasure to have found my father staying at one of the hotels in Bond Street, I resolved to have a look at him, and see what he was like. "We may pick out a neck-tie, a waistcoat, a hat, or anything of that sort, to please one's own fancy," I thought to myself, "but it's very different with a father. We must take him just as he is, dirty or clean, ugly or handsome, in the fashion or out of the fashion, because he is an old heirloom, which there is no setting aside, as he was there before we were born. It has been decided that a person may take any name he pleases, and I think it ought to be the same with a father. And many besides would be of the same opinion if

they had to take to such a dirty father as I found in the tap-room of the 'Pig and Tinder-box.'"

On my entrance I found my industrious parent standing on his head on the bottom of a quart pot, and dancing a hornpipe on the ceiling, with his feet uppermost, while one or two were whistling the tune he was moving his feet to, and another drumming it on the crown of his hat. He seemed to be quite as much at his ease on his head as he would have been on his feet. Sometimes folding his arms, then clapping his hands together, and beating capital time, though I could not help noticing that portions of the ceiling kept falling on the table while he moved his nimble feet.

Then there was a sudden movement at the door, and an angry voice exclaimed—"Didn't I say I would have no more of this? Am I to pay for repairing the ceiling every week?" And whether it was a broom-handle or a thick stick I could hardly tell, so quick did it come down on the upper and most prominent portion of my parent, who, in his hurry to alight, struck both his feet on the chest of his assailant and brought him to the floor. Although it was the landlord of the "Pig and Tinder-box" which my unsavoury sire had prostrated as he brought down his feet from the ceiling, no ill-feeling seemed to linger on either side, as one had given and the other

received; and while the worthy host rubbed himself before, my unclean father rubbed himself behind, and a pretty cloud of dust was raised by the broom-handle when it struck him, causing me to conclude that if every inch of his tattered garments had passed through the same process it would have been a great improvement.

When he stood up, drinking out of every pewter pot that was offered to him, I noticed, as the beer gurgled down his black unshaven throat, that he had a villainous-looking face, with a low receding forehead, and that at no period of his life could he ever have been what old Grizzy called a fine-looking man, or one who even appeared to have had courage enough to knock down an opponent fairly and openly, but was far more likely to come up with a stealthy and silent step and assail him from behind. My summing up was very unfavourable, and I didn't feel the least spark of affection for him,—for what feeling I had, blazed out quite the contrary way.

I was, however, determined to have it out with him there and then, and having spoken to one or two men in the room who knew me when I hawked fish, I treated them to a pot or two of beer, and soon all eyes were on me, and it was whispered that I had come to discover my dirty father.

I then rose, and standing up like a man before

Dirty Jack, in the middle of the room, told them who I was, and said—"You have been telling people all about the neighbourhood that you are my father, and that I ought to do something for you?"

"So I am, and so you ought," he answered, impudently; but I noticed his eye quail as I looked into his face.

"How old are you?" said a costermonger, whose face I well remembered, having often bought things of him to sell again.

I told him the date of the ticket when I was pawned, which was my Register of Birth, I being six weeks old at the time.

"Why, you lying old rascal," said the costermonger, turning on Dirty Jack; "you was 'doing time' in the Penitentiary, and had been there two years before, and remained two years after this young man was born. Out with your ticket-of-leave, quick, or it will be worse for you! How dare you circulate a report that you are the father of such a smart young fellow as this!"

"It's all a mistake," said Dirty Jack, pulling out his ticket-of-leave. "It's some other young man, who is above two years older than he is. I'm not your father, nor never was."

"I felt sure, at the first glance, you were not," I said, "and I am very glad of it. And were I a bit

bigger, I would throttle you until you confessed that you had been knowingly telling a parcel of lies in the hope of making something out of me, well knowing that no one could keep a situation long if such a filthy old wretch as you are were to come hanging about the place where he was employed, annoying him by saying you were his father. Where did you obtain information about my father, and the fire, and the insurance office?"

"Well, if I must tell the truth, and I don't see what I shall gain if I don't," said Dirty Jack, "it was All-alive-o that laid the plant, and told me all about you, and got me to see Betty Blackman, as he thought there might be a little made out of you, and we were to go shares."

When I mentioned it, two or three who were present well remembered how Live-o went off and took my money at the donkey races, and though they were only poor costermongers they were indignant at finding that the scoundrel was still endeavouring to injure me, after having carried away what was then the whole of my hard-earned capital. They vowed what they would do the first time they came across Live-o, and I knew that when a man of their own grade had done anything which they felt to be a disgrace to themselves they would fulfil their threat.

As to Dirty Jack having striven to injure me by

lending himself to Live-o's villainous plan, they passed sentence on him there and then. He must either mizzle at once, and never again show his face at the "Pig and Tinder-box," or sit bareheaded on the bottom of a pail under the high pump at the end of the court while I pumped on him. He preferred the latter punishment, and I gave the fellow such a sluicing as would cause him to remember calling himself "my father" for many a long day to come; for some of the costers held up his face, and how much water he was compelled to swallow no one could tell, though I noticed it at last run out of his mouth as fast as it was pumped in, so I imagine he was full to the very bung, which one of them drove pretty tight between his teeth as a finisher.

Although it afforded great pleasure to pretty Emma, my nurse, and Betty Blackman to find that Dirty Jack was an impostor, had acknowledged his villainy, and been punished for it, and was in no way related to me, I did not fail to impress upon their minds that, low and dirty as he was, had he really been my father I would have assisted him to the very utmost of my power; that I had no origin to be proud of, being nothing more nor less than an unredeemed pledge, which, if everybody had their rights, ought still to be lying on old Pettinger's shelves until principal and interest were paid, at least up to the time

he made me a present of my own pawn-ticket,—for after I had left him I did not think he had any right to charge interest for even warehouse room, as I ceased to occupy any space in his pawn-shop. My pride had, however, been deeply wounded through Dirty Jack setting himself up for my father.

CHAPTER IX.

I AM EMPLOYED IN THE BURYING BUSINESS.

I HAVE said that my temporary master was a shrewd, far-seeing, speculative man, who in many of his undertakings touched so closely upon success, that even those who lost their money through joining him said "he deserved it," for he always made it appear to their satisfaction that but for this, that, or the other, they would all have realized fortunes. I sometimes thought that his name, which was Else, had a good deal to do with his failures: but that might be through hearing his friends joke him on the subject. He had also, in his plain, homely, Doric style of speaking, a great habit of using the word, especially in connection with anything that had not been successful, always ending his reasons for failure with "else it would." On and off, between him and the mistress of the lodging-house, I attained my sixteenth year, when he got a new crotchet into his restless head. Clapping me on the back in his hearty way, as he ordered his mutton-chop, "and one to follow," he said, "There will be no mistake this time, Jack, as I

shall get up a company, and I mean to make you clerk, to commence at a guinea a week. Is it a bargain?" I said it was, without knowing anything about the object he intended carrying out, for he had always been exceedingly kind to me. Then he spat on the palm of his hand, seized mine and gave it a grip such as I could imagine it might have got in a joiner's bench-vice. That was his way of binding a bargain.

We were to be a Great Burying Company, with a capital of twenty thousand pounds, to be increased to any amount, as occasion required. We were to have our own hearses, horses, mourning-coaches, masons, sculptors, coffin-makers, and a new class of men as undertakers, mourners or mutes, trained to the trade, dressed becomingly, and to be constantly retained and drilled to the burying business, which he at once commenced by opening office; for as he said, "people kept on dying, and the sooner he broke ground the better." My master's friends took a great many shares, for which they accepted a vast number of bills, and many of these got discounted somehow. We had "splendid spreads" in the board-room, in which I shared, for nothing was considered too costly to be placed before the Directors for luncheon. I of course wore black, and a white neck-tie, which had quite a clerical appearance. Jimmy had great designs: his

brain encircled everything within its grasp. "Let a thing be done right and straight, and well, then it is done, if nothing more can be done at it," he used to say.

We had artists constantly calling to show him designs, and in his room, the door of which was marked "private," he gave them hints, by placing himself in such attitudes as he considered figurative, not only of the departed, but of the sorrow of the survivors. "The public wants something new," Jimmy would say: "there has been more than enough of headstones, footstones, and crosses: we want something that shall show what people do feel that have any feeling at all: a good crying figure, full of trouble, and cheap—that would be the cheese, and everybody would buy it that could get a ten-pound note."

He drilled what he called our Blackmen in the Board-room two or three times a week, that they might be able to walk in a becoming manner beside the funeral procession, and stand at the doors as mutes in dejected and sorrowful attitudes. "Now you, sir, with a smile on your face," he would say, "cast down your eyes as if you had lost half-a-crown, and were looking for it,—then you would be sorrowful enough, I'll be bound. A mute ought always either to lean on his staff, as if thinking it might be his turn next,

or else be looking up at the sky, as if he expected comfort to come from that quarter, and not stand staring at everything in the street. A few good sharp pickles, or anything of a griping nature, that would give you a twist every now and then, would be very effective in throwing an expression of pain into your face, and making you look as if you felt a good deal more than you could make known for the deceased. I should advise you, when you have nothing else to do, to read Blair's Grave and the Burial Service, and when you are employed at a funeral to think of nothing else but what would help to give you a miserable hang-dog look, — which you ought always to wear, because you are paid for it. You can't expect people to look sorrowful who have good fat legacies left them, can you? Of course not, and that's why they hire you, because it isn't reckoned respectful to have a funeral without somebody at it to pull a long face. You must only learn to sing very solemn hymns, to get off epitaphs; and when you want a little exercise to always take it in some burial-ground."

Then he would measure them back to back, and say: "Now you two are both of a height, and a good match, and must always go together. A big man and a little one side by side is not an equal tribute of sorrow, nor a proper respect to the departed. Always

stoop a little as you walk,—it not only gives a becoming fall to the hatband, but looks as if you carried a heavy burthen of grief on your shoulders." Whenever one of our men was employed to carry a little Baby on his head, Jimmy insisted that he should hold a white handkerchief before his face with one hand. "It is not only," said he, "expressive of the copious shower of tears the mother has shed, but also emblematical of its little Innocence:" and that the Baby-bearer ought to keep his head well up, as if to show that it had never done anything it need to be ashamed of.

We bought up all the old mourning coaches we could get cheap, and had large coats of arms emblazoned on the panels, though they bore but little resemblance to such as are sent out of the Herald's Office. These we put in low, for, as Jimmy said, "It was better to keep them moving than standing still, or leaving the horses in the stable to eat their heads off." Three coaches were charged at the rate of two single ones, and six as four. And as Jimmy said, "What can look more solemn than half a dozen coaches with coats of arms on them, and nobody inside? Of course the people in the streets they pass through look at them, and think that the mourners are so full of sorrow at home, sitting in dark rooms, wringing their hands and crying their eyes out, that they couldn't attend the funeral, unless they laid down in the mourning

coaches, and gave vent to their grief among the straw at the bottom."

As Jimmy considered my appearance and address rather superior to that of any of the touters they had hitherto employed, I was removed from my desk and placed in a separate room, which was called the Fine Art Department, in which were placed specimens of the monumental figures and designs we supplied. If a party came to order what we called a "Christian Memorial"—for monument or tombstone were words too common to be used in our style of business—it was my duty to point out and recommend those designs which realized the greatest profits, which I did in the following manner, after having been drilled by Jimmy—"Sweet pretty thing this, and very much the fashion, Image of Grief. Please observe the beautiful turn of that arm, and notice the sculptured folds of the handkerchief she holds to her face." Perhaps some fellow with no taste would say, that instead of weeping, Grief looked as if she were wiping her nose, which was a very rude remark. So I ran on through all our monumental statuary, giving the price after describing each figure. We had Charity, with one child, twenty-five guineas, charging five guineas for every extra child; we could surround her with any number that might be required. Hope could have either a cross or an anchor, according to the fancy of

the purchaser. Faith, as I used to say, "was a sweet angelic creature, with raised head, and her finger pointing heavenward." We had angels with wings in every imaginable position — outspread, folded, big, little, and just opening; for our artist worked from nature, and having a number of live pigeons before him, made them his study: these I recommended as "chaste and very neat," and got a great many orders for them. We also did a large business in the very little baby line, and were the first to suggest tiny stones for such as died as soon as born, or who only lived a few hours, or a day or so. But in this new trade we were entirely indebted to the poetical genius of Jimmy; for he composed the epitaphs, and few mothers could resist selecting one, as they were so simple, expressive, and much to the point. These we did for a guinea each, on a plain stone two feet by three. I long preserved a few just as I copied them from his manuscript-book, on the title-page of which he had written, in his fine, bold, noble hand, "Epitaphs For Very Little Infants, Of All Ages, And Under All Circumstances. By James Else."

Though I have not preserved a hundredth part of the epitaphs Jimmy wrote—there is not a complaint that the race of babes and sucklings is subject to that he did not touch upon, even to the medicine that was given them—and they show that my master had ideas

of his own, and scorned borrowing a thought from anybody. He made Dalby's "Carminative" kill a baby "diminitive," and "parrygorick" leave another as "dead as Yorick."

We went on swimmingly for more than twelve months, for one of our first-class funerals filled quite a long street; no other hearses had such tall plumes, no other horses such long tails, and few knew that they were artificial. It was a wet spring that ruined us—that brought us lawyers' letters by every post, and caused actions to be entered against us in every court. Our monumental figures were plaster casts, and wouldn't stand the weather, and it was this that broke up the company. Complaints were made that Charity had lost her children, and that she herself was falling away through want of better support. That Hope was lying prostrate, having no longer anything to lean upon, her anchor having drifted away. That Faith was broken, and Regret had lost an arm, while Sorrow had come to an end, through her head having fallen off. Our Angels had broken wings, some none at all. Time had neither his scythe nor hour-glass, and what little hair belonged to him had fallen off. Grief could no longer wipe away her tears, as she had no arms; as for faithful Friendship, he hadn't a leg to stand on. The works of our artists that looked so beautiful, and were so much admired, when first set

up, were now in ruins,—headless, armless, legless, bodiless, and a grievous eyesore as they strewed the ground. As Jimmy said, "It was making those statues of plaster of Paris, instead of marble and granite; else we should have done, and all have come out with fortunes, instead of having to run for it, and play at hide-and-seek."

Of course the office was closed, and my occupation at an end. Jimmy put up a board, requesting that all messages and parcels might be left next door; but as the next house had long been shut up, and nobody was left in charge of it, there would have been some difficulty found in leaving anything there, unless it was dropped through the iron grating that gave light to the kitchen window. That autumn my master and a few of his most intimate friends, who had joined him in the business, went to see how things were managed at Père-la-Chaise Cemetery, for, as Jimmy said, they might pick up a new idea or two by going to France for a little while, as there was nothing to be picked up that he could see through staying, excepting the broken images. Some of our procession men and mutes, whose wages were owing, seized a long-tailed horse apiece, and rode off therewith. As most of our hearses and coaches wanted repairing, they were put in a coachmaker's yard, where I have no doubt they fell to pieces. The directors at

last arranged to pay a dividend of three shillings in the pound, though how that was managed was to me a mystery, and I have thought since that it must have come out of the lodging-house, through the money-letters my mistress received from Jimmy while he was in France, where—as she told me—"he was miserable, and wanted to be back again, and go into something else."

CHAPTER X.

I FIND OTHER TROUBLES BESIDE MY OWN.

WHETHER things went well or ill with my patron—or sometimes master, Jimmy—made but very little difference to me, as I had always the waitership at the lodging-house to fall back upon, and never came out of his speculations a loser, though I could not help noticing that after his last failure my mistress seemed sadly out of spirits. Only one thing troubled me at this time, and that was the increasing annoyance pretty Emma suffered under from her drunken mother, who was continually waylaying her when she went out on her mistress's business. Neatly dressed, and with her sweet face and beautiful figure tripping along with a bonnet-box in her hand to wait on some lady, it was a terrible trial to be stopped in the public street by her drunken mother, accompanied, as she generally was, by two or three of her dirty and besotted companions. "And what can I do, Jack?" she would ask me, her blue eyes filled with tears; "bad and low as she has fallen, she is my mother, and I cannot turn my back on her,

nor even refuse to give her money to spend in drink, while I have any, for she says, 'It is only drink that can keep me alive.' Oh, Jack, it is very hard to have to feel ashamed of meeting with your own mother, after you have done all you can for her." I could fully sympathize with her, remembering what I suffered at the time I was led to suppose that Dirty Jack was my father, and I wished from the bottom of my heart that she could shake off the relationship as easily as I had done; but—as the dear girl said—"she is my mother," and through the ruin which drink had made, might still be traced the outlines of what had once been beautiful; and those who remembered her when she was first married, said she was then the very image of what Emma was now.

I knew not what to do. I could but feel sorrowful for the dear girl, and grieve with her, and utter words of consolation, while I knew not where to find comfort for her; for I had not the heart to propose that she should abandon her mother to her fate. If she brought ruin on us both I could not have made such a proposal, only because she was her mother. I could not forget how that beautiful face, which even women gazed upon with admiration, and men with loving wonder, and which, under her present quiet occupation, wore that pure complexion of white and delicate red, which showed that she was allied to some family

that had been able to boast of its fair ladies :—I could not forget how it had been scorched by the summer sun, and pinched by want and winter, when we were children together, and she accompanied me in my daily rounds, as we strove hard to earn an honest penny. What loads of heavy hearthstone those little arms had carried ; what a light of joy there was in her violet coloured eyes, and a smile of sunshine in her countenance, when she came pattering up with her bare feet, exclaiming, "Look, Jack, I've sold another hap'orth !" and as she put the halfpenny into my jacket-pocket, felt to see how much we had taken. And beautiful she was as a child ; but, oh ! a thousand times more lovely now. I used to look at her at times, and think of what she might have been with such a mother, but for Betty Blackman, and the brother-like love I had for her, a child of the street —perhaps a wreck on that shore which is strewn with drifted humanity, for the want of pilot and chart ! ! I thought how we had stood ragged, and hungry, and cold, warming our hands on some baked potato-can, longing to spend a halfpenny and divide the hot purchase between us, yet knowing that we had but enough to buy her mother's nightly quartern of gin—without which she said she could get no sleep—and I well knew how my childish companion dreaded entering the court of a night, unless she had money enough

to satisfy this continuous craving. Let her but bring home that amount of a night, I often feared to myself, and her mother cared not where she had been, nor what she had done. I might be mistaken—I hope I was—for she would say, "I always know Emma is safe, Jack, while she is with you." Sometimes when the effects of drinking were dying down, and reflection lay at the bottom of this hideous twilight of consciousness, she would look from one to the other as we sat side by side—often by our all but fireless grate in the middle of winter—wring her hands, and sigh, and maunder about her mother, though she never named her name. I often thought now of what she said, and whether I could find the old house she talked about unaware, with roses hanging over the high garden-walls outside, and laburnums dropping their chains of gold on the footpath that led out to the gorse-covered Common. I often thought now that if that old lady could be found, and were to see her beautiful granddaughte, and know the depraved life that her own daughter was leading, she would come forward and, for the sake of the grandchild, endeavour to reform the degraded mother. Often, when I had leisure, after Emma had been crying while telling me all her troubles, I have gone to Clapham, and looked at every house and garden on the border of the Common, and into the face of all the old ladies I met, to see if I could trace any

likeness to the lovely girl, and that saddening ruin, her mother. Could I but have found her, I would have brought her auburn-haired granddaughter down, led her in all her youth and beauty, told all we had done and suffered together, and how the conduct of her mother was blanching her cheek, and hanging heavy at her heart, and that I knew not what to do to comfort her.

What was her mother's maiden name? At what church was she married? What was the name of her husband? At what school was he master when he married her? Where did they reside when Emma was born? I was continually asking myself these questions, after the dear girl had been telling me how her mother's ill-conduct troubled her, and thinking where I should begin my search for her wealthy grandmother. I knew that the old lady was still alive, and that the drunken woman, by some means or another, was acquainted with her movements, knew when she went to the sea-side, and when she came back; but how she obtained this information was a mystery to all who knew her. What she gave utterance to at times in her drunken reveries was, excepting to herself, as difficult to comprehend as old Grizzy's soliloquies over her gin-bottle and her crust of bread. I had followed the drunken mother, unseen by her, for hours, had paid people to watch and dog her steps,

and only once had she ventured as far as Clapham Common, and there our spy had lost her, at the Balham Hill end, among the tall gorse-bushes. Then I thought that if the grandmother was found, and Emma saw her, I could produce no proof of their relationship unless the drunken mother came forward. How strange that she should promise that we should know who her mother was, and where she lived, when she was dead, and not before. Supposing she were to drop down in the street, or die in the midst of her drunken orgies, surrounded only by her depraved companions, where were we then to look for the address of her mother?

Neither Emma nor I dare put such a question to her, for, though her manner was generally kind to both of us, even when she was half stupified with drink, yet, when offended, and she gave loose to her fiery passion, she was a fury: her blue eyes seemed to blaze, and her long hair—which still retained its rich auburn colour—was tossed about her face like flickering flames.

About this time Emma's mother became so ill that she could not even relish the poisonous gin, which for years had been her chief support, but, to use her own words, "felt quite set against it." I got a kind doctor to see her, and after much persuasion we prevailed on her to live with a poor clean laundress, who had a little

cottage at the Clapham end of Streatham Common. It was near: and both Emma and I promised to visit her at least twice a week, and provide her with every comfort. I had another motive for selecting the locality. I thought the neighbourhood had been familiar to her in the days of her maidenhood: that while taking exercise, amid quiet green scenery, she might begin to reflect on the error of her ways; think what disgrace her misconduct brought on her lovely and pure-minded daughter, and perhaps meet with her aged mother, though I had but little hope of the old lady recognizing her, such havoc had drink made with her face since they were first estranged.

These were among the happiest weeks that Emma and I had ever enjoyed since those days when dearly-remembered Mrs. Pettinger was so kind to us both, and we sat in the same seat and held one hymn-book between us. Jimmy had not entered upon any new speculation that required my assistance; almost everybody who could afford it had left town, and what little there was doing at the lodging-house the under-waiter could very well manage. Emma obtained a fortnight's holiday, which she passed at the cottage with her mother, who seemed quite an altered woman, though she was still unable to sleep unless she took spirits, and by the doctor's advice I supplied her moderately with the best French brandy. Emma told me that

when they went out a-walking, her mother showed her sweet green places in which she had gathered flowers in her girlhood; had even gone so far as to speak of her school companions by their Christian names, but that when she herself ventured to speak of her grandmother, she hurried her back to their lodgings, and drank more brandy at a draught than she had hitherto taken in the course of two or three days.

Though still a mere youth, I had had more experience of the "ups and downs" of life than many a one years older than myself, and having often known what it was to want a penny to buy a loaf, I was—excepting towards Emma's mother—very careful of my money, and always very economical in my habits. I was therefore always able to place my hand on a few pounds, and nothing afforded me greater pleasure than to keep Emma's mother at the cottage, without encroaching too much on her daughter's earnings, as I was able to bring her many little comforts from our lodging-house, for Emma was a great favourite with my mistress, who would have taken her for a barmaid. Though I should have liked to have had her so near me, there were a many reasons for my persuading her to refuse the situation; first, the fear of being visited by her mother; and second, the attention that was paid to her by some of the "fast" young gentlemen, whenever she called, who were our lodgers.

CHAPTER XI.

I AM STARTLED, AND JIMMY STARTS AFRESH.

ONE day, about this time, when I went to call on Betty Blackman, she said — "I've got such news for you, Jack; there's been a man and woman making inquiries about a baby that was left to nurse in the Borough some seventeen years ago. I haven't seen them myself, but from what I have heard, they seem quite bettermost sort of people, something like a lady and gentleman, or very near it. If it's you they are looking for, I think you'll find a father you needn't be ashamed of this time; and I'm sure anybody might be proud of you, you keep yourself so clean and respectable. But it may all turn out nought, after all, as people are always putting children out to nurse and forgetting to take them away, or to call for them, or leave their address. Norwood was a dreadful place for nurse-children never being called for at one time, I have heard; and that, I suppose, was why there were so many gipsies about the neighbourhood."

I paid very little regard to what Betty said, and was not at all anxious about being owned by another

father after the specimen I had found in Dirty Jack; for Betty was always jabbering about something or another all the time I visited her, and what she said generally went in at one ear and out of the other, leaving nothing to be remembered behind.

It was not until two or three days after they had left, when I found out that the same party who had been making inquiries after a child in the Borough had been staying for a fortnight at our lodging-house, and both had taken great notice of me, though they had asked no questions about my parentage. This discovery was made by old Grizzy the day before they went away, for they had met her as they came out, and just as she was turning to go down the area steps, with her gin-bottle in her hand; but what conversation took place between them I could not ascertain, for there was no understanding the poor woman. They, however, knew her, and the gentleman presented her with half a sovereign, and after Betty Blackman and I had tried our very hardest we could get nothing more out of old Grizzy than—"Good to old Grizzy—always was—shook old girl's hand—remembered fire?—Yes; knock man down—yes! laughed he did—always merry—knowed nurse?—Yes, bad woman—kept money—dead—knowed baby? Knowed no more. Gave old girl gold. See! good. Missus says so. Buy lots o' gin." And that was

about all the information we could get from her, for seven years had made a further inroad on her mental power, as during their course her thoughts had flowed all the time through a sluggish current of stupefying gin, in which they seemed, at last, to have become stagnant.

She could not now repeat a tithe of what had happened, and which she remembered when I first went to the lodging-house, and used to spend so much time with her in the dark back kitchen. She did not even shake her head, as a sign that she did not understand or had forgotten, but kept on talking to herself, and not seeming to hear the questions that were put to her. She seemed to have no recollection of what I had been.

I had no difficulty in ascertaining that they were the same party who had been making inquiries after a child in the Borough, for having waited upon them every day while they stayed at our lodgings, I was well able to describe them; and when I went to places at which they had called, all doubt was removed, for they had even given the name of our lodging-house as their residence. My patron Jimmy had introduced them, having first met with them at Boulogne, at a time when he was as near England as he dare venture. But all that he could tell me was that they had plenty of money, and seemed to have

nothing else to do but go from place to place enjoying themselves. "He is not a man to take a liberty with," said Jimmy, "for on one occasion, when I asked him for his name, he said—'Oh, Jones, Brown, or anything you like; when I owe people money I write it down for 'em.'"

So Jimmy took him at his word, and they had come and gone from our lodging-house as Mr. and Mrs. Jones, and would never have been thought of again only as passing lodgers, but for their interview with old Grizzy, and the half-sovereign, which was strong proof that they had known her beforetime. I tried, but in vain, to forget all about them. It was of no use; instead of forgetting them, I found myself, as it were unaware, recalling all they had said and done, from the first hour when I opened the cab-door to admit them, to the last moment of their departure, when, to my great amazement, he held out his hand to me, and said—"You are an obliging waiter, Jack, and we shall come and see you again some day. You have done all you could to make us comfortable."

He had just before that presented me with a sovereign. But, strangest of all, after they had gone I remembered how the eyes of his wife were always upon me, look at her when I might. I am almost ashamed to say now that I was hardly surprised at this, as I then considered myself about as smart a

waiter and as fine-looking a young fellow of my age as was to be met with between Whitechapel and Westminster. Beside, I had my hair dressed and curled every morning, for which I paid threepence. I always thought that they went away rather suddenly, because at first they talked of staying some time, and I noticed, at last, that the gentleman got out of Jimmy's way as much as he could, especially after they had sat very late together one night over their grog, during which time Jimmy was busy with his pencil, casting up sums, and I heard him say more than once—"It leaves thirty per cent. profit; thirty, at the very least." Nor was I wrong, as I found soon afterwards that Jimmy had been pressing him very hard to become the principal director of a new company, and find the money to start it. It was Jimmy's persevering propositions that started Mr. and Mrs. Jones from our lodging-house, I do believe.

This time it was a Loan Society, and I had again to give up my waitership and become secretary, much against the wishes of my mistress, as I now pretty well undertook the management of everything of importance at the lodging-house. But, as Jimmy said—"His hours of attendance at the office will seldom be more than from ten to four, so he will have plenty of time to set things a little straight before he goes and after he comes home;" and so he had his way. My

mistress said to me—"It will be like everything else he undertakes—soon at an end, John (she had long since ceased to call me Jack), but were you not to go, I should be blamed for the failure. 'She would not let me have John for a secretary,' he would say, 'else we should have succeeded.'"

It was pleasant to be set so much store by. But she was a kind woman in her way, though she was so keen, and had often invited Emma to stay to tea when she called on me with a message from Betty Blackman, and had promised that when she commenced business for herself, she would give her an order for a drawn silk bonnet.

"I like your pretty little sweetheart, John," she used to say, "because she isn't proud and stuck up, like some girls, when they have learnt the millinery business; for often when we are by ourselves she tells me how you used to throw her Sunday frock and boots and little jacket out of old Pettinger's back window into the court, so that she might be able to go to church with you. There is no make-believe about Emma."

We opened our loan society with very little capital; although it is true that we did not profess to lend any borrower more than five pounds. That was to be our largest amount. "What we want to get into," said Jimmy, "is the small loan line: to have many borrowers of little sums. That's the ticket! That's

the winning game! We charge twopence for our rules—they cost next to nothing. We charge for inquiry fees according to distance—that must be paid whether we lend them anything or nothing. We don't like the securities, don't you see? I reckon the inquiry fees, if that oracle is properly worked, will bring in quite as much as will pay our expenses." We also offered to lend money on furniture, without requiring it to be removed, so that any person might borrow money on his own bed, table, and arm-chair; and still sleep in the one, have his dinner on the other, and sit down at his ease just the same as if they were his own. All the security we required being an inventory of the goods in the form of a bill of sale. Of course, we had an awful shindy in the office every now and then, when we refused to accept the securities, lend the money, or return the inquiry fees. But as our printed rules stated "that unless the securities were approved of, no loan would be granted, nor no inquiry fee returned," why we pointed to the document, and stuck to the money. There was also another source of profit, if we granted a loan; which was a penny fine in every shilling a week, for every week the borrower neglected to pay back his stipulated instalment. After a few weeks' experience, Jimmy said it was too good a thing to let slip; and that, when honestly carried out on both sides, the

percentage was enormous. So it was with the money paid for the rules, the inquiry fees, the fines, and the interest, altogether making considerably more than thirty per cent., as we deducted the whole of the interest at once on the day we advanced the money.

So Jimmy, as usual, got a few of his friends to "stump up," and we had once more a board of directors, and comfortable little luncheons, and lent away right and left while the money lasted; for, as Jimmy said, "It's a dead loss to keep even a single pound on hand, when it brings in so much interest; and look what a large amount we have coming in weekly."

So we should have had if the borrowers had paid up; but when they ceased to pay in, and the securities were nowhere to be found, and the furniture we held a bill of sale on, was gone, or sold to the nearest broker, and nowhere could we hear any tidings of any of the parties, then it was that the Directors began to look at one another, and Jimmy said we had been deceived in the men we paid to inquire after the securities, else it would have been all right. And so it was in too many instances; for the men we employed drew their wages, and sat spending the money in public-houses, seldom making any inquiries at all about the securities, but reporting "all right;" and,

we had reason to believe, in several cases receiving a portion of the loans.

To one party, on these representations, we had lent ten pounds on the furniture; and, on glancing over the inventory that was brought me, I was satisfied that the goods were worth at least fifty pounds. As only one week had been paid, and two months were owing—for the loan was to run a year, and be paid back at five shillings a week—we put a man in possession, giving him the bill of sale along with his warrant. On the second day Jimmy said to me, "You had better go and see after that furniture. Do you know where the house is?" I referred to the large map of London that hung in the office, and which, along with the Post Office Directory, gave quite a business-like look to the place, and, though the court I looked for was not in the map, nor yet the street that led to it, I found the main road, which I knew the omnibuses run over, and, getting into one, I reached the house, after many inquiries.

I knew a few nooks, and corners, and tumble-down places in the Borough, where I picked up some of my poorest customers when I first commenced Jack-of-all-trades; but the court I now entered beat all I had ever seen before. It contained but two little poking houses, each consisting of only a lower and an upper room, and there was neither door nor window in the

one which was uninhabited. In the other I found our man in possession, sitting on four bricks; for, as he told me, there was not a chair about the place, and there was a pot of porter standing on the floor. He was unlucky, for, as he said, "It was not safe to trust such valuable property on the table, it having given way that morning, when he sent out for a cup of coffee for his breakfast." And he pointed to the broken cup and saucer which were thrown under the grate, the fender of which was formed out of part of the tiring of a wheel.

"We was just a seeing what the goods and chattels come to, sir," said the owner of the house, offering me the porter. "I'm the gent what had the ten pound loan, and no mistake."

"But we lent the money on a bill of sale, on a house splendidly furnished," said I, looking round. "This could not have been it."

"I calls this Rosomond Willa, sir," replied the man, "and everything's just as it was when I had the ready. There's nothing we could sell if we tried. But the gent what's in possession was just making out the inventory, and I was a calling over the articles for him to put down. If you wait a bit, sir, you'll see the walue of the whole kit."

There was a twinkle of humour in the fellow's eye, and I could see that he quietly enjoyed having "done"

"The Royal Incorporated Loan Society;" so, picking up a board that laid on the floor, I placed it across a large pan in which they fetched their water, sat down and watched the progress.

"I think," said the man, whom I shall call the debtor, "we had better get through the cooking department first, as grub is the staff of life; so we will say one toasting fork, ditto gridiron, and one saucepan, which is very handy for everything, as we boils our tea-water in it, makes our coffee, cooks our potatoes, and whatever we can get to 'em. It had a hole in it, but that I've drawn a piece of rag through. Lid's lost. How much for the cooking department? Gridiron and toasting fork cost a penny each when new."

As the saucepan had a hole in it, our man declined putting any value on that. The gridiron and toasting fork he put down at half-price; so that the first entry in the inventory was, "Cooking utensils, 1d."

"That won't go very far towards paying the loan, young man," said the debtor, turning to me as he rose to open the door of a cupboard. "I'm afraid we shan't make up a very large amount in the crockery and knife and fork department. Here are two knives, one without a handle; fork, I broke through getting the cork out of a gin-bottle. Haven't had a spoon of any kind for many a day; stir the sugar in our tea

with a knife, it's just as good. Never use a salt-cellar, as we scrape it off the lump as we want it; we always have it fresh. And fresh mustard we beg, whenever we buys a bit of boiled beef, or anything that wants it. Pepper we keeps in the paper it comes in. One cup, no saucer; broke that through flinging it at a cat that stole a herring out of the cupboard. Two plates; one with a piece out, the other cracked. One mug, handle broke; and that's all in this department, which we'll call 'articles, various.' How much?"

I suggested threehalfpence, at the same time saying that I didn't think anybody would have them at a gift. So our man added them to the inventory as "Articles, various, 1½d."

"We're getting on, young man," said the debtor, "and shall soon reach up to sixpence, after I've pottered about in a few more holes and corners. Fire-irons we never had—that's extravagant. Pop a lump of coal on with our fingers, and poke it with a bit of firewood. Candle we sticks in any bottle we happens to have empty, and we're not troubled with any full ones very long. Chimney-ornament's gone; you see it was a bit of curious stone I picked up—what they call plum-pudding. Happen, somebody thought it was real, and so's eaten it—for they are all precious hungry that hang about here. I suppose empty bottles, corks, and nails in the wall, when drawn out,

will make a nice little lot for some marine-shopkeeper, if we shove in the key of the door, and this half-bundle of firewood and lump of coal. We'll call the lot 'divers and sundries.' How much, young man?"

I suggested a penny. So our man put down "Divers and sundries, 1d.," in his inventory. Our debtor said he washed himself at the tap every other day, when the water was turned on for an hour, if he happened to be at home, and if he didn't, he waited until it was turned on again. This accounted for their not having either washing-stand, basin, or jug. As for bedding, he said, "There's an old mattress on some boards upstairs, but if you offered to move it the least in the world, it would all tumble to pieces; so would the bedclothes, which haven't been washed for more than twelve months, as they wouldn't stand wringing out. There was a blanket, but I think the fleas carried it off and hid it somewhere, so that they might have it to themselves, instead of going shares with the bugs."

As we had to pay our man for the time he had been in possession, I took him out at once, and, at the next meeting of the Board, placed the inventory before the Directors, together with the bill of sale. The Board bore the loss very patiently, for, as the chairman said, "It's of no use throwing good money after bad."

Jimmy, however, set a sharp detective to work to

find out what collusion there had been between these poor defaulters and the parties who had been paid to make inquiries after the securities; and we found that generally the borrowers and their references had received an equal share of the loan, which was divided amongst themselves and the men we employed. But all this was difficult to prove when summonses were issued, and ended in a muddle, the magistrate deciding that it was only a debt, and the County Court was the place to go to for redress.

Having no more money to lend, a motion was made, and carried without a dissenting voice, that no more loans should be granted. After a long discussion, the Directors agreed to attend once a week, in turns, to receive the instalments from the few borrowers who did keep up their payments. As these were very few indeed, and some of them a little irregular, it was decided that each Director should take his chance—little or much—pocketing what he received, and waiting patiently until his turn came round again. As the proposition emanated from Jimmy, the Board agreed unanimously "that nothing could be fairer."

There was some talk of presenting Jimmy with a piece of plate, for having settled the affairs of the Society so satisfactorily; but when I was asked what I thought the assets would realize when those that were marked "good" had paid up, and, having gone over the

book, and found it would only be one shilling and three-halfpence in the pound, the Directors came to the conclusion that the whole of the assets would not purchase so large a piece of plate as they should like him to have; so they decided that he should receive the first instalment of the weekly payments instead. "I should have got the plate, else," said Jimmy.

So was our Loan Society wound up—all, as Jimmy said, through the borrowers having nothing to pay with when we tried to recover; else it would have been a success. Towards the close I resumed my duties as head waiter at the lodging-house, to the great satisfaction of my mistress, who found it very hard to get out of her "sharp practice," which at best she did clumsily, while I made the establishment yield the most profit, without any complaint from the lodgers.

If we cut our mutton-chops so as to get four out of a pound of the loin, I had a way of my own of bringing it in, and placing it before a hungry boarder, and lifting off the cover, and saying, "You'll find that a very beautiful chop, sir;" so that, whatever he might think about the smallness of the chop, he couldn't very well complain, nor yet ask for another, as the very moment he had finished, I whipped away his plate, placed the cheese and bread-tray before him, and left him to eat as much of that as he liked. Then I had a knack of talking to a gentleman while he

dined, if I found he was very ravenous, by telling him what a quantity of bad meat had been seized in the markets, and how difficult it was to tell it from good, and what numbers of people had died through eating too much of it, and such-like. After such remarks, they were generally eager to get at the bread-and-cheese, instead of grumbling, as they mostly did if any of the under-servants waited on them, for then my mistress had to be summoned, and the matter generally ended in a row. "Jack's got a policy about his way of doing things," Jimmy used to say; "there would be many a rumpus, else, with such short commons."

CHAPTER XII.

AN OFFER WHICH SETS ME THINKING.

I NEVER rightly knew how the acquaintance first commenced, nor had I ever seen "the generous gentleman," as the laundress called him, who lived on his property, though I had heard Emma speak of him, and regret that her mother should make so free with the man as she did, considering that she had only known him since she came to reside at the cottage. Some labourer, who lived near the laundress, and understood dogs, had got two puppies to train for him, and it was while he came to see how his dogs were getting on and to give them a run on Streatham Common, that he first met with Emma's mother, as she was out walking. Whether she had been indulging a little more freely than of late, or had really fallen down through weakness or indisposition, I was unable to ascertain, nor could the laundress supply any other information beyond that the gentleman saw her fall on the common, picked her up, got her round through giving her brandy out of the flask he always carried in his pocket, and brought her back to her lodgings. In

my own mind I had no doubt but that the brandy-flask was the means of continuing the intimacy that sprang up out of so slight an accident.

But it was not until after he had seen Emma that his visits to the cottage became more frequent, for, before that happened—from all I could gather—he had called but twice, only coming to the door the first time to inquire after her mother, and at the second visit going in when he called to ask for a little water in a tumbler for his brandy, as he had had a run with his dogs, and complained of feeling hot and thirsty. The third time they met, Emma was walking with her mother, who introduced her to him, and told her how kind the gentleman had been when she was taken ill on the common. Though Emma told me of this introduction, and expressed a fear that her mother had again been yielding to her old vice, it left no impression on my mind, and I believe the only remark I made was, "that it was very kind of him, whether she had been drinking or not." That his visits must have been pretty frequent after this interview was clear enough to Emma, who, on getting away from her business, unexpectedly went down to the cottage, and found him seated at tea with her mother and the laundress, while on the table stood a bottle of French brandy he had brought, and a portion of which he poured pretty freely into the women's tea. Emma

had to sit down to tea with them ; for, as she said to me, "After such company as my mother had been accustomed to keep, and you and I, Jack, had to meet, when we went to see her, she would very likely have turned round upon me, had I refused to have joined them." I did not see how she could have done otherwise, as she knew of nothing against him, excepting his being so liberal to her mother with his brandy. As for his continually looking at her, it was only what all the gentlemen did, even in the street, for very few admirers of beauty ever saw her face without turning again to look after her. If she came to tea with my mistress, she was compelled to take her into her private room, for if they sat down to tea in the bar—as was her usual custom—all our gentlemen lodgers would contrive to get in with some excuse or another, only to look at Emma. They had laid wagers with one another about the colour of her eyes and the colour of her hair, and I had been compelled to ask her to cut off a lock, to send to an artist in hair, to settle their bets, for they were all extremely kind and liberal to me, and, as my mistress said, "Your pretty sweetheart is far too good-natured, Jack, to refuse you such a favour, if you tell her what it is wanted for; and neither you nor I must offend our best customers, if we can help it, though it's very silly of them to lay such absurd wagers." No sooner did I name it to

her, than she told my mistress to cut as much off as she liked, for it would soon grow again. I believe no one ever breathed who thought or cared less about her beauty than she did, or ever paid fewer visits to the looking-glass ; and at this time I never remember seeing her look in one, when she put on her bonnet before going out; for everything she wore fitted her as it ought to do, and nothing was ever out of place. I have seen many lovely faces and beautiful portraits since that time, as I was always fond of looking at picture galleries, but to my fancy Emma's excelled all. It was her excessive beauty that had attracted the eye of brandy-loving Squire Scowby, and caused him to make Emma an offer of marriage through her mother, who came straight to the point at once the next time I saw her.

"You have always been very kind both to me and my daughter, Jack, and I am very grateful for it," she said, "but I shall not be a trouble to you any longer, as Emma is going to be married, and I am to live with her and her husband, who has an income of —at the very least—twelve hundred a year."

"Going to be married!" I exclaimed in amazement, "why I saw her only the night before last, and she never made any allusion to such a subject, and she generally tells me everything."

"How could she, when she knows nothing about it

at present?" she replied. "You have heard her speak of the gentleman, of course, who has been so kind to me? He only made her an offer to-day, and I accepted it at once. I am sure you ought to be glad of it, Jack, as I shall have a comfortable and beautiful home. He drove me over to look at it yesterday; it is quite a little paradise. And, Jack, he knows my failing," she added, sinking her voice, "though I am striving hard to wean myself from any excess. But he says he shall never complain, as he has a little leaning on that side himself. You ought to be glad, Jack, as you know I shall be far from those who——"

She stopped suddenly, as if she felt that it was wrong to throw the blame on her drunken companions in the Borough, when she had been as bad, if not worse, than the worst of them.

"But Emma is only sixteen," I said, "and the gentleman, you tell me, is at least forty; and if he has a leaning in the way you speak of, I am sure Emma will disapprove of it, whatever else she might be disposed to sacrifice for your comfort."

"Emma is a dutiful daughter," she answered, and there was that fiery flash in her eyes which warned me of danger, for in her passion she was terrible to look upon, "and she knows how hard a fight I have had with myself, while here; and if you are the friend I have always believed you to be, you will

persuade her to marry Squire Scowby for my sake. If she refuses such a home as is offered to both of us, I will go back to my old haunts and former companions, and never again try to reclaim myself. Look what I have done."

She unlocked a cupboard, and taking out five or six small bottles containing brandy, showed me how she had taken a less portion every day—the Squire never omitting to either bring or send her a bottle, as he imported his own from France—and I noticed the last bottle contained the most, and that from the appearance, the decrease in each day's consumption, as she showed, had been less.

Addicted, as she had been, to drink for many years, and never seeming to rest unless when half-intoxicated, this triumph over her old vicious habits was all the more creditable, through the greater temptation that now beset her, though I could not help thinking to myself that to encourage such vice in the mother was not the way to find favour in Emma's eyes, however kindly it might be intended on the part of the Squire.

That the mother would be greatly benefited by such a marriage, I could see clearly enough; for if even she fell back upon her old habits, fewer would know it, though the vice would be just the same, for she would be beyond the reach of her old companions, and as the Squire pleaded guilty to the same fault, there would

be no fear of "the kettle calling the porridge-pot grimy;" and what were a few bottles of brandy to a man who imported his own, and had an income of twelve hundred pounds a year? I knew she would have to look a long while to find a man who would consent to allowing her an unlimited supply of brandy, even if she were his wife's mother, and beautiful as that young wife would be. Emma then was to have no voice in the matter, though the Squire was considerably more than twice her own age; it was her mother's comfort only that was to be considered; and, in my mind, the proposal shaped itself into some such words as "There's the man; the drink; the money; the house and grounds; refuse to marry him, and, on the other hand, there is the low court, the close stifling room, the busy neighbourhood of gin-shops, my old drunken companions, and the disgrace that must also fall on you because I am your mother."

How would Emma decide? I should know soon enough, for she always came to me when in trouble, and I already knew that she had no liking for the Squire. I was above a year older than Emma, and another question arose in my mind which had never arisen before: "Supposing he had been younger and in every way desirable, and still for her sake was willing to bear with her mother's infirmity, should I have been satisfied?" I met the question boldly,

honestly: I looked at it from every point of view, and felt that though it would break my heart to part with her, if she decided to sacrifice herself for her mother—as she had done all her young life—I would make no attempt to dissuade her, unworthy as her selfish mother was of such a sacrifice. We had never spoken of love; we had never thought of it, excepting as children love one another, and we had been too much together even to feel any alteration in that childish affection. We had always shared the many troubles between us, occasioned by her mother's drunken habits. We had too much to do and say about her when we met to think of love, and we had grown up side by side like brother and sister, loving each other from the time when we first met, and neither finding abatement nor alteration in our affection. Far back as I could remember, we had always kissed each other when we met and when we parted, and we did the same now; and this caused many who did not know us intimately to conclude that we were brother and sister.

"Oh, Jack, I am so cold. Oh, Jack, I am so hungry. Oh, Jack, I am so tired. Oh, Jack, I am so sleepy." How many times had those words sounded in my ears when we were children? When I had rubbed her dear little hands and feet to warm them, and sold somebody a lumping pennyworth to buy her

a cake, and sat down in some sheltered doorway while she rested, and drew her head to me, and threw the half of my little jacket over her sweet face while she slept; my arm round her, and her head resting on me, and very often the tears rolling down my cheeks at the thought that I could do no more for her, so fond of her as I was. And now her mother wanted her to marry a man old enough to be her father, caring nothing at all for her daughter's happiness, but only for herself; looking forward to the prospect of a comfortable house, where she could have as much drink as she liked, and no one to interfere with her.

When I left the cottage it was a moonlight night, and, late as it was, I could not help walking round the outskirts of Clapham Common, and looking at the house, and wishing I could find the one in which Emma's grandmother lived, so that I might see her, and tell her everything, and get her to do something to put a stop to this hateful marriage. I don't think I ever felt more low-spirited since those days when Emma and I, after a hard day's work, used to stand at the end of the court, afraid to face her mother, because we were a halfpenny or a penny short of the amount required to purchase her nightly dram. How those old times came back to me, as I walked home in the moonshine, for I had stayed too late to catch the last omnibus; and I was not sorry for it, for I

again lived through the past years, and seemed to have her beside me, ever looking up to me, and telling me all her wants and wishes, her hopes and fears, and how if she were ever to lose me, or I were to leave her, she should go a long way off into the fields, and creep under a great thick hedge, as we used to do when it rained, and she went with me to gather chickweed, groundsel, and plantain, and that she should never make a bit of noise, nor come out again, but lie down there to die.

And now that little, simple, trustful girl, that used to clutch my rough, hard hand, as if it were a treasure that she was afraid of losing, that worked like a little slave for her drunken mother, was still to be a slave, and her beauty sold, because it would supply her more bountifully with the things she craved for, than she could procure through her daughter's industry, though she deprived herself of many necessaries to supply her mother's wants and excesses, to say nothing of the continuous sacrifices I had made for her. Such thoughts as these had never before entered my mind. It was too late either to see Emma that night, or call on Betty Blackman. And if I did see her, what could I say? Supposing the dear girl put it to me, and said, "Which of the two evils am I to choose?" what answer could I give her? Was I not very selfish, after all, for feeling that if she were to marry one of

the best men that ever lived, who would study to make her happy, and provide her with such comforts as could never even come within the hope of my attaining, I should envy him the possession of her? I knew she liked me better than any one beside she had ever known, because in her simple, truthful way, she had told me so, times and times again, when she had come to me full of trouble; and she was Truth itself. That the Squire would ever make her an offer of marriage had never entered her head, for, although she said he was very kind to her mother, yet she found it very difficult even to speak civilly to him when he pressed her to have a little of his brandy in her tea. Neither had her mother ever hinted at such a proposal, for, on the contrary, Emma and I had had our little jokes about the improvement in her mother's appearance since she had been at the cottage; and as the Squire and she appeared to be about of an age, had said what a capital thing it would be if they made a match of it, then they could sit down and enjoy their glass together, and nobody have a right to interfere with them. Not that we thought that such a thing was ever likely to occur, happy as we were to see such an improvement in her mother. Once only had Emma set me thinking of what we might be to one another, when I was a man, and that was after the party called Mr. and Mrs. Jones had been to our

lodging-house. "If they should prove to be your father and mother, Jack," she had said, "and to be as rich as they seem to be, they would soon separate us; they wouldn't let you be on friendly terms long with a poor girl like me, who has such a mother as mine is—your little sister, as you have always loved to call me, Jack, would then have to go and hide her head in some corner, with her heart broken, and no one to help to bear the load of misery thrown on her by her mother, as you have done. They would separate us, Jack, and I should die, and death would be the only rest and comfort I should long for." She was still in heart a child. I remember well that every sentence she uttered was broken by a sob; that I took out my handkerchief and dried her tears, and kissed her, just as I did when we were children, and that my own tears fell fast all the time; and that as she hung sobbing, with her arms around my neck, I wished all sorts of dreadful things might happen to me, if ever I ceased to love her as I had always done. I am afraid too that I did not speak of Mr. and Mrs. Jones so respectfully as I ought to have done, even supposing they were my parents; but told her that however rich they might be, if they wanted to separate us, I would become a Jack-of-all-Trades once more, and that we would cling together to the end.

No brother could have said more to a sister, how-

ever great the attachment might have been; and now, for the first time, I felt glad that she was not my sister; that I should not disobey the commands of my parents—having none that I knew of—if I defended her to the utmost of my power. As for her mother, I determined that she should not make a sacrifice of her, for her own selfish ends, but that, youth as I was, I would struggle to protect her until I died.

Then what a daughter she had been! Many a time had she called on me to go with her to look at some dress or shawl that was ticketed in a window, to see if I should like it, as she had saved up enough to buy it; and when weeks passed and I never saw her with it on, how pretty she looked as she blushed and hung down her head, and said her mother wanted this, that, and the other, and she had bought it for her instead, and turned her old dress; and Emma could make herself smart and clean and tidy in anything. And when she had looked pale and tired and care-worn, and I felt fearful that she was not well, and pressed her to tell me what was amiss, and she confessed that she had been working very late after she got home, making a dress or something for somebody she knew, I needed no telling for whom she had sacrificed her health and rest. And now that mother was ready to drive her into the market—so to speak—and sell her to the highest bidder.

How would Emma act? All her life she had yielded to the wishes of her mother, "who," as Betty Blackman used to say, "would have been ashamed of herself, if she had had any shame at all in her, to take such advantage as she did of her daughter's sweet disposition. She's no mother to her, Jack; she never was. A real mother is one who will make any kind of shift, if by so doing she can add to a child's happiness. She never did that; never went to bed without her quartern of gin, so long as either you or Emma were able to get it for her, by hook or by crook. That you both well know, and so do I."

No one knew it better than Betty, for many a time when we had not sold out had we gone to her and borrowed the trifle we required to pay for it, so that we might have peace. "I never liked her mother, Jack," Betty used to say, "after that night when the poor child's chilblains were so bad, through tramping about the streets with you, selling sprats, when you bought half a quartern of brandy to rub her feet with before she went to bed, because I had told you what a good thing it was, and when you went to look for it at night in the cupboard, after you had sold your fish, you found the bottle empty. That cured me, Jack. Her mother had drunk it every drop, and would have drunk her heart's blood, I do believe, if she could have got at it, and it had been spirits."

I felt ashamed of myself for calling up, as I did, everything that I knew bad against her mother, and yet I couldn't help it, try all that I could. And what made her seem to appear worse in my eyes than she had ever done before? There was but one answer, and it was always the same, let me put the question in what form I might. She wanted to take Emma away from me, to give to another a right over her, to sever our childish love, which had grown with our growth; that was it, and if an angel had come down to have separated us, I should have hated him.

CHAPTER XIII.

JIMMY'S VIEWS BECOME TOO EXPANSIVE FOR ME.

WHEN I reached home I found my friend Jimmy sitting by himself in a little room which we called the Snuggery. He said—"I want to have a little quiet chat with you, Jack, when you are at leisure," and as I had very few things to see to, I soon joined him, when he treated me to a pint bottle of pale ale, which I found very refreshing after my long walk. Nor was I sorry to join him, for I had been thinking until my head ached, and I knew his rattle and jabber would divert my thoughts for a time from the painful subject I had been dwelling upon all the evening. I have always found it best not to sit brooding too long over one thing, but to wrench away the thoughts into some other channel, then go back again afresh to that which was becoming wearisome. I do not know that I thought so at this time—if I did, I could not have expressed myself at seventeen so clearly as I do at the time of writing these pages. "The world," says a great author, "is always in its infancy," and the unborn Homers, and Shake-

speares, and Miltons will have to begin with their A, B, C.

"I am sick and tired of doing nothing, Jack," began Jimmy, puffing away at his cigar, and uttering a sentence between every whiff. "My friends begin to complain, and say I am a failure. Old Rothschild once advised a young man never to have any dealings with a person that was unlucky. I never took a thing in hand in my life, but what somebody or other did wrong, else I should have succeeded. I'll have no more directors, Jack, for I feel quite sure that if I start a thing of myself, and carry it out with only your help, I shall make a fortune yet. I've got a few notions stored away here," he said, tapping his forehead, "which I've had wisdom enough to keep to myself. British House Agency, and Universal Inquiry Office for everything. That's an idea—isn't it, Jack? And he took the cigar from his mouth, threw his arms out, and his head back, like a man who, playing at cards, throws his ace on a king, queen, and Jack, when everybody thought he hadn't a trump left.

"But isn't universal almost too wide a word?" I said.

"Not at all," he replied; "it's the very thing; you see, I've been looking at Johnson's dictionary. The first two words my eye fell upon gave the very mean-

ing I wanted, 'Universal, not particular;' don't you see, Jack? Nothing can be better. I don't mean to be particular. We are universal, not particular."

I saw that Jimmy's application of the sense of the word was too favourable to his own lax notions for me to venture upon showing its true meaning, for his definition was "not at all particular,"—"stick at nothing,"—"go the whole hog," and I question if he saw it in the sense of "the whole," or the total.

"A British House Agency," said I, "must extend a long way off. And how are you to get a knowledge of all the towns and streets in which there are houses to let?"

"There are always houses to let in every town in Great Britain," replied Jimmy, "in some street or another. We print a list of the towns, that is quite sufficient. Person writes to us, wants a house in a certain town; we get the town or country paper; if there's no advertisement, write to some house-agent residing there. It's as easily done as giving change for sixpence."

I thought to myself, not quite so easy; but only said, "How do you propose working London? We shall have a great deal to compete with here, where there are so many long-established and respectable house agents."

"The more the merrier," said Jimmy. "I intend going shares with them, and having a little pull of my own beside. You may look; but this is my way of doing it. I go up to an agent, 'You've got a house to let?' 'Yes.' 'I don't want it for myself; but think I can find somebody it will suit. Rent so and so? Of course you'll allow a little commission?' 'Yes, so and so.' That's quite enough, put it in our circular; if we find a tenant, he goes shares; if he finds a tenant, we go shares. That's fair, isn't it?"

I was compelled to confess that I didn't think it was quite fair, as fifty persons might go and ask the agent the same question, and put in the same claim. "As to inquiries," I said, "they are constantly being made, and I can easily believe that if one hundredth part of them could be answered satisfactorily, people would be glad to pay for the information. You call it universal. What kind of information do you profess to supply?"

"All kinds, not at all particular," replied Jimmy; "registers of births, deaths; heirs wanted; money left; ships lost; children, wives, husbands; cats; dogs; a chest of drawers even; everything that's lost or found. Here now, for instance, is something for you to start with, for which a reward of fifty pounds is offered," and, having turned over the odds and ends he kept in an old pocket-book, he read as

follows: "Wanted, a certificate of the death of John Smith, Smythe, Smither, or Smythron, who sometimes went by the name of Simson, Somson, and Sommtion. He is supposed to have died somewhere either in Europe, Africa, or America, between the years 1805 and 1830, during which period nothing was heard of him. Was a Smith lost when the *London* was wrecked, and all hands perished; and a Smithers missing, that went as cook with an exploring party in New Zealand; also a Simson transported, that made his escape about 1810; also a Smithson, an officer's servant in India, that ran away with his master's watch and money? If proof of the death of any of the above-named can be given, also showing that it was the John Smith, son of John and Mary, who left Dumbleton some time between the years 1790 and 1805, a reward of. . ." "That's a specimen of the business I mean undertaking," said Jimmy, "and the first inquiry I shall set you to make."

"And a pretty tough job it will be," said I. "How am I to commence, and where?"

"That will require a little consideration," replied Jimmy. "It would hardly pay to send you to New Zealand; and Africa, I believe, is a largish country, and there wouldn't be much chance of identifying a man ofter a lion's eaten him up. And I don't think a man who stole his master's watch and money would

be very likely to leave an address, stating where he might be found. You are right, Jack, 'Universal' has a wide meaning, and we must confine ourselves to Great Britain. We must get the names of everybody from Abel to Zachariah, and send them circulars, stating that if they enclose half-a-crown's worth of postage stamps they will hear of something to their advantage."

"And what will that something be?" I asked.

"Nothing is easier," said Jimmy, "than to get a list of heirs that are wanted; of property that is in doubtful hands; and as for claimants, they will spring up by thousands. Everybody's ancestors have been done out of property at some time or another by some lawyer, according to their own showing, especially if they are poor; and the poorer they are, Jack, the surer they are to raise half-a-crown, if even they take the last thing they have got to my uncle—if the hint is thrown out that they will hear of something to their advantage."

"But is it honest?" I asked.

"Most certainly it is," replied Jimmy, "if something should turn up to their advantage; and who can tell how many Smiths, Browns, and Jones's ought to be riding in their carriages, if they had their rights, who at present are padding the hoof? We will go over all the wills in Doctors' Commons, and examine all the

parish registers in Great Britain, and if we can't find something or another somewhere that would be to somebody's advantage, if it could be proved, why the deuce is in it."

"It wouldn't be a very cheerful occupation," I said, "standing in a cold church all day in the middle of winter, hunting over a parish register," and I did all I could to dissuade him from carrying out his "new idea," as he called it, feeling certain that it must be a failure.

A little cheap house-agency and inquiry office, that would scarcely require any outlay, and where the weekly expenses would be small, was something too low for Jimmy's notice, for he often said, "A great fortune's as easily made as a little 'un, when you are once about it," and there was a roguish twinkle in Jimmy's eye, as he added, "and so is a smash," for he had very loose notions of business, and that honour, which has been the making of so many of our "merchant princes." I often felt this, and also felt thankful that though my life, hitherto, had been passed amongst people who took the same view of honour and honesty as Jimmy did of the cause of "universal," and "were not particular" as to how they made money, my very soul had abhorred their meanness and pined to breathe the air of a pure atmosphere, where men held their heads high, and did unto

others what was just and right, and had a scorn for all who attempted to do otherwise.

Though Jack-of-all-trades—true to the old saying—"I was master of none," yet many a time I had expressed a wish to learn some trade; but all I applied to either wanted a premium in money, or required that I should be supported for a year or two without receiving any wages, neither of which I could do. And now that I had saved enough to pay a moderate premium, I began to fear I was getting too old to learn any manual business, for I was turned seventeen, and what was worse, I had been allowed, through my mistress and Jimmy, to have my own way so much, that I could not help feeling I should bear badly the bonds of apprenticeship.

Though Jimmy's conversation had done much towards banishing the heaviness that had been weighing me down all that evening, still when I retired to my chamber I thought more seriously of my position, and how my life, to a great extent, had been wasted, than I had ever done before. True, Jimmy had always been exceedingly kind to me, and I should have been an ingrate not to have felt kindly towards him. Still there was always something in Jimmy's way of doing things that I never could approve of.

CHAPTER XIV.

I HAVE ANOTHER PEEP AT OLD PETTINGER.

WHETHER it was the thoughtful light in which I had sat so long viewing things on the previous evening, or the unexpected announcement made by Emma's mother which had startled me, and awakened feelings which, if not new to me, had hitherto sat so lightly on my mind, as to give me no concern, I cannot tell; I only know that when I arose on the following morning I felt as if I had grown many years older in a single night. I seemed to have become taller, bolder, graver, and more manly in every way, and I planted my feet on the ground with a determined firmness, as if I bore a heavier burden on my shoulders than ever I had before walked under.

We were doing a slack trade at the lodging-house, and I had noticed that my brisk, sharp-eyed mistress had appeared rather low-spirited of late, especially after receiving her letters, which came more frequently now than ever. Jimmy had also long interviews with her, and generally, after a consultation, he sat down and smoked faster, and remained silent longer, than

usual. Acceptances also had frequently to be met, and sometimes fell into my hands, as they were oftener "noted" than paid, and across them all I always saw the fine, flowing handwriting of my friend Jimmy. These were the ghosts of his failures, that oftener, I believe, haunted the pillow and broke the sleep of my mistress than they did that of Jimmy's.

Business being so slack, I had easily obtained a holiday for the day, and had despatched a messenger to Emma's place of business, requesting her to get leave to go out in the afternoon—which I knew would not be refused—and appointed a place of meeting. I was well known to Emma's mistress, who, through my intercession, had obtained a deal of work, and supplied endless articles to the ladies who often stayed at our lodging-house.

Before meeting Emma, I had made up my mind to call on old Pettinger, the pawnbroker, who had been married some years to Mary, the old servant, who was so kind to me when a child. Betty Blackman had heard say that Pettinger "had only married her that she might nurse him in his old age," as he had told a friend. I had seen Mary, as I shall still call her, several times since she had been married, and she had pressed me to look in, and had said Mr. Pettinger would also be very glad to see me; and when I said no doubt he would, if I came to pay him the principal and interest for

which I had been pawned, she begged of me, when I did call, not to allude to the subject, as he had often expressed great sorrow for having treated me so unkindly as he had done after his wife's death.

Instead of going to the private door, I went into the shop to shake hands with my old friend Bill, who had taught me to read from the pawn-tickets, and who treated me to that heavy dinner, when I wore the velvet tunic, and was laced up so tightly, and padded so beautifully, and burst off the buttons. Bill was now Pettinger's manager, for the old man no longer attended to the business. I went into the box where Betty Blackman stood with my nurse, when they pawned me, and could not help smiling as I pictured the scene which had been described to me by Nanny Pearson, who was present when I was taken out of the bundle, and introduced myself to the whole shopful of people by roaring with all my might.

I went through the private door and into the parlour, which I had never been in since the old man gave me the ticket that was pinned on me when I was pawned, and which was his contribution towards giving me a start in life. Though it was a hot summer day, the old pawnbroker was seated close to the fire, and the windows closed. I should not have known him again had I met him anywhere else, he looked so aged.

His wife was with him, and when she shouted in his ear, he looked first at me, then at his wife, and said, —"Jack, Jack, there are so many Jacks—what Jack is it? I don't remember ever seeing the young man before."

Mary turned to me, smiling, and said—"How am I to make him understand? We never knew you by any other name than that of Jack, and I believe that's all you know yourself by—isn't it?"

"I'll soon make him understand who I am," I said, and going up to the old man, I shouted into his ear—"I'm the Jack that was pawned for one pound five, and that was a naughty boy, and used to throw the pledges out of the warehouse window into the court."

A faint smile crept over the old man's pale face as he took hold of my hand, and said,—"I am glad to see you, Jack—very glad indeed. Ah, how fond she was of you. Yes, threw pledges out of window; but she knew all about it. Once hit me with a pair of boots—little Emma's—dear child—a sweet child—had a drunken mother—could be a lady when she liked. I was very unkind to you, Jack—very sorry—say no more. Have some dinner with us, Jack—fillet of veal. Mary makes beautiful stuffing. Bit of Yorkshire ham, peas, and new potatoes."

Old and infirm as he was, I found he still liked a good dinner, and as his wife pressed me to stay, I

accepted the invitation, telling her that I must leave as soon as dinner was over, as I had an appointment with Emma, to whom she had also always been very kind.

"We were talking about you the other day," said Mary; "when I say 'we,' you may be pretty sure that I had to do nearly all the talking myself, so deaf as Pettinger is. But a lady and gentleman called about a chest of plate, which was left in my husband's care ever since—I should say, before you were born. It wasn't pawned, but he agreed to warehouse it, and keep it safe until wanted, for so much a year. I believe they were about removing into a new house, and that before they got well settled, there was a fire, and a deal of bother. But what struck me was their inquiring after a baby, which they put out to nurse; and from the questions I asked, and what my husband also remembered, I should say that it was about the time that you were pawned, and——"

I interrupted her by asking if they were anything like what I at once described, for my experience as waiter had enabled me to portray the appearance of a person so that there could be but little doubt about their identity; and every lodger we had would come to me, after interrogating all the household, if any one had called without leaving a name.

"The very same, Jack," answered she, "in every point. I could not have described them half so well

if I had tried for an hour, only she had blue ribbons in her bonnet."

"You are right," I said; "for it was a new bonnet Emma had brought to our house the night before. I now know the very day on which they called, for before that day the bonnet she wore was trimmed with pink." I then told her they had been staying with us about a fortnight, and were known as Mr. and Mrs. Jones.

"That is not the right name," she said, "but I will find it, for when the plate-chest was sent here for safety above seventeen years ago, he left his printed card with it; and a pretty job I had to find it, for it was quite at the bottom of my husband's desk, and as yellow as gold, and there it had been laying, no doubt, untouched all these years, for I could have written my name in the dust and dirt that I found at the bottom of his desk—but I gave it a good routing out after they had gone."

She then went up to her husband, and shouting in his ear, asked him for the key of his desk, and told him what she wanted it for. It grieved me to see that the old pawnbroker could not walk across the room without the support of his wife's arm, and the aid of a stick.

"And now I am going to hear my name for the first time in my life," I thought to myself, while they were opening the desk; "for if they are my parents, and

I have very little doubt, from what old Grizzy has said, but what they are, and none at all about their being the same party who were lodging with us—if they are, I shall soon have another name besides Jack; and whatever name there is on the card, that I will call myself."

The card produced was engraved with the name of Branston, and I felt rather glad that it was no worse, for I thought to myself, "It might have been Hearthstone." If it had it would have been a name I was pretty well known by at one time, for to distinguish me from so many other Jacks, most of my customers called me Hearthstone Jack, when I dealt in that ponderous and very unprofitable article.

By bawling in his ear Mary got him to answer a few questions. The plate was still in his strong-room, and was quite black through remaining undisturbed in the chest so many years. He had never opened it above two or three times. When the gentleman and lady called to pay for the warehousing, William went upstairs with Mr. Branston to let him see that it was all safe.

When my friend Bill came in to dinner, he had nothing to tell me about the gentleman, excepting that he had a sharp, short way of speaking, and that he left orders for the plate to be well cleaned, regardless of expense, and fresh burnished where the

chased workmanship required it, and said that he could not tell how long or how soon it might be before he wanted it. There was a crest on the plate, but my friend Bill had no knowledge of heraldry; he remembered seeing something like a calf's head, but I might go up and look if I liked after dinner. I promised to do so when I should have more time.

The pawnbroker's wife knew quite as much about me as I did about myself, for it will be remembered that she helped Betty Blackman to start me as a Jack-of-all-trades, and as Betty had often called on her since she had been married, she had heard what old Grizzy had said, and was quite convinced in her own mind that I was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Branston, whose heavy plate-chest had been left in her husband's charge so many long years. There was no address on the card, and from all the old pawnbroker could recollect, it was at first left with him with an understanding that it would be wanted in about three months, as the house the gentleman had taken was not quite ready, and it was not considered to be safe while so many work-people were about. After a hearty dinner I left the old man, though not until he had pressed me to call again as soon as I could.

CHAPTER XV.

I SEE EMMA, AND MORE THAN SHE SEES.

AS I knew a Clapham omnibus would pass along the Borough about the time I had appointed to meet Emma by St. George's Church, I hurried off, and had not to wait above five minutes before both the maiden and the vehicle appeared. At two o'clock few people leave the city, so that, excepting a lady and two children, we were the only passengers. I heard the little boy say to his mother,—"Oh, what a pretty lady, ma!" and while the lady shook her head at the child, and said, "hush," I saw her raise her eyes, and there was the light of admiration in them as she gazed upon Emma—a look which few artists are able to seize upon and transfer to canvas.

As we got to the far end of the omnibus, and spoke low, and the children began to chatter to their mother, their voices and the noise of the wheels rendered our conversation inaudible to the lady, and scarcely were we in motion before Emma said,—"How strange you look to-day, Jack! whatever has come over you? You look as grave as an old man at a funeral. Has any-

thing happened?" and her soft voice faltered as she uttered the last three words, and put her hand in mine, just as she used to do, when we were children and in trouble.

I told her that I had been dining with Mr. Pettinger and Mary, and thinking about old times. How kindly he had received me, and how he smiled when he mentioned my hitting him on the head with her little boots, as I threw them out of the warehouse window. That he had also spoken of her very kindly, and that the recollection of those bygone scenes had made me feel what I looked, a little grave.

The grasp of her hand tightened, and she sat silent for some time, and though she was looking out of the opposite window, I believe neither house nor tree arrested her eye, as we rode along, but that her gaze had gone back to the old Borough, and the little court in which she used to stand with her sweet upturned face, and spread-out pinafore, looking at the small window, and trying to catch the tiny frock, jacket, or boots her mother had pawned, and which I took out of pledge in my own boyish way, believing I was doing what was right, as it enabled her to go to church with me on a Sunday. I watched her sweet face, and saw that her thoughts were far away with the past, and that Memory was busy painting pictures of what we had done when children.

When we alighted, and she put her arm in mine, I took hold of her hand, and we went along over the yielding turf to where the gorse-bushes were hung with their thousands of golden baskets; and as we threaded our way between them, I said,—"I saw your mother last night, and she wished me to do all I could to persuade you to marry Squire Scowby, so that she might live with you, and be provided with a comfortable home."

It was all out, and I drew in a long breath like a diver coming to the surface, and relieving himself of the suffocating pressure which he could not expel before.

"Mother must have made herself what our old friend Grizzy calls 'quite comfortable,' before she placed such a ridiculous proposal before you," she said, speaking in a way that showed me she considered the subject too absurd to be considered in earnest. "And you are to persuade me, Jack," she added, looking at me with a sly smile, which said plainer than words that she knew I should be the last person in the world ever even to make such an attempt. Then she plucked a flower from the gorse, and pulling off the helmet and the wings from the pea-shaped bloom, held up the bottom portion, and said, laughing,—"When you can persuade me that this little golden basket would have held all your stock-in-trade when you strutted along the Borough pavement, with 'every

article-on-the-board-a-penny,' then I'll begin to think about this brandy-loving old beau."

And throwing away the boat-shaped part of the bloom, she, in her happy light-heartedness, imitated my walk by holding back her beautiful head, and squaring her elbows, as no doubt I had often done when I was Jack-of-all-Trades, and carried the old tea-board before me, covered with penny articles. From her gay manner it was evident that no such thoughts as that of marrying Squire Scowby had ever entered her head.

It seemed cruel, so happy as she was, jumping, and running, and laughing, and clapping her hands to start the linnets from out the gorse-bushes, that appeared as if hung with thousands of golden lamps, and were all of a murmur through the multitude of bees that were rifling the bloom of its honey—cruel, as she went dancing backwards before me, now bending her pretty head on this side, then on that, and holding up the heather gracefully with her fingers, while the warm summer-day and the exercise deepened the damask of her sweet soft cheeks, over which the auburn ringlets rose and fell with every motion—it was cruel, and yet it must be done.

"Emma," I said, and there was something both in my voice and look as I uttered her name which startled her, and made the roses fade on her cheeks,

and shut up all their beauty. "I have not told you all your mother said," and I held her hand gently, pitying and loving her, while compelled to strike so unkind a blow; "if you refuse to marry this man, and provide her a comfortable home by so doing, she has resolved to fall back into her old habits, and return to her former haunts."

It was said at last. I felt her hand tremble as I held it. Into her face I could not look. She was silent for several moments, and when she spoke it was only to give utterance to two words, repeated over and over again, in all those sad tones which sorrow has used since Eve first bewailed the death of Abel; and the burthen of her cry was still "Cruel mother! cruel mother!" until sobs and tears came and checked the flow of the melancholy sound.

For that cruel mother I offered no plea: I could find none; but emptying all the bitterness of my heart, said what I have before written. I dwelt upon her vicious habits; her selfishness; her heartlessness; how we had both borne with her; what we had suffered for her; and how, every day of our lives, we were still making sacrifices that we might contribute to her comfort. "But she is still my mother. She is still my mother," was the cry that kept falling from her lips at the close of every sentence I uttered, as if keeping time to her tears.

Then I said something. I hardly know what, for all my anger was up, and in arms against her mother; but the purport was, that if she was so much attached to her, she would but show proof of her great affection by yielding to her wishes, and marrying the Squire. Then it was that I had proof she was her mother's true daughter. She exclaimed, "What!" threw aside my arm with a jerk, while her colour rose, and her blue eyes flashed, and she looked like an angel in a deuce of a rage, "What! Did I think? Could I suppose? That she had? that she should? that she would?" But I will not write down what she said, nor even try to remember that such passionate words passed through those bright red lips, which looked like cherries when they hang in the sunshine. Had Squire Scowby been hidden anywhere behind those golden-flowered gorse-bushes, and heard what she said, he would have given up all hope of ever persuading her to become his wife. Then the storm subsided. She had cleared the atmosphere of all doubts—swept everything away that hung thick, dark, and cloudy between us, by the fire of her passion; and the rain fell, not accompanied by sobbings, as before, but sweet gentle gales, that were as cooling and refreshing as the shower and the breeze blowing down the opening in some upland, from where there are miles of tall hawthorn hedges in blossom. "Oh, Jack, forgive

me," she said; "but it hurts and angers me, to hear you talk so, knowing, as you do, and have always known, that the greatest hope of my life has been the day would come, however remote it might be, when you would have a home to take me to, no matter how humble it might be, so long as it was our own, and that there we should take my mother, and you would kindly bear with her, as you always have done, for the sake of me, and that, in return for all you have so long endured for us both, I should, when I became a woman, be your little wife, and love you, and wait upon you, and know no greater pleasure than that of making you happy, for you know there never was any one I ever knew that I cared for so much as you—and I hope God will forgive me, if it is sinful, because it is the truth—not even my mother, for she was not always so kind to me as you have been." What she then said, bore in every thought the same meaning as that which passed between us when we were children, and talked hopefully of what we should have for dinner of a Sunday, when we grew up and were man and wife, though we were then thankful to dine off the halfpenny potato we purchased in the street, and divided between us. I stood ashamed and silent before her, among the gorse-bushes, to see how childlike and pure her heart still remained, untroubled by even a doubt about her own constancy—let her mother do

whatever she might; that she who might look out from the maiden beauty which enthroned her, and beckon hundreds to kneel at her feet, by the power of her surpassing loveliness alone, should have neither eye nor heart for any one but me, a poor waiter, a poor castaway, a child of the streets, as I had ever been, with no one to love me excepting herself.

True, she had never heard of it, but I remembered now, how that handsome young gentleman who lodged with us, and whose father was one of the richest merchants in Liverpool, was mad to marry her, and how when he went away his father came up, and wanted my mistress to give him Emma's address, saying that his son had lost all life and energy for love of her, and that I pitied the young gentleman—while the thought of ever marrying Emma myself, never, at the time, entered my head.

What little store do we set at times upon the treasure in our possession, compared with the value we place upon it when likely to become another's.

I will not repeat the promises and vows we made. I felt satisfied that Emma had courage enough to defend herself, and a strong spirit that would rise in insurrection if any attempt was made to force her to do what she disapproved of. "I have not the power to control my mother, as I could wish, which would always be for her own good," she said; "but what-

ever she may please to do, I shall never forget my duty as a daughter. As to forcing me to marry this man, she has not the power, neither will she attempt it. If she returns to her old habits, I must still do my best for her, as I have always done; and I have no fear, Jack, but that all will come right at the end, because I can depend upon you, whatever may happen, and that has always been my greatest comfort;" and oh, what a sweet smile there was on her face, and a tender light in her eyes, as she placed her hands on me, and said, "Remember the dark old hedge we crept under when we sheltered from the rain, and what I said I would do if ever you neglected me. I know the words were silly and childish; but the same feeling remains, for if I were parted from you, I should never be happy again."

As we were so near to the cottage, she proposed calling on her mother, and, as she had lived among people who spoke the plainest Doric, said, in their own idiomatic style, "I will have it out with her at once." She further proposed that I should not accompany her further than the corner of the common, where there was a roadside public-house, and beautiful tea-gardens, and that she would meet me there, as she should want her tea by the time she came back, adding, "I don't think mother will press me to stay tea with her, after I have had my say."

I was rather glad of that, having no wish to be present at the interview, which I knew would be a stormy one—at least, on the part of the mother—and I had no fear of Emma's firmness giving way, after what I had that day seen. I watched her retreating figure, until a turning of the road, that went winding round a hedge which came jutting out upon the common, shut her out of sight. How quick she walked! how erect she carried herself—her head well up: there was determination in her very attitude. A single day seemed to have changed us both; to have made me more manly, and her more womanly than she had ever been before.

I should no more have looked for the fire that lay hidden within her sweet, gentle, violet-coloured eyes, than I should have looked for lightning in a clear blue summer sky, when not a cloud is seen sailing over the shoreless sea of heaven.

While she was gone, I went into the old tea-gardens, said to be the oldest on the south side of London, and to have been often frequented by Dr. Johnson and such friends as he did not care to introduce to the Thrales, when he made a short visit, but that they waited for him there, where I was waiting for Emma. There are some old engravings in the parlour, which no doubt Johnson and Goldsmith have often looked at and laughed over, as they illustrate the humorous

disasters of Falstaff, in Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor."

I entered into conversation with the waiter, and told him that I was in the same line as himself. "He knew our house well," he said, "as my mistress used to oblige those he lived with in town, when they were short of beds. He had only come there for his health, and his old situation was open for him when he was strong enough to return. Where he had before lived they kept very late hours."

So the time passed until Emma returned, when I ordered tea, with fried ham and eggs—a treat my mistress always prepared when she stayed to take tea with her. She was much calmer than when she went away, and, as a proof that the interview had not had much effect on her, made a hearty meal. In answer to my inquiry as to how she got on with her mother, she said, "Not an angry word passed between us, Jack. She only said, 'Very well; you know best; but it would be a good thing for both of us, if it did take place,' and that was all. She did not even press me to stay tea."

The subject was not again alluded to, until we were returning home in the evening, when she repeated something her mother had said, which struck me as being very strange, though I said nothing at the time. What could her mother mean by saying she thought

she should set her own cap at the Squire, as he seemed rather partial to her? and she didn't see why Emma couldn't get a week's holiday, and spend it with her at his cottage, while the fruit was ripe, as he had given them both a pressing invitation. That set me thinking. In a moment the thought entered my mind, "They have laid out a plan between them for getting possession of Emma, and forcing her into this marriage."

CHAPTER XVI.

I LOSE MY SITUATION, AND MY MISTRESS LOSES HERS.

ON my return home that night I was not the least surprised to find a man in possession, and my mistress in tears inside the bar, while Jimmy was in a maudlin state of drunkenness. Time for payment had been asked for and conceded, and bills renewed over and over again, and kept afloat until the very interest was raised with difficulty, and I felt sure that the end must come, as it did. All the sharp practice of my mistress was as nothing to it, after they once began. James, the under-waiter, told me that the man hadn't been put in possession above a quarter of an hour for one of Jimmy's dishonoured bills, before another man was put in to protect the bill of sale, while, as if to look after the other two, the landlord popped in a third, for two quarters' rent. I went inside the bar, as in duty bound, and expressed my sympathy for my mistress, who—although at times she did a great many things in the way of business that I felt were disreputable, and far from honest—had always been exceedingly kind both to me and to

Emma, and, taken away from her sharp practice, was really at the bottom a goodnatured woman, and would have everything as clean as a new pin.

She held out her hand to me, and, while the tears coursed down her cheeks, said—"When all is over, John, and the worst has happened, my mind will be more at ease than it has been for many a long day. This fear and suspense was killing me, for Jimmy was always concealing something, never telling me the whole truth, and I have always been a good and true sister to him. But he would go on speculating, and this is what he has brought me to," and her loud sobbing showed how deeply she felt her fallen position.

Had I spoken the truth, I should have said that I felt at times ashamed of myself for the part I had played in his speculations, but it would have been cruel and ungrateful to have spoken the truth at such a moment. So I endeavoured to console her by saying—"All your brother's speculations were undertaken with the best intent, and I am sure that no one grieves more that you are a sufferer than he does;" and I could not help adding, "the same hard lot has fallen on many of his friends."

I was glad to find that in spite of her close-cutting heavy charges, and smart way of doing business, my mistress was not without friends; for one old gentle-

man, who had boarded with her for several years, and was a keen, money-making man, offered to pay out the execution, if so doing would enable her to carry on again, and also to give her plenty of time to repay him. She thanked him, and said it was useless, for if even two or three were paid out, a dozen more would come in, for, to use her own words, "she was over head and ears in debt." This gentleman could never be prevailed upon to invest in any of Jimmy's speculations, though they were the best of friends, and I thought to myself that the offer he made my mistress was a kind of oblation for his escape from Jimmy's propositions, for on one or two occasions he had listened long and attentively to "the voice of the charmer."

True to her sharp practice, and in spite of her trouble, I felt certain that my mistress had made some little preparation for "coming events," as I noticed that neither the spoons nor forks which our lodgers made use of on the following day were silver. There were also some little jokes amongst them about "running for the lady's plate," nor, as I ascertained afterwards, was that metal mentioned in the bill of sale, excepting as represented in half a dozen teaspoons, two ditto for salt, and one pair of sugar tongs.

As the bill of sale was no protection against rent,

things took their course under the sheriff, who was compelled to pay the landlord, so that one man was quite enough to leave in possession; and as my mistress said "delay would be adding to the expenses," they commenced at once with the inventory, and sent the catalogue to the printer. As the house consisted of a great many rooms, all well furnished, the numbered lots made a good-sized catalogue, and no sooner was that issued, than the birds of prey were let loose and began to settle down in every room, just as the flies used to do on the lodgers' joints of meat, when my mistress set them out in the back yard; and I could not help thinking that it was something like retributive justice, as I saw the brokers alight in the house with catalogues in their hands—the very breath of many of them almost bad enough to flyblow the furniture.

They came from every bye-street, where mouldy bedding is stowed away with rotten mattresses at the backs of their shops—the spoils of weekly tenants, who are never allowed to be above a month in arrear of rent—bringing a smell of decaying fungi with them, and a mildew caught from the close dampness in which they dwelt. Such as these betook themselves to the kitchens and cellars to see what had been turned out of dark cupboards and secret places, where spiders spun, and mice made their nests, and black-beetles were ever heard pattering over the waste

paper that was thrown there to be out of the way. They turned over old Grizzy's dusters and floor-cloths, disused saucepans and fire-irons, and other refuse, that come under the head of "Miscellaneous," and was not thought worthy of having even a name among the more valuable lots.

The more respectable brokers kept aloof from the underground places, and with catalogues in their hands, went over the more costly articles, "ticking" such as they intended bidding for, and making private marks, which no one besides themselves understood, as guides to the amounts they intended bidding. Here and there you saw two or three laying their heads together, and making up their minds to bid against all comers, and run up to a ruinous price what they had decided to purchase, if their biddings were opposed, then divide the loss amongst them. These were the riggers of the market, which a stranger must first conciliate with a commission, and allow them to become the bidders, if he wanted to purchase, or make up his mind to see the articles run up to double their value. As this was often bone, it was nothing unusual at the close of the sale to hear them deny their own bidding, swearing "back and edge" that it was all a mistake, and leaving the lots that had been knocked down to them to be removed to the auctioneers' sale-rooms, where they

would be put up again on some future day. There was a sharp, wide-awake look about many of these brokers, a decision in the expression of their eyes, showing that they knew at a glance what was the value to them of everything their eyes fell upon. It was the same with the women, who generally confined their attention to the linen and the bedding, and who knew the value of every article they turned over by the feel.

I do not think my mistress felt the selling-up of her house so acutely as she would have done had she led a more retired life, as it was the temporary home of so many beside, some of whom had lodged with her a considerable time. Even what she had called her own apartments had to be given up occasionally, when some of our regular visitors brought their wives to town with them, and she and her barmaid had to make the best shift they could; for what forms the real quiet of domestic life was a thing unknown at our lodging-house.

I thought of these things on the day of sale—how this and that room had been named after our oldest lodgers, and only one or two known as my mistress's; and I pitied old Grizzy more than I did her. When the poorer sort of brokers came into the kitchen, and wanted to examine her turn-up bed, the old woman opened such a fire upon them with her sharp, short

shots as made them desist. "Shan't touch my things with nasty, dirty hands—couldn't go to sleep on 'em again, if you did—get out, else I'll scald you all—bad men to want old woman's bed," and as the landlord chanced to come into the kitchen while Grizzy was defending herself against her intruders, I spoke a word or two in behalf of the poor old woman, which induced him to allow her to remain in the house after the sale was over, and until he found a new tenant. With difficulty I made her understand that what few things she required should not be removed, so a cross was put on them, and her bed, table, arm-chair, a set of deal drawers, and a few other trifles were saved, the landlord agreeing to deduct their value from the rent, and to allow old Grizzy to remove them when she had to remove herself. I liked my mistress for the pleasant look she gave me when I told her how I had interested the landlord on behalf of the old woman, and she said, "She has been a good and faithful servant to me, John, and if ever I get my head fairly above these troubled waters again, she shall have a peaceful home to lie down in at the last."

Articles which had cost pounds were knocked down for a few shillings to the brokers that had banded together, and which would again be put up when they had a "knock-out" amongst themselves, when some

broker who wanted them would make an offer far beyond what they had fetched in the sale, and the difference be divided amongst those who "stood in." So my mistress's creditors were robbed throughout the sale, and her own "sharp practice" followed up to the end; for those who were in "the ring" had bidders in every corner from hunger-bitten men, who, after the sale was over, would be employed by their shabby masters to remove the goods, and who considered those "white-loaf days" in which they were put—as the man in possession—into any respectable but unfortunate household, to look after the goods and chattels.

When they began to remove the goods, and their masters were no longer there to overlook them, then the wreck and ruin that was strewn about on every side was brought nearer to the eye, and as I looked on I felt the desecration. On articles which my mistress had kept spotless, were placed short pipes and pots of beer; dirty jackets were thrown down on snow-white pillows and counterpanes by the men who stripped to do their work, trampling on things with their dirty shoes, and whistling and singing over their labour.

I was glad to find when all was over that the old gentleman who had offered to pay out the execution, had arranged with one of the brokers to buy in such few things as my mistress set most store by. Through

this arrangement, several articles were not removed, and we were able to sit down in tolerable comfort to supper, when a few of the old familiar silver forks and spoons put in an appearance, though they had not been announced among the lots in the catalogue. Emma sat down to supper with us, and not having seen her during the last three or four busy days, we talked over a great many things as I walked home with her.

One thing, however, made me feel very uncomfortable: she had obtained a week's holiday, which she was going to spend along with her mother at Squire Scowby's.

"I do believe, Jack," she said, in the greatest faith, and with one of her sweetest smiles, "that from hints let fall by my mother, if it isn't already a match between 'em, it soon will be, and what a good thing it will be for her. I couldn't refuse to go with her, could I?"

I had no faith in the match, as I told her, but great fear of herself. I could not, however, offer any reason for dissuading her, as he still visited her mother at the cottage, where Emma sometimes saw him; so offered no opposition.

As Betty Blackman had risen a step or two in the world through her own industry, by the addition of my mistress's washing, which I had obtained for her

—though that was now done with—she had taken a larger house, with a good drying-ground, where she let out a room or two, and having a vacancy, I again became her lodger, until I obtained some fresh situation.

I looked in now and then upon my mistress, who, with Grizzy, still remained at the lodging-house, a sufficiency of everything having been bought in that was just necessary for her comfort until she "got suited," which latter words are almost indefinite, when applied to any one who hardly knows which way to turn next. I was surprised and disappointed a few days after the sale to hear that Mr. and Mrs. Jones had called, and gone away without leaving any address. My mistress said the gentleman seemed quite sorry at what had happened, and said they must be off and look out for fresh quarters, and that he never even named me, though his wife did, and said she should like to see me. Sanguine as I had before been, I now began to think that it was quite absurd to suppose they were my parents, though I had, on the day I visited the old pawnbroker, felt confident they were. What dependence could be placed on such a muddled brain as old Grizzy's? And except her incoherent narrative, the—

> Story of the bear and fiddle
> Begun, but broke off in the middle,

what else had I even to rest my hope upon? Still, on looking from a more favourable point of view, there was something to cling to in the account of the fire and depositing the plate-chest with old Pettinger. Then I thought to myself, as I am now out of a situation I may employ myself worse than in endeavouring to discover this Mr. and Mrs. Branston—for I felt sure of the name—and if nothing more is made of the discovery, I shall at least be satisfied that I am not their lost son, after telling them all I know. But for the thought of Emma accompanying her mother to pass a week with Squire Scowby, I should have found a pleasant change in hunting up Mr. and Mrs. Branston, but with the fear weighing upon my mind that both the mother and the Squire were in league against Emma, I set about my task with somewhat of a saddening of the heart, which I could not otherwise account for.

CHAPTER XVII.

I DISCOVER SOMETHING, BUT SCARCELY KNOW WHAT.

I CALLED at several hotels and boarding-houses which I thought the most likely to be selected by the party whom I believed to be my parents, but nowhere could I obtain any tidings of them. I also looked carefully over the advertisements, in the hope of finding some situation that might suit me; and as I could bring with me a good character, I was rather particular in my choice. One day my eye was arrested by a strangely-worded advertisement, and on calling for the file of newspapers, I found that it had been inserted a great many times, running through the paper for several weeks. It read as follows :—

EMMA SAXBY or Mrs. ELLISTONE, formerly of Ivy House, West Clapham, where her mother is still living, was married to HENRY ELLISTONE about seventeen years ago. Daughter born within twelve months of her marriage, soon after which the mother was left a widow.—Any person giving information concerning the above EMMA SAXBY or ELLISTONE, or her daughter, will receive 50*l.* reward, by applying to ——, Temple, or Mrs. SAXBY, Ivy House, West Clapham.

Now I had seen Ivy House while trying to find Emma's grandmother, and had paused long before it, as laburnums and tall roses hung over one of the garden walls, agreeing with her mother's incautious description of the home of her childhood, when she let the words fall from her lips unawares. But what was still more strange, I had seen the old lady, and had been struck by her face, for if it was the mother, she appeared to be but some dozen years older than her daughter, such marks of age had drink left on the features of Emma's mother. It was on a Sunday, when she was going to church, followed by her servant, and I remarked how upright she walked, and thought how much her figure resembled her daughter's, when her back was towards me. I had also shown Emma the house, and she had laughed and said, "Let's ring, Jack, and ask if my grandmother lives here. I would if I knew what my right name was, for I believe it's no more Henry than yours is Blackman;" then she added, after a pause, "Perhaps my father's Christian name was Henry. I hate to be called Emma Henry, it sounds so silly, doesn't it?"

If the lady of Ivy House was her grandmother, the advertisement showed reason enough why the widow had retained her husband's Christian name while concealing herself, though so slight a clue would have been but of little help to her daughter, had the mother

died suddenly, unless she left clearer proof behind, as she had hinted would be found after her death.

I knew enough of Emma's mother to feel certain that if her attention was drawn to the advertisement, and she was the person sought after, she would not reply to it, such was her unforgiving nature. What could I do? If I persuaded Emma to call on the old lady, she could produce no proof that she was the daughter of Henry Ellistone. And her own daughter? Could any reconciliation take place while she was still such a slave to her vicious habits? I thought not, though I felt sure she had only to know Emma to love her. Should I call on the barrister in the Temple, whose name was appended to the advertisement? No, that would look as if I sought for the offered reward. The proper thing to do was to see Emma at once, and that I determined upon doing.

As I have before stated, I felt very uneasy about her somehow, a sad, low, indescribable feeling, which no reason can be offered for entertaining—no cause of any kind assigned why it should exist. Such a feeling is best expressed in the homely idiom of uneducated people as "if something was going to happen." I tried hard to dispel it, but tried in vain. It first possessed me when Emma told me how collected her mother appeared when she refused to marry the Squire. I felt that such calmness was assumed, put on to conceal

some purpose, as it was so unlike the fiery burst I had encountered—so unlike her passionate mother, who was furious when opposed. Emma had already been away three days, on her visit to the Squire's with her mother. She had promised to write to me every day; I never knew her tell a wilful untruth—I had not heard from her. There was a post-office within two miles of the Squire's residence, her mother had told her, to which he sent twice a day for letters.

Thanks to my poverty, and the many shifts I had been driven to to earn an honest crust in my boyish days, it enabled me to find the Squire's residence, though it was situated in a wild, out-of-the way place. I had discovered it while hunting for groundsel and chickweed to sell to the bird-shops; and once Emma had been my companion, dreaming as little as myself that she should ever be a visitor there, or have an offer of marriage from the owner.

I did not go the nearest way, but round about, so as to have a peep at Ivy House, now of great interest to me; then I struck across the lower portion of Streatham Common, and so out by Tulse Hill, round which the whole neighbourhood was familiar to me, especially the more secluded portion beside the river Effra, near to which stood the house of the Squire.

Though but very few years have elapsed since the time of which I am writing, the railroads and other

alterations have so changed the features of many portions of the scenery beside this narrow old river, that in many places they bear no resemblance to what they then were. There was until lately near the Brixton railway station a portion of the wild embankment, between which the Effra flowed, overhung with trees that had stood for many long years leaning over the water, and few would believe, unless familiar with the places of which I write, how solitary and silent were some of the spots within a mile or two of this now busy station. The few old houses that were sprinkled here and there, far apart from each other, had been occupied by wealthy and fashionable families, at the time Dulwich was celebrated for its medicinal waters; when there was an assembly-room at the sign of the "Green Man," a house which Lord Thurlow afterwards occupied, when the far-famed Dulwich wells no longer attracted visitors either to drink the water or sit under the Oak of Honour. Almost every old house, in fact, of any size, from Kennington Common to the far end of Streatham, that lies scattered over the level fields bounded by the Brixton Road and the river Effra on the north, and on the south by the Norwood Hills, was occupied during the season by high-born and wealthy people, when this picturesque village was almost as famous for its waters as Bath. Nor is this longer ago than

when the grandfather of Queen Victoria sat on the English throne.

It was in one of these old brick houses where Squire Scowby resided, and on reaching it, I saw what had never struck me before, and that was the great distance that lay between it and any other residence. I well knew, as I pulled the handle of the bell, that to all excepting Emma I should be an unwelcome visitor, but as I had a duty to perform in her behalf, I was determined to execute it.

The barking of a dog was the only answer I received to the loud peal I rung. I noticed that the gate was old and strong, with a little opening cut in it, just big enough to put an arm through, or to show a portion of a face, when the slide was let down, which was not done until I had again tugged at the loud bell, and aroused another dog, whose bark was deeper and more angry than that of the first. After a time the red face of a woman blotched and bloated through drink, as I believed, was seen through the opening, who said, in an unpleasant tone of voice, "What do you want here?"

I told her I wanted to speak to the young woman who, with her mother, was visiting there, and that my name was John Blackman, the name I was best known by.

"I know nothing about young women," answered

the woman. "The Squire has gone to the races, and will not be back for a day or two, and there's nobody here knows you. You should have gone round to the back, and inquired at the lodge, if you've come on business," and the slide was closed, and soon after the dogs gave over barking.

In a moment I suspected there was something wrong going on inside which affected Emma, and I rung the bell again with all my strength. The woman had not gone away, for the slide was let down before the bell had ceased ringing.

"I have come to see the young woman whose name is Emma. I have something of the greatest importance to say to her, and I must speak either with her or her mother, and will before I go. You know they are both here, and I will ring until one of them comes to speak to me."

"Oh, you will, will you?" said the woman, again closing the opening. I had to shout to make myself heard, on account of the dogs, one of which was loose and close to the gate. I had been at too many houses where they kept dogs while a Jack-of-all-trades to be afraid of them, so I looked round for something to defend myself with, if they were set on me, and I soon found part of a broken paling, strong enough to drive off almost any dog, if struck sharply on the nose, for very few will run the chance of receiving a

second blow, if fairly hit there. After waiting for two or three minutes, I gave a third ring, and above the barking of the dogs I heard voices in angry altercation, and that of Emma's mother was the loudest, for I heard her say, "Why the devil didn't you set the dogs on him?"

That did it. I pulled at the bell again, and struck at the slide with the broken paling, and shouting with all my might, said if the door was not opened, I would scale the wall. Then the slide went down with a bang, and I needed no second glance to see what state she was in. It was Emma's mother, drunk and mad with passion.

It was Emma's mother, and I will not repeat the language she used—it was dreadful to hear it; while her inflamed and angry countenance was frightful to look upon. I think if the door had not been between us, she would have flown at my throat, and torn at it with her nails. My blood was also up, and I said what I felt sorry for afterwards, but anger is temporary madness, and she maddened me through saying what she did. Divested of its bitter abuse, the purport of what she said was a refusal to let me see her daughter; that she had brought her there purposely to be out of my way, and should keep her there as long as she pleased, and that would be until she obeyed her. That her daughter had no wish to see

me, and a great deal more in a similar strain. But she foamed again when I said if such was Emma's wish, I would trouble her no more, but I would receive my discharge from no one but her daughter. Her answer I will not write down. I denounced her in no measured terms, and was not sorry that I raised my voice to its highest pitch, as it was answered by Emma calling out, "Jack, Jack, dear Jack, I am locked up."

The sound of her voice came from the side of the house, and shifting my position, I went in that direction, shouting, "I am here, Emma," when she again answered me, and in a few seconds I was mounted on the top of the side wall, under which the dogs were barking and rearing up. The window through which I saw her sweet face was strongly barred, and never shall I forget the feeling that came over me as she thrust out her dear arms as if to reach me, exclaiming, "Oh, Jack, take me away from this dreadful place." She then told me in words that were broken by deep sobbings, that her mother had threatened to keep her locked up until she consented to marry the Squire. That he had gone away somewhere for a time. That when her door was opened, and the woman came to wait on her, a man kept watch to prevent her from escaping. That she would die before she would yield to her mother, whom she now hated. That I was to go to the police station,

and get all the men I could find to come with big hammers, and break the doors down and take her away.

What more she said I was prevented from hearing by a stout, tall, powerful fellow, who coming up, with a garden-chair in his hand, placed it under the wall, then mounting it, he laid hold of my leg, and pitched me outside, uttering a great oath, and telling me, if I wasn't off he would climb the wall and jump on me. I was not at all hurt, though he threw me over as easily as I could have thrown a mouse, had I held it swinging by the tail. Just as I fell I heard Emma's voice speaking in anger at the barred window, and had no doubt but that the woman with the blotched face was either trying to persuade her to come away from the casement, or threatening to compel her.

I stood considering what I should do to liberate Emma, feeling that I had no chance by myself against two passionate women and a powerful man, besides the dogs.

What could I do? Though detained by force, she was in the keeping of her mother, and I had no power to release her, no right even to try, and no authority to employ any one to make the attempt. We loved each other, and had always done so, but that was far too weak a claim to make for a summons, and I had sense enough to know that if I asked a police magis-

trate to grant me one, I should be thrust out of the court with as little ceremony as I had been bundled over the wall. I was nothing—I was nobody; and excepting her liking for me, and mine for her, I had no more right to attempt to get her out of the house of her mother, than the last traveller who had just landed in England for the first time. As to going to the lady I believed to be her grandmother, or calling on the barrister in the Temple, why they would think me mad, and if I insisted that I wasn't, perhaps call in a policeman and lock me up, and keep me in prison until I really did become mad. I was determined to do something to get her out of her mother's clutches, and away from the Squire, but what I didn't know was how to set about it. As I walked home my head ached again through thinking what I should do to release Emma.

It was while loitering before a petty stationer's shop window, that a strange thought came into my head, a recollection of something I had entirely forgotten, and which, when recalled, seemed too ridiculous to occupy the mind beyond the passing moment. But it did.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I INTRODUCE EMMA TO HER GRANDMOTHER.

THE stationer into whose window I looked, inattentively at first, had opened shop with a very small stock, nearly all of which I had but little doubt was temptingly exposed before me. But what attracted my eye so forcibly was a neat little box of turnery-ware, made out of either boxwood or lignum vitæ, and containing little wax tapers for sealing letters, which were considered "quite the thing" about this time to place on writing-tables, as they were scented. Not that the box was exactly like the one so strangely recalled to my memory, for though the latter was also turned in a lathe and the lid screwed on, it had been made to hold needles and bodkins, and such-like things, and had originally, no doubt, belonged to a workbox. It came into Emma's possession through having been her mother's; and I think I remember seeing her playing with it when we were children in the Borough. Emma always carried it in her pocket while learning the millinery business, until, one day, I bought her a little case called a

lady's companion, an article which had a great sale about this time. In return, I got Emma to give me the old-fashioned needle-case, as the little turned box had always been called. "There is a bit of paper at the bottom, Jack," she said, as she gave it me, after taking out the needles; "I have often tried to get it out with the point of my scissors, but can't—it's fitted in so tightly."

I peeped inside, and saw the paper at the bottom of the box, and said, "I see; it's put there to keep the needles from falling to the bottom, so that they may be taken out the more easily, especially the short ones:" and I measured the box with the blade of my knife, inside and outside, to show her how little space the paper took up.

Although I had seen the letters scores of times, yet it was not until my eye caught the box of "Vestas" in the shop-window, that the thought entered my head that the inlaid initials on the needle-case were H. E., for Henry Ellistone, and E. S., for Emma Saxby; and that it had been a love-gift.

I hurried home to my lodgings, and turned out the little drawer I had had made inside my box, in which I kept every keepsake I had stored for the love of Emma, even to the first pair of wornout shoes we had such difficulty to raise the money for, when we were children, and the weather set in so cold that she could no longer

go barefooted. I could fill a chapter telling of the sacrifices we both made to purchase those shoes when they were new. On taking out the old-fashioned needle-case, and rubbing the lid, I for the first time saw that the inlaid initials were of silver, and united together fancifully by a true-lovers' knot. It was but a poor proof to produce, though to my mind "confirmation strong as Holy Writ," that it was a gift from Emma's father to her mother—that mother whom only to think of caused my face to flush with anger. I was about replacing the case in the drawer, when I again thought of the paper inside, so taking out my waiter's knife—which, in addition to its two blades, was fitted up with no end of things inside—I opened the little thread of a corkscrew, boring it in the paper as if I were going to draw a cork, and it was almost as hard to pull out, so tightly was it driven into the "pin-poppet," the old name by which these curious cases were best known. On unfolding the paper,I had first to undo about a dozen short squares, each becoming narrower as I came nearer to the end. When these little squares were opened out, the paper was still tightly folded lengthways, and looked like a flat paper-knife or "spill," some eight inches in length. These long folds were easily undone; and, when opened out, I found that the paper was the marriage certificate of Emma's mother, and

still as clean in the inside as on the day it was given to her by the clergyman whose signature it bore. What would I not have given to have had Emma beside me when I made this great discovery. What a pleasure it would have been to have watched the changes that would have passed over her beautiful countenance, and to have listened to the sweet, simple words that would have fallen from her lips, while telling of the good she would do if ever her rich grandmother made her her heiress. How grieved I felt at the thought that, during my painful interview with her that day, I had not had a chance to speak even of the advertisement—that advertisement which I was now prepared to answer so satisfactorily in every way.

It was not too late—I had plenty of time to see Emma's grandmother before dark, so I resolved to start at once for Ivy House, instead of calling on the barrister in the Temple. Having overtaken a Clapham omnibus, I found myself within the hour walking on the Common, and thinking of what I should first say to the old lady. Never before had the Common seemed so wide, or I to have been so long crossing it, though I walked my fastest, in my impatience getting out of the omnibus at the corner, only because it went round, though I should have reached Ivy House all the sooner had I not got out, for it passed me. I was

feverish with excitement, and fearful that I should do something wrong that would retard the liberation of Emma. When I rang the bell at the gate I was covered with perspiration. The bell was answered in a few moments, the little gate beside the carriage-entrance opened and closed, and I was at the foot of the steps that led to the front door, when I delivered my message, and was asked to come inside. The only message I delivered to the servant was that I had called respecting the advertisement—not a word more nor less. Not a minute elapsed before the servant returned, saying, "This way, if you please, sir;" and he ushered me into a room that opened with glass doors, or windows reaching to the floor, on a beautiful flower-garden. The lady had been reading, for I saw her glasses on the book she had just laid down. She rose to receive me, and said, "Pray be seated. You come respecting the advertisement?"

"Yes. I saw both your daughter and granddaughter this afternoon," I said; "and though I was sure in my own mind that they were the persons inquired after the moment I saw the advertisement, yet I was unable to produce any proof until an hour or two ago, when I discovered this."

I arose from my chair, and placed the marriage certificate in her hand. I noticed her hand trembled slightly as she glanced over the paper; when, laying

it across the book, under her glasses, which she had put on to read it, she asked me how the paper came into my possession. I told her in fewer words than I have told the reader in this chapter. This led to many other questions, all of which I answered truthfully, concealing nothing, but telling her everything that my readers already know.

As I painted the picture of our childish sufferings, the old lady was unable to sit still in her chair, but got up and paced the room, passing one hand over the other, and exclaiming, "Poor children! poor dear children!" As for her own daughter, I put in the portrait in the most delicate colours I could use; but through all, her mother saw the real likeness, and detested it; and I soon perceived that all her sympathy was enlisted in favour of Emma. An hour or more had passed away, during which she was either asking me questions, or listening to my narrative, the last portion of which I finished, when the shadows fell so thick about the room that I could scarcely see her face.

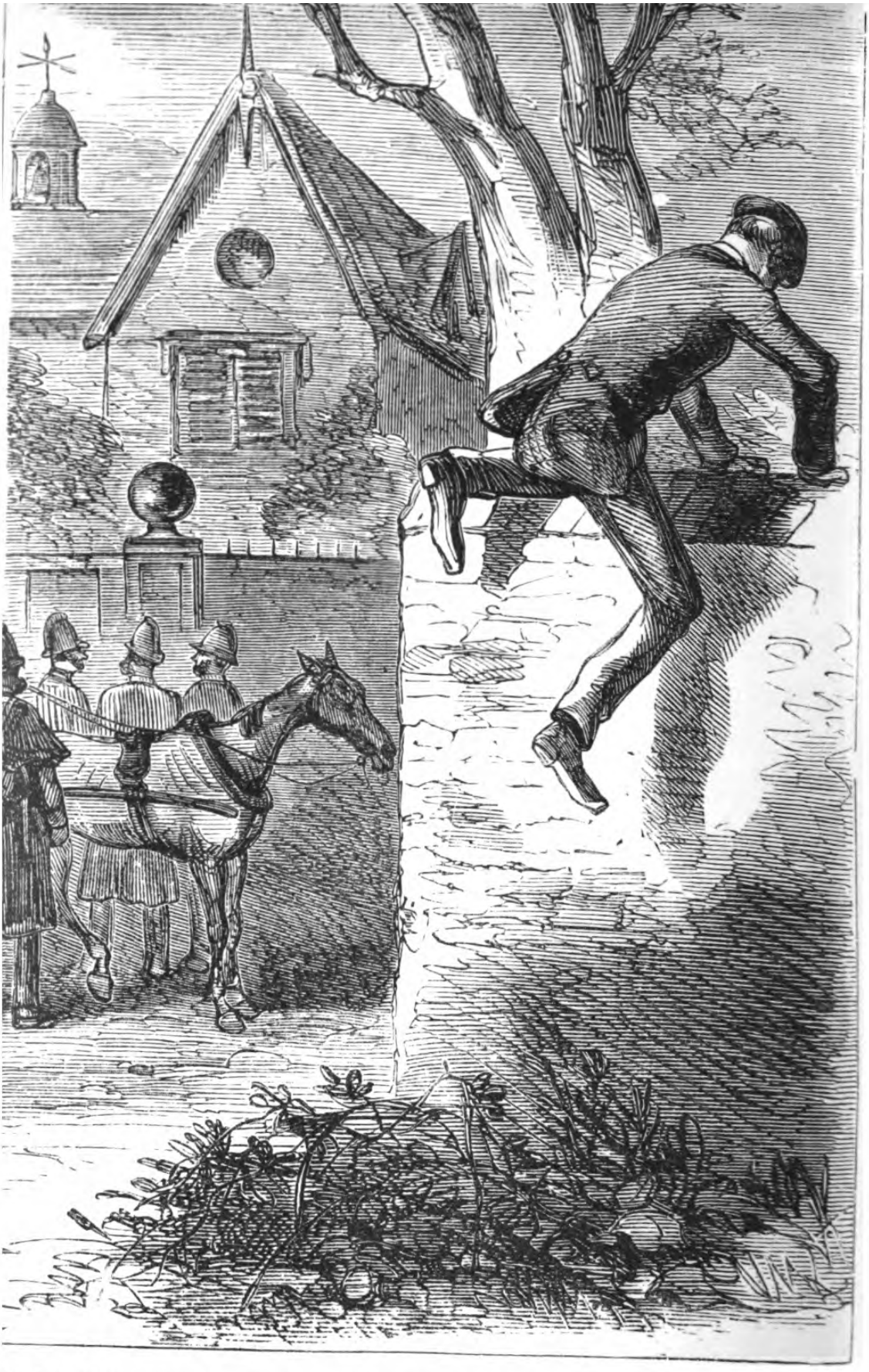
When I ended telling her all I knew about Squire Scowby, and the mother's motives for keeping her daughter a prisoner, her voice altered, and there was something that reminded me of Emma's mother in the passionate exclamation of—"I will put a stop to this before the night is over!" She then rang for lights; ordered me some refreshment; wrote a note, and told

the servant to be sure and get a promise from the magistrate that he would come at once. In a word, she seemed no more like the sad, sighing lady who walked up and down the room wringing her hands a few minutes before, than the soldier who halts a moment to place his knapsack under the head of a wounded comrade is like the same man, a minute after, charging at the point of the bayonet.

"One of my oldest and most intimate friends," she said, "is Mr. N——, the magistrate. My granddaughter is kept a prisoner by her bad mother; she has cried for help, and, whatever may be the consequence, she shall have it. And I will have a warrant out against this fellow calling himself a squire, for allowing his house to be used for an unlawful purpose."

The magistrate was not long in arriving. He had an interview with the lady in another room, at which he drew up a paper, and brought it to me to sign, after swearing to the facts already stated. The grandmother also affixed her signature to the paper. I then went with him to the police-station, signed my name in a book, and, five minutes after, was seated on the box of a cab, beside the driver, followed by a sergeant and half a dozen policemen, and guiding them to the lonely house where Emma was a prisoner.

We were soon there; and while the policemen were knocking and ringing at the gate, I went round to



ile the policemen were knocking and ringing at the gate, I went round to the side-wall, and climbed it."—P. 201.

the side wall, climbed it, and called out, "Emma, I am here! We have come to take you with us."

She was standing by the barred and opened window when I called; and said, "Oh, dear Jack! make haste! make haste! and take me with you."

Those inside refused to open the gate, though told that the police had a magistrate's warrant to enforce admission. In two minutes they were over the wall and inside the house. The tall fellow who had before thrown me over the wall, having now the fear of the law before his eyes, wisely secured the dogs. By the time I got inside, I found Emma standing in the hall, and looking wildly around her. The instant she saw me she threw herself into my arms, and hung sobbing round my neck as if her heart was breaking. What I most dreaded was the trouble we should have with her mother; but this we were spared, as the woman with the blotched face had helped the man to carry her up to bed an hour before, helplessly and speechlessly drunk. The sergeant felt it his duty to see that she was within the house, and I went with him, so that we might be prepared to swear that Emma was kept prisoner by her sanction. It was a pitiable sight to see her lying on the bed just where they had thrown her undressed. He left two of his men in the house, with orders that no person was to quit it until he called again in the morning.

It was quite true that Squire Scowby had gone to some races a few miles distant, and was not expected back for a day or two. "It is against him," said the sergeant, "that the warrant must be taken out, as we find the young lady locked up in a room of his house; and it will be for him to show why she was kept prisoner there. I wouldn't stand in his shoes, young man, for a ten-pound note." While this conversation took place, Emma had gone up-stairs to put on her things, and pack up those she brought to wear during her visit. "When the drunken woman comes to her senses in the morning," said the sergeant to the men he left in charge of the house, "you can tell her if she wants any tidings of her daughter, she can apply to the police-court, which will save us the trouble of serving her with a summons. I remember having to lock her up a few times when I first joined the force, and had a beat in the Borough. Mother Henry, as we used to call her, was a great nuisance to us. But here comes the young lady." I forced half a sovereign on the sergeant to get his men a little refreshment, then handed Emma and her luggage into the cab. She was far too happy to inquire whither we were going—too delighted to think or care about anything, excepting that she had regained her liberty and was with me; crying for joy as she clung to me, just as she did when a little girl, after I had got her

out of some childish trouble. I believe that love which first springs up in childhood is, in its onward flow, ever purifying both heart and mind while deepening its course, and is a thousand times more enduring than that impulsive passion called "love at first sight." To me her beauty was still the same—"a joy for ever;" calmly and happily possessed through the love I knew she bore to me; and never startling me for a moment as it did the stranger on first beholding her. And never did I feel so proud of her beauty as on that night, when I was on my way to present it to her grandmother; proud to think that, humble as my position had ever been, God had enabled me to be her shield and protection when temptation and privation had assailed her; and that she had come out of the fire pure and unsullied. How my heart had swelled that night, when the tears of her grandmother fell on my hand as she held it, after I had told all that we had gone through, and she had said that were her granddaughter a princess, I had done enough to make her honoured by such faithful service.

What difficulty I had to keep my lips sealed until we reached Ivy House, but I was resolved that nature should have its course; and that I would not even breathe the name of her grandmother until she stood in her presence. The cab was listened for, the gate

was open, and the aged lady stood at the entrance of the doorway, when I ran up the steps and said, "Not here! please let me bring her into the parlour; she does not even know that I have discovered you." She stood inside the cab with her little parcels in her hand, and as I took them from her and helped her out, said, "Why, dear Jack, wherever have you brought me to?" I led her up the steps into the hall, and said, "You will soon see—pull off your bonnet." I placed it with her parcels on a seat in the hall; then, with her beautiful hair falling about her sweet face, I led her by the hand into the parlour, and said, "Here is your granddaughter;" and I said no more, for some strange magnetic power drew them into each other's arms at the first glance. So I closed the door and came out of the room.

CHAPTER XIX.

"THE WICKED CEASE FROM TROUBLING."—JOB, CHAP. III.

AS the old lady invited me to stay all night, I accepted a bed and slept as soundly as a child that has wearied itself through playing; for I had done a good deal to make me tired that day, and before closing my eyes I thanked God for enabling me to do my duty. Though I had nothing pressing to attend to the next day, I thought it would be best to leave Emma alone with her grandmother, so proposed leaving them after breakfast; but as they both pleaded so urgently for me to remain, I consented, for I saw at once that they had a dread of facing Emma's mother—nor was it long before she arrived. I knew by the angry pull at the bell that she had come; and as I had before spoken to the servant, telling him who she was, and to admit her without a word, I stood ready for her in the hall with the front door open.

"I have come for my daughter, and will have her," were the first words she uttered; for she had discovered where she was, at the police-court, where I

imagined she had conducted herself rather violently, through the sergeant having followed her, as I saw him standing outside on the hall steps. Emma had been sent out of the way upstairs.

"Here comes your mother," I said; "she is the proper person to answer you."

"It was all your doing," she shouted in her passion; "you got her away."

"And so I would again, were you to keep her locked up," I replied. "I had her grandmother's sanction for what I did."

"I had hopes, Emma, after this long separation, that we should meet in mutual forgiveness, and that you would be glad to place your daughter under my protection, since she declines to live with you any longer. As to your taking her from me by force, the law will not allow that, after what you have done. I know all." The first few words were uttered by her mother in a low, tremulous voice, as if spoken more in sorrow than under any feeling of anger; but when she met the fierce and defiant eyes of her daughter, and saw the threat of taking Emma away repeated in her look, it was then that the old lady's colour rose, and I felt that there was a firmness in her nature which no passion of her daughter's could shake or overthrow. She raised her hands while speaking, but when she had uttered the last three words she let them

fall, as if she had done and wished to say no more; as if in her mind that was the summing up of all.

"I despise your protection, and I defy the law to take my daughter from me," replied the angry woman. "I have always avoided you. I saw your advertisement, and was too proud to reply to it. What I was doing when you interfered with me was for the best, both for myself and daughter; and I have a right to use what means I please to compel her to obey me."

"You have not," I answered, for I saw her aged mother had turned her back on her. "By coercing your daughter, and trying to compel her to marry a man she has an objection to, and who is in no way suitable, you have broken the law; and it is by the authority of the magistrate your daughter is now here, and that same authority will not permit you to have any power over her any more."

"It is all your doing," she screamed out, and shook her fist at me.

"It is not," said Emma, who had come downstairs unnoticed by any of us, and now approached to within a yard of her mother. "Though I am forced to say you are my mother, yet, after what you have done, were you to place your hand on me again as you did a day or two ago I would force myself to forget that such a wretch as you are ever gave me birth. I could not forgive you if I tried, after thinking of all

I have done and suffered for you. Then to want to force me to marry a drunkard, after what I have endured through you. Look at me;" and she thrust her face close to her mother's. "I am not afraid of you—I despise you too much ever to fear you again; nor will I ever after this moment call you mother again. This is my mother."

There spoke out the child of the Borough—there showed the blood of the little outcast, who, like myself, had to battle for her bread in the streets, literally to fight our way to a customer from the centre of a score of little wretches, as poor, ragged, and hungry as ourselves. And then—let it never be forgotten—was the force of evil example illustrated, a touch inherited from her passionate mother, who acknowledged no law but that of force, no power saving that which was the strongest. Even afterwards she told me in tears that the woman with the blotched face and the powerful man were too much for her, though she fought against them both when they forced her into the room; and that had her mother alone attempted to keep her prisoner, so strongly did the evil demon rage within, that she had strength enough to overpower her, and would have used it.

I believe that the drink she had taken over-night was still "in" the mother—that it had not what the drunkards call "died out," and for the time she forgot

where she was; and although I was half-ashamed that he should hear such unguarded words fall from the lips of Emma, I had made a sign to the police-sergeant to come inside the hall, for I knew the violent nature of Emma's mother. It was well I did so, for the words her conduct had forced from Emma stung her to madness, and she made a spring at her daughter with bent fingers and clenched teeth. The sergeant seized her in a moment from behind, where he held her hands as fast as if they had been screwed in a vice. She set up a cry of rage, like some savage animal struck down in the act of springing upon its prey. Then the fiery spirit broke, slaying her with its own boiling blood, which was sent surging up into her throat as if it scorned any longer to become an inhabitant of a mansion which another was master of, so went its disdainful way to where evil passion is free to mingle with its kind in some congenial element which may still feed its former fire, never more to be subdued; for what greater punishment can be imagined, than for evil to live on, ever increasing and feeding on passion too dreadful for us ever to have a knowledge of? It seemed a fit ending to her stormy life, which had never found rest anywhere for long together since the days of her maidenhood.

It was not until long after her death that I was informed of the circumstances that caused her to take

so great a dislike to her mother. Her marriage was not the cause; on the contrary, Mrs. Saxby received them kindly, and would willingly have allowed the young couple to live with her, but the husband declined the kind offer. He was not aware of her vicious habit until some time after her marriage. One of her school companions was the daughter of a wine and spirit merchant, and as she was often a visitor at the father's house, where the girls were left a good deal to themselves, he being a widower, they both became partial to brandy through having tasted loaf sugar that had been soaked in it, for the purpose of sweetening the spirit. Having once begun, they seldom met alone without indulging in their old favourite dish, a saucer of sugar filled up with brandy, which when thoroughly soaked, they ate up by spoonfuls. Her mother had not the slightest idea that she had picked up so vicious a habit; though after her marriage she recalled many things which had struck her as being rather strange, and which her daughter's maid must have had a knowledge of, such as retiring to her own room as soon as she came home, or very frequently remaining all night at the wine-merchant's. She was Emma's mother, and it is painful to me to trace her downfall. They had a house beautifully furnished by her mother, and as the husband continued to hold his situation as master at the school,

where he had a liberal salary, in addition to the allowance Mrs. Saxby made her daughter, they had as fair a start in life as most young married people not in possession of an actual fortune, and far beyond what many of our clergy are compelled to maintain themselves upon in prominent positions, for their certain income was over three hundred a year. The bills that came in for spirits maddened the young husband. He saw her mother, and requested her to discontinue his wife's allowance, which she spent in drink. Emma was born—the husband died, his life cut short through her dissipated habits. Her mother refused to supply her with money to be dissipated in drunkenness, but offered her a weekly allowance, payable through the barrister in the Temple. For a time she drew it, then demanded more than double the amount, and on her mother's refusal to grant it, she wrote a most insulting letter, declining to accept any assistance at all from her. Then she went lower and lower, concealing herself from her mother, and that so effectually, that even the barrister's emissaries were unable to discover Widow Ellistone in the low, drunken Mother Henry, too well known to the police in the Borough. From about this period, the rest of her life, like that of dear Emma's, is closely interwoven with my own, dating long before I commenced Jack-of-all-trades; for, as I have before stated, Mrs.

Pettinger had a great liking for Emma, and I have heard her say since, often sent her home with something screwed up tight in paper, which she was not to open or look at on any account, but give it to her mother. So, for the sake of the child, the kind-hearted pawnbroker's wife supplied the drunken woman with money, at a time when she had no other means of obtaining it, and after Mrs. Pettinger died, Emma and I came to help her, as I have already stated.

There was not much to grieve over in the death of such a mother, though it was a long time before Emma recovered from the shock, feeling as if she had hastened her death through giving loose to her own passion in such language as I had never before heard her utter. But for her good grandmother consoling her, and I doing all I could to persuade her that it would have been unnatural for her to have acted or spoken otherwise under such strong provocation, she would, I think, scarcely have believed that she could ever be forgiven. As for myself, after hearing all that the old lady had endured—which for the love I bear to Emma I shall never record—I consider the making her an allowance was the extent of forgiveness it could be carried to, knowing that every pound would be dissipated in an indulgence Mrs. Saxby abominated.

The clue that would lead to her discovery after death, and enable those who laid her out to communicate with her mother if they chose, was Mrs. Saxby's last letter, refusing to increase her allowance, which was folded in linen and sewn inside her stays, together with a copy of her own angry and insulting reply to her mother's letter. Only one of a thoroughly vicious and vindictive nature would have preserved the copy of such an answer through so many years, the sting of which was savagely envenomed by her stating that she would rear her child in infamy, and when she had steeped her in every crime, proclaim to all the world who was her grandmother.

As to the brandy-loving Squire Scowby, it appeared clearly enough that he had no knowledge of Emma having been locked up in the room; that both the man and woman who had used her so roughly had obtained their situation through the recommendation of Emma's mother; and that he had been led to believe that though the daughter had no great love for him, she was willing to become his wife for the sake of providing a comfortable home for her mother. Emma had taken his fancy, he said, and as he knew well enough what her mother was, he should have been quite willing to have taken the bad along with the good, and done his best for them both. I was satisfied when I afterwards became acquainted with

him that the whole plan was concocted by Emma's mother, just as I had surmised, and that no such thought as that of marrying Emma ever entered his head, until it was proposed by the mother. "I knew she was a great deal too young and pretty and good in every way for a man who indulges as I do," he said to me one day; "but when her mother told me she was very unhappy, and greatly in want of a home, why I said, 'God bless her pretty face, if that's all, she shall have one so long as I've a tile over my head; so bring her, and both of you stay as long as you please; then if, after a time, when she's seen my faults, she can make up her mind to marry me, why she shall if she likes, and if she doesn't like, she shall have a home and do as she likes, just the same.' And that was the long and the short of it all." I have no doubt he told the truth, for he was a simple-hearted, straightforward man, whose greatest fault was, I believe, a fondness for his glass. I need not say that the man and woman were dismissed as soon as he returned and was informed of what had taken place.

We always look with a charitable eye on the failings of the dead, striving to preserve only what awakens pleasant thoughts, since they have become but a memory. It is a hard sentence to write of Emma's mother, when I look back, and see nothing pleasant

to remember of her, no sacrifice ever made for her dutiful daughter—was duty due to such a mother?—nothing but a continual demand upon us both, to gratify her own selfishness, to satisfy the cravings of her vicious appetite, no break of light anywhere in the darkness that overshadowed her, except that made by the white arms of her daughter, who through good and evil report continued to enfold her, until at last that fond clasp was entwined by brutal force, and "The wicked ceased from troubling."

CHAPTER XX.

MY FATHER OWNS ME, AND THAT'S ABOUT ALL.

JIMMY was not to be beaten after all, but kept flitting about the old lodging-house after all was sold and gone to ruin, like one of those fabled ghosts that are too restless to be "laid" by any exorcise. The landlord found it harder to get a tenant, at the advanced rent he asked, than Jimmy did to get up the Royal Hotel and Boarding House Company, imited, so the Company became the tenant, taking in two houses on each side, and giving the management of the whole concern to my old mistress. As the old lodging-house stood in a commanding situation, and like the houses beside it was well built, the company unroofed the whole and began to build two additional stories, so that the New Royal Hotel overtopped every house in the neighbourhood, and was almost on a level with the spire of the parish church. While the work progressed, the directors had luncheons, as in former days, in the large room, where our principal boarders had so often met when I was the head waiter, and having been Jimmy's secretary in former

speculations, I was occasionally invited by the Board, to which he introduced me. Indeed, I might have held office in the Company had I been so disposed; but both Emma and her grandmother had an objection to my taking any situation, for the kind old lady said she thought I had been Jack-of-all-trades long enough. Jimmy was in his element; there was plenty of money, as the shares were all taken up within a week, and he set about devising how to spend it. To say nothing of the splendid decorations and large rooms, which were easily made by knocking down walls, Jimmy had quite a mania for "lifts," worked by water-power. Everything was to be lifted, even so far as getting into bed, if the lodgers were so disposed. No servants would be required to carry anything "upstairs or downstairs, or in my lady's chamber." One room on the ground-floor was roofed all over with bells, and by some kind of Jimmy's magic they had only to be touched and what was wanted was sent up by the lift. "Supposing a lodger is dining in his own room, now," said Jemmy; "he touches a wire and it communicates with the 'campanular' (for so Jimmy had christened the underground room, thinking it was near enough as it was devoted to bells), where bell B is ringing. The clerk, who looks after the campanular department, seeing bell B in motion, concludes that the party dining wants something

beginning with that letter, so sends up by the lift a bottle of bitter beer. Don't you see what labour it saves? You, as a waiter, know what running up and down stairs is, if anybody does."

"But will your bell be understood," I asked, "if he wants more beef, bread, or brandy?"

"That never struck me," replied Jimmy; "and I begin to see that plenty of everything must be sent up at first whether it's wanted or not, for if not wanted it can but be dropped down again, as there is no tiring the lift. If one doesn't want it, another may."

"But supposing bell C is rung," I said, "a chop or coffee would soon get cold, and nobody would care either to eat the one or drink the other, if they wanted cheese or celery, cider or claret, chicken or champagne. Or if it was a lady, and she was dressing —for I see you have a laundry—you wouldn't assist her much, if you sent up a collar, when she rang for her crinoline."

"Ah, well, at all events, the lifts will be useful now and then, if any of the lodgers keep it up as we have seen them, until one or two in the morning," answered Jimmy, with a merry twinkle in his eyes. "I know many a time I would have paid a trifle for a lift, when my legs seemed to want to carry me anywhere but where I wanted to go. If we find the bells don't answer, we must try telegrams."

Poor old Grizzy winked and blinked when they invaded her dominions, and, bundling out her pots and pans, commenced fitting up the patent range which was to prepare dinner for a hundred more easily than she could get the meal ready for half a dozen; the number of stewpans that were placed in the rack made her lift her hands in astonishment, and when she saw the roasting apparatus, she asked if they intended cooking a whole bullock at once. "Not want Grizzy now," said the old woman, "people will be sick, such many nasty messes; melted butter, plain, melted butter oysters, melted butter shrimps, melted butter parsley, melted butter onions, melted butter capers, all at one dinner. Enough to make one caper and pull long faces, and cry oh, dear, so sick, and want nips of brandy. Stick to drop of gin, and bit of bread, as I do, and not have dog's messes; won't cry oh, dear! so much, and have to send for doctor, and his men, and stomach pumps."

But what seemed to delight my friend Jimmy as much or more than anything in connection with his Hotel Company, was having caught what he called "the shy bird" at last, and when I inquired whom he alluded to, I found it was the Mr. Jones that I had been in search of. It appeared Jimmy had hunted him out and got him to take a great many shares, though no persuasion would induce him to become a

director. When I asked for his address, it could not be found, and all I was able to obtain was the name of his banker. I discovered also that he banked in the name of Branston.

I was too happy at this time to care much about finding my parents, and began to doubt whether I had any right to claim Mr. and Mrs. Branston as such, considering the meagre proofs I was able to produce, for a pawnbroker's ticket is but a poor certificate of birth, hardly equal to a baby's night-gown, if I had chanced to have been found in one bearing the initials that would have answered to my name. Emma's grandmother—who seemed desirous that I should not leave them—and when I told her I was weary of doing nothing, that I had been accustomed to stirring about all my life, and that if I had my choice of the two, I would rather be poor and industrious, than rich and idle, the good old lady hardly knew how to reply to me, and if I went into her great garden and did a little there in the best way I could, I fancied the gardeners looked at me with jealous eyes—as they had little else to do besides keeping the weeds down—as if they thought I had no right to interfere with their work. As for dear Emma, her work of late had been using her needle, and she found both amusement and employment in repairing and altering the old-fashioned and valuable articles with which her grand-

mother's drawers were crammed, for she never permitted Emma to go to her place of business again, excepting to give her former mistress a friendly call, after she first received her. Mrs. Saxby had a good old-fashioned library, and in it we passed many hours, Emma and I reading such works as she recommended to us, and there I first became acquainted with the "Tatler" and "Spectator," and several similar works, though when left to my own choice I preferred reading the novels of Sterne, Smollett, Fielding, and Richardson. I could not help noticing that Mrs. Saxby never loitered a moment in the hall since her daughter had died there so suddenly; that she even entered it as seldom as possible, preferring to go from one apartment to another by any other way, even passing along the garden to such rooms as opened into it. She confessed at last that she should never be happy in Ivy House again, so resolved to sell it, and as it was freehold, and surrounded with several acres of land, she had no fear of finding a purchaser, though several thousands were asked for it. So we all found employment at last in trying to find another house for her. In that Squire Scowby rendered us good service, as every decent house for full five miles around the neighbourhood was familiar to him; if, as he said, "They are good and have any age about them," and nothing would induce the old lady to look

at a new mansion. The goodnatured Squire seemed to think he could never do enough for Emma, and all who were acquainted with her. At last he found "a nice little piece of property," as he called it, with a southern aspect, on the sunny slope that parts the Norwood Hills, with the beautiful village of Dulwich nestling in the valley at its feet. There was more land attached to it than the lady knew what to do with; but, as the Squire said, that which she did not want was already inquired after for building purposes, and would be too far off to interfere with her privacy: so, as the estate was freehold, he advised her to close at once, as it would be dirt cheap, even if five thousand more were given for it than the amount asked. So the new estate was purchased, and the old one sold, and a few thousands of pounds added to the old lady's fortune through the good management of Squire Scowby, as he sold the freehold plots to be built upon for within a trifle of what she paid for her new property, for the Squire was able to blend a good deal of business with his brandy.

There was a far more cheerful prospect before the new residence than there was about the old one, for as it stood half-way down the hill, it overlooked a wide stretch of country, up and down the valley, while the one she had left stood on nearly level ground, though from it here and there could be obtained

pleasant peeps of Clapham Common; and I noticed with pleasure that Mrs. Saxby was much happier after having removed than she had ever before been since the sudden and dreadful death of her daughter gave her such a shock.

It was necessary that the gentleman who had purchased Ivy House should be a witness to some deed which Mrs. Saxby had to sign to complete the sale of the freehold; so a day was appointed by her solicitor, and an invitation given to the new purchaser to dinner. Squire Scowby was also included in the invitation, as he had been so exceedingly kind to her grandmother in hunting about for a house. Emma and I had our little joke about the Squire coming, and it was a pleasure to see her grave grandmother join in it. We agreed that he should sit beside her when we dined, and at my intercession a little decanter of brandy was to be placed near him, for he had told me that he never enjoyed a meal unless he had a small quantity of the "right sort," as he called it, standing at his elbow.

Great was my surprise when the guests arrived to find the purchaser of Ivy House was the gentleman I believed to be my father, and that he was accompanied by the lady who I had some reason to suppose was my mother. They both shook hands with me kindly, and as they had seen Emma at the lodging-house, and

she was then a great favourite of Mrs. Branston's, the meeting was very agreeable on both sides, and none the less so on finding that the hostess was her grandmother. A few minutes were sufficient to transact the business they had come upon, and as I had been more accustomed to superintend the serving up of dinners than either Mrs. Saxby or any of her servants, I must own that everything was in order before I joined the guests. Over dinner the Squire was very attentive to Emma, while Mrs. Branston asked me a great many questions about my friend Jimmy, and quite enjoyed my description of some of the speculations he had entered into, with which I was so well acquainted. From one thing I was led back to another, "even to my boyish days," and no wonder the lawyer's eyes glittered again behind his spectacles when he saw a young lady so elegantly dressed and so beautiful helping me out when my memory broke down, and owning with pride that she had been my companion through so many trials. When I went back to tell them how, when a baby, I was pawned as linen at old Pettinger's, for twenty-five shillings, stating all the particulars that Betty Blackman had made me acquainted with, and also what I had gathered from old Grizzy, it was then that there was a cry of alarm at the dinner-table. Mrs. Branston had fainted away, and had to be placed on a sofa,

until she recovered sufficiently to leave the dining-room.

After the ladies had retired, there was a low conversation by the window between Mr. Branston and the lawyer, before they sat down to their wine. What that conversation was I pretty well know, from the cross-examination I afterwards underwent by them both. The lawyer's questions were very searching; but I was able to answer them all satisfactorily. Then there was a lull in the conversation, and Mr. Branston, taking up his glass and holding it to the light, said, "It seems all clear enough."

"Clear as day," answered the lawyer, "and not the least clouded in any way."

I thought they were speaking of the wine, and began to tell them how many years the butler said it had been in bottle; but great was my astonishment at hearing Mr. Branston say, "Well, Jack, my lad, I feel sure that you are my son, and I've the pleasure of drinking your very good health, and here's to our better acquaintance." And that was all he said, though he did manage to shake me by the hand.

"Dash my buttons," said Squire Scowby, "I must join in this anyhow, though wine lies but coldish in my stomach. So here's your very good health, Jack, and may you be a better man than your father, and he's many a long mile off being a bad 'un."

I think altogether it was about one of the coolest things ever witnessed. I did think he might have got up, and have put his hand on my shoulder, or have done something or other to show his fatherly feeling. But to sit in his chair and put out his hand without rising, and only propose my health and drink to our better acquaintance—and I his son and heir—why, it was hardly showing a bit more affection for me than he had done at the lodging-house, when I was only a waiter.

"And now go and speak to your mother," he said, "and tell her it's all right. She always had a bit of a liking for you, and will be glad to see you and own you as her son."

Was ever a lost child, as soon as found, despatched on such an errand? What would Mrs. Saxby and Emma think, if I went into the drawing-room and up to Mrs. Branston and said—"It's all right!" He might as well have told me to have added, "so give us a kiss, old girl." And this was my father!

CHAPTER XXI.

ALL THINGS FALL IN RIGHT AT LAST.

AS a proof that having found my father I didn't much like him at first, instead of obeying him I went into the garden, and sitting down in the arbour, began to wish that I could unfather myself. As I sat leaning forward, balancing my hat on the tips of my fore-fingers, with its crown downwards, and causing it to rock like a boat in a brisk gale, Emma came running up to me and said—"Oh, Jack, I've been looking for you everywhere. Your mother is dying to see you, and she's such a nice lady. Grandmother has told her everything, and we're to be married soon. Won't that be nice?"

I think I never saw her look more beautiful in my life, for though in half-mourning, her dress became her well, and there was but little about it to recall what had happened, for before she dressed for dinner she said—"I must try and look as charming as I can to-day, if only to please my old beau, for the Squire has been very kind to dear grandmother;" and the pretty flirt knew how to make herself admired, for she

had only to embower her sweet face in the auburn tendrils of her hair to witch every heart that came within reach of her.

She took hold of my hand and led me in, as I had many a time led her by the hand, and then my mother opened her arms, and drawing me to her, kissed me many times, thanking God for having restored me to her, and uttering such affectionate and tender words that I could not refrain from crying; and I caused her to smile, as I dried my eyes and said —"I am glad, dear mother, you didn't find me when I was a little baby, for Mrs. Pettinger used to say, when I once began there was no stopping me; so your ears have been saved from a great deal of squalling, and I hope these will be the last tears either of us will shed."

She kissed me again, and said—"Oh, my dear child, these are the happiest tears I ever shed. And I have found a sweet daughter, too, for Emma says she already loves me, and I was greatly attached to you both from the first time of meeting you, little thinking then how near and dear you would both become to me."

Emma hung fondling around her neck, and tumbling her own beautifully-arranged hair without ever thinking about it; then she burst into tears, as she said—"I have at last found two mothers that I can love with all my heart."

I felt myself getting "spoony" again, and that it was easier to bear my sturdy dad's warm shake of the hand, and his manly salutation—"I'm glad to see you, Jack," than such an outpouring of affectionate feeling from those dear, tender-hearted women.

One of the first things I did was to get Betty Blackman installed as housekeeper at my father's new residence; and when my mother named it to him, he not only consented, but said, in a hearty way—"Poor Old Grizzy seems quite lost in this new-fangled hotel. Can't we stow her away somewhere in the kitchens at Ivy House? There's one or two quite dark enough to suit her, I'm sure, and the poor old creature will neither want her bit of bread nor her drop of gin many more years. What say you, wife? Betty Blackman will give an eye to her." So old Grizzy was removed to our new property, and thoroughly darkening two or three panes in the back kitchen window, which was also overhung with ivy, it was made quite gloomy enough for her to see the firelight flickering on her pots and pans at noonday. And there she would sit, talking about old times to herself, while nursing her gin-bottle and soaking her crust of bread.

My father had never received a gentleman's education—though the Branstons were an old family—and considering how I had been "dragged" up, I was not

sorry for it, as I was allowed more of that old homely freedom which I had always indulged in, than could have been permitted had the strict etiquette been kept up which is necessary in a gentleman's establishment.

Though I was the heir to thousands, I was never ashamed of confessing that I had been a Jack-of-all-trades, and I believe in his heart my father liked me all the better, because I was never above owning the humble position I had once occupied. It was the same with Emma, though the lady sat as easily upon her as if she had been "to the manner born," and this was in a great measure owing to her good grandmother, whose affectionate eyes were scarcely ever off her, and who, when she observed any little breach made by her in the level monotonous wall of conventionality, would step forward with a "No, my dear child, allow me to show you," and so she was polished into excessive politeness by kindness.

But, oh, how everybody loved her! Even my surly father said to me one day—"I'm glad you've picked up a little wife, Jack, that it's a pleasure to look at and speak to." And that was great praise to come from him.

It appeared, from what I could understand, that the woman who was entrusted with the money to pay for my nursing got a footing somehow into the house during my mother's confinement on the strength of

her acquaintanceship with the monthly nurse. My mother was then young and inexperienced, and easily imposed upon, and this woman managed to win her entire confidence; and as the doctor had recommended a good healthy wet-nurse for me, on account of my mother's delicate state of health, her false friend undertook to find one. How she found the poor woman who was acquainted with Betty Blackman, and kept the money herself that was entrusted to her to pay for my nursing, was all made clear enough through the nurse's poverty, who was compelled to get rid of me in the best way she could, as she could not afford to keep me for nothing, having nothing herself to live on. But how this woman, on so slight an acquaintanceship, came to be entrusted with money enough to pay for my support for at least twelve months, can only be accounted for in one way, and that was the fear my mother was in at the time that something dreadful would be done to her husband for knocking the man down who came to look at the salvage in behalf of the Insurance Company after the fire, and, after that, laying violent hands on the officer who came to serve him with a summons for the first-named assault. I wonder now I was ever thought of at all, amid the muddle and confusion of the fire, and the passion my father was in when he knocked down the man from the Insurance Office, for saying that it was

his duty to inquire how the fire happened, as all fires were not accidental with people who had insured. I can fancy my father, with his long purse and passionate nature, would not give a man time to repeat a hint at such a charge as that a second time, without giving him the lie with his lips, and the blow with his fist to clench his angry denial. When I questioned my father about the matter, he said, "I thought it was bad enough to have double the amount of property I was insured for destroyed by fire and spoilt through water, without being insulted by a bit of a whipper-snapper fellow, who came swaggering in, without even saying, 'Good day,' or 'By your leave;' and who, when I asked him what he wanted there, impudently said, 'That's my business;' then, when I, in return, gave him back sauce for his goose, hinted that I might have set fire to the house on purpose to obtain the insurance money. Of course I had but one reply to that—a word and a blow; though I believe I added a kick, which sent him clean across the road, and into as pretty a puddle, caused by the plug being up, as ever a fellow was pickled in. I might have been a little more civil to the officer who served me with the summons, but I suppose he angered me somehow. So, as the house was in a muddle, and I had got into a scrape through my passion, and I believed you were well provided for, and I thought any place would be

better for your mother than one that was blackened through fire and drenched with water, why, I went to my solicitor, told him what I'd done, and gave him orders to fight it out in the best way he could, and not to spare the money, but to pay all they demanded for kicking one man out and knocking the other down. But the worst part of it related to yourself; for the woman your mother entrusted with the money to pay for your nursing was continually writing over to say what a fine little fellow you were growing, and that you ought to have this, that, and the other; and as your mother was allowed more money than she knew how to spend, I used to tell her not to bother me about you. Well, well! she was a bad woman, and has gone to give an account of her misdeeds to that Just Judge who shows no favour to the wicked. I am not sorry that she had been dead some time when we arrived in England, for it saved me the trouble of killing her; for I'm afraid, Jack, I should have been too impatient to have waited until the law had taken its course, but have broken every bone in her body, after discovering the treacherous part she had played. Altogether, your mother says, she had four or five hundred pounds of her. What made us remain longer abroad than we should have done, was the delicate state of your mother's health, which the warm South suited better than England."

I found, on further inquiry, that the solicitor he had entrusted with his property not only got the money from the Insurance Company, but also that the salvage realized a considerable sum, and that the insurance-man my father bundled out was not so bad as he seemed, but confessed that he had been put out that morning before he called on my father, had lost his temper, and was very uncivil, and that it was a warning to him ever after to keep a guard over his tongue.

But I found my mother much more communicative than my father, for she told me it was through her persuasion he had purchased Ivy House; that the fire which broke out about the time when I was born so annoyed him, that he said it would be a long time before he ever became a householder again; that they had visited every capital in Europe, besides having made three voyages to America; that my father had shares in a great many ships, also in railways; and knew so many people in every place they had been to, that he found a warm welcome everywhere; while she was sadly in want of rest, and had long since pined for a place that she could call home.

"Your father never knew what I suffered, my son, through the loss of you," she said to me, one day, when we were by ourselves, "and I never told him. But it was your loss that preyed upon my health; for

when we came over to England, and I discovered that the woman I had trusted you to was dead, and that you were nowhere to be even heard of, then I broke down, and but for removing me to a warmer climate you would never have known your mother. No husband could be kinder than your father always was to me; but one thing was wanting, my dear boy, and that was sympathy in your loss: that he could not give me, for he felt but little regret. 'You can't expect me to take on much, mother,' he would say, in his rough way, 'for a little mite of a thing that I just had one peep at, and which I couldn't have told from a doll which a child had put to bed; it was so covered with lace and one thing or another, that I thought the nurse was doing all she could to smother it to death.' But when he saw how much your loss affected my health, he set out in earnest to find you, and spent hundreds in the search one way or another." There was a pleasant smile on my dear mother's face as she added, "At one time we advertised, stating when you were born, and with whom entrusted to put out to nurse; and I think that, if we had not moved away from the family hotel at which we were staying, your father would have been driven mad. We had a score of applications in a day, at which as many children were produced. They were squalling on the doorsteps and all up the stair-

case, where the women who brought them were seated. I do believe parties went out collecting all the children they could pick up, in any quarter, that their parents or relations were too poor to keep or wanted to get rid of. Dirty, ragged, shoeless, capless, Scotch, Welsh, Irish, English; even one woman brought a black child, and said it was as fair as the day before it had the black fever. What with the children squalling, the women talking, half-a-score at once at times, and your father swearing, and the policeman and servants trying to get rid of them, made altogether such a confusion that we were compelled to move away on the third day; and for a week after or more, the landlord was obliged to station policemen at the door of the hotel."

"And all that time, dear mother," I said, "I was taken as much care of by kind-hearted Mrs. Pettinger as if I had been her own child, for I never knew what want was until after her death; and if we could but get old Pettinger's consent, I don't know anything would make me more happy than to place a beautiful monument over her grave." And my mother drew her head to me, big as I was, and kissed me, for my eyes were filled with tears; and she promised that it should be done, for that she had already mentioned it as her own wish to Mr. Pettinger, and he had given his permission.

When I went into the Borough to speak to him on the subject, I found the shop closed, and mutes standing at the door. The old pawnbroker was dead, and my good friend Mary a widow—who, I hear since, still carries on the business. I mentioned the monument to my friend Jimmy, and asked him for a design. Jimmy suggested a square pillar, with a child's head and shoulders peeping out at the top, and a female figure, which he called Pity, stooping as if lifting the child from out the pillar. "That," said Jimmy, "would be both original and becoming; the pillar would represent the pawnbroker's spout, the figure Mrs. Pettinger opening her charitable arms to receive you when you were popped. A pair of large wings, put to show that she was an angel of a woman, and the design would be perfect." Dear Emma suggested that there should be a representation of a window in the pillar, with an arm projecting from it, to show how I used to throw out her things when they were pledged by her mother.

A beautiful marble cross—emblem of our salvation—marks her resting-place and that of her husband.

There is such manœuvring to get possession of my dear little wife, between my mother and Mrs. Saxby, that my father has suggested to her grandmother to either sell or let her new property, and come back again to live with us at Ivy House; and the grand-

mother has consented, so that she may always be near Emma. As for myself, I find employment enough in receiving my father's dividends and looking after his banking account; for many thousands pass through his hands in the course of the year, and I have reason to believe that, before I undertook the management of his money matters, he lost several hundreds a year through his own negligence. He says to me sometimes, when I point out an error in his cash-accounts, "You have learnt the value of money, my boy, through having been a Jack-of-all-trades."

THE END.

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