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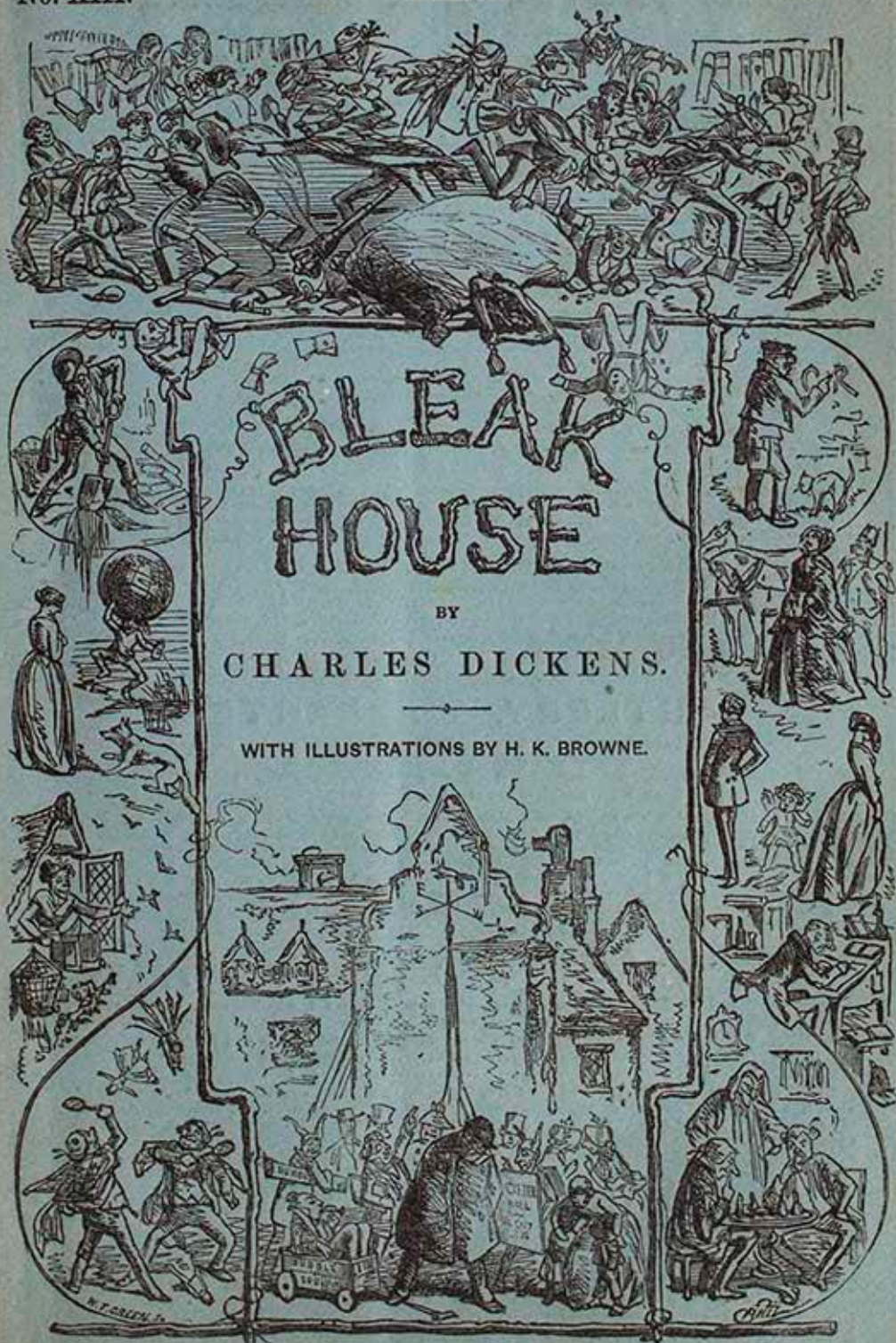
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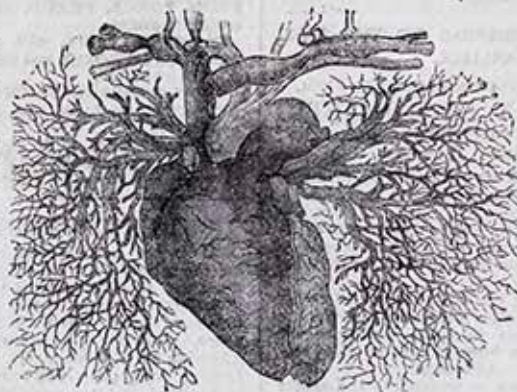
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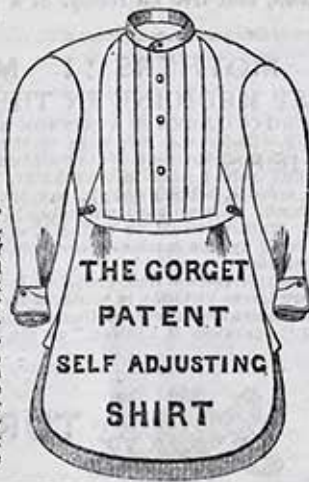
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To MESSRS. MORISON.

January 12th, 1853.

GENTLEMEN,—I feel great pleasure in making a public acknowledgment of the good I have received from your valuable medicines. I have been afflicted from childhood with severe attacks of bilious complaint, every five or six weeks; I have suffered dreadfully from spasms, scarce ever free from them little or much; I have suffered from bad legs for these last twenty years, I have dreaded the approach of winter for they would be then covered with scaly bleeding running sores from the knees to the ankles: I have been afflicted for these last ten years with rheumatism with repeated attacks of lumbago; I have been troubled from a child with great quantities of worms, and for these last five years I have suffered from a fistula, which gradually increasing, caused great pain and lowness of spirits, so I continued up to September, 1851; when my afflictions increased—I was seized with severe griping pains in the bowels, for which by taking large doses of medicines and drugs, would relieve me for a few days, then they would return more violent. Worms made their way through the wound of the fistula in abundance. Four months I endured dreadful pains in the chest, I felt as if I were bound round with an iron bar, I felt dreadful pains across the back and shoulders, my neck became stiff, my eyes bloodshot, their appeared a heavy weight on my head, with a hissing noise like a steam engine, my arms seemed filled with streams of boiling water. I had every advice within my reach, I had blisters and mustard plasters to my chest in abundance; I had Doctors and medicines of every description, but all to no use, I gave myself up for lost; the last doctor told me my liver was dreadfully affected, and if I did not take care I should have the yellow jaundice and that the wound proceeded from the liver; he did me no good, there was no hope but the hospital, but I dreaded the knife. A friend at last

persuaded me to try MORISON'S PILLS, but I was so prejudiced against them, I ridiculed the very idea, but try them I did, glad to catch at anything, and thank God I did; they made me very bad at first, but I persevered beginning with five of No. 2, increasing one each night up to nine. I found relief, they stopped the violence of the fistula, they relieved the pains in my chest, and brought from me frightful quantities of worms. I then bought some No. 1's of Mr. Lofts, No. 1, Park-place, Mile End-road, and took them alternately increasing the doses up to 12, and they were the cause of my passing five pieces of thick skinny substance the size of the palms of the hand. I commenced taking the pills January, 1852. In May the lumbago attacked me violently, in June my legs broke out worse; I increased the doses 16 each night, they soon got well, but there was a pain under the ribs of the right side—something appeared to be gathering there, it got bigger and heavier, till it appeared to be as big as a pint basin. I increased the doses to 18, it got worse; I increased the doses to 20, my whole back seemed inflamed in three hours after, I took 10 more, something gave a sudden snap, I was sick for the first time since the commencement, upwards and downwards came from me several pints of slime blood, and corruption, &c.—the pills had done, their work, and I was healed, since that time I have had a few flying pains. I have gradually decreased the doses down to the present time. I am restored to health and strength. I feel ten years younger, and I thank the Almighty God in putting within my reach your most valuable medicines; since I began to take your pills I have been exposed to all weathers, working in a market garden, and I have been laid up for illness but one day through the whole time.

I remain yours most gratefully,

GEORGE HOLDEN, aged 45,

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Longparish House, near Whitechurch, Hants, October 21st, 1846.

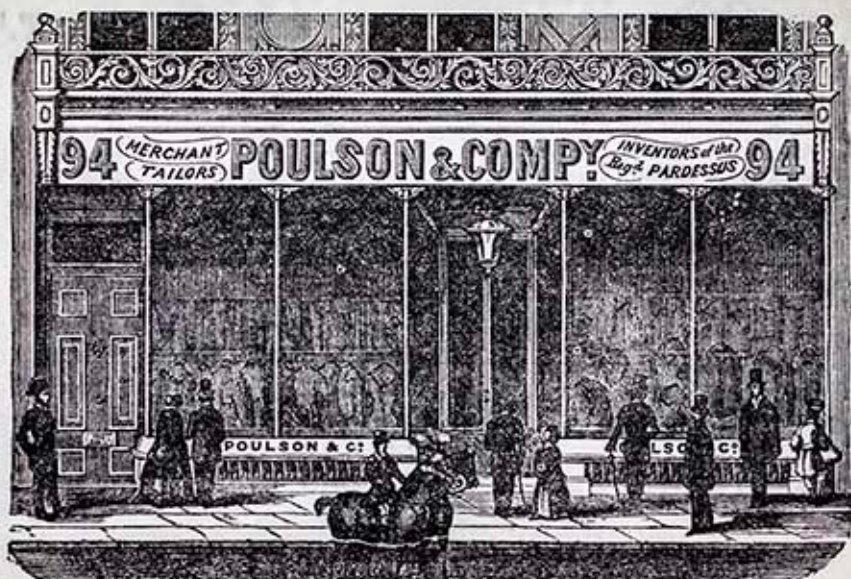
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I am, Sir, your humble Servant,

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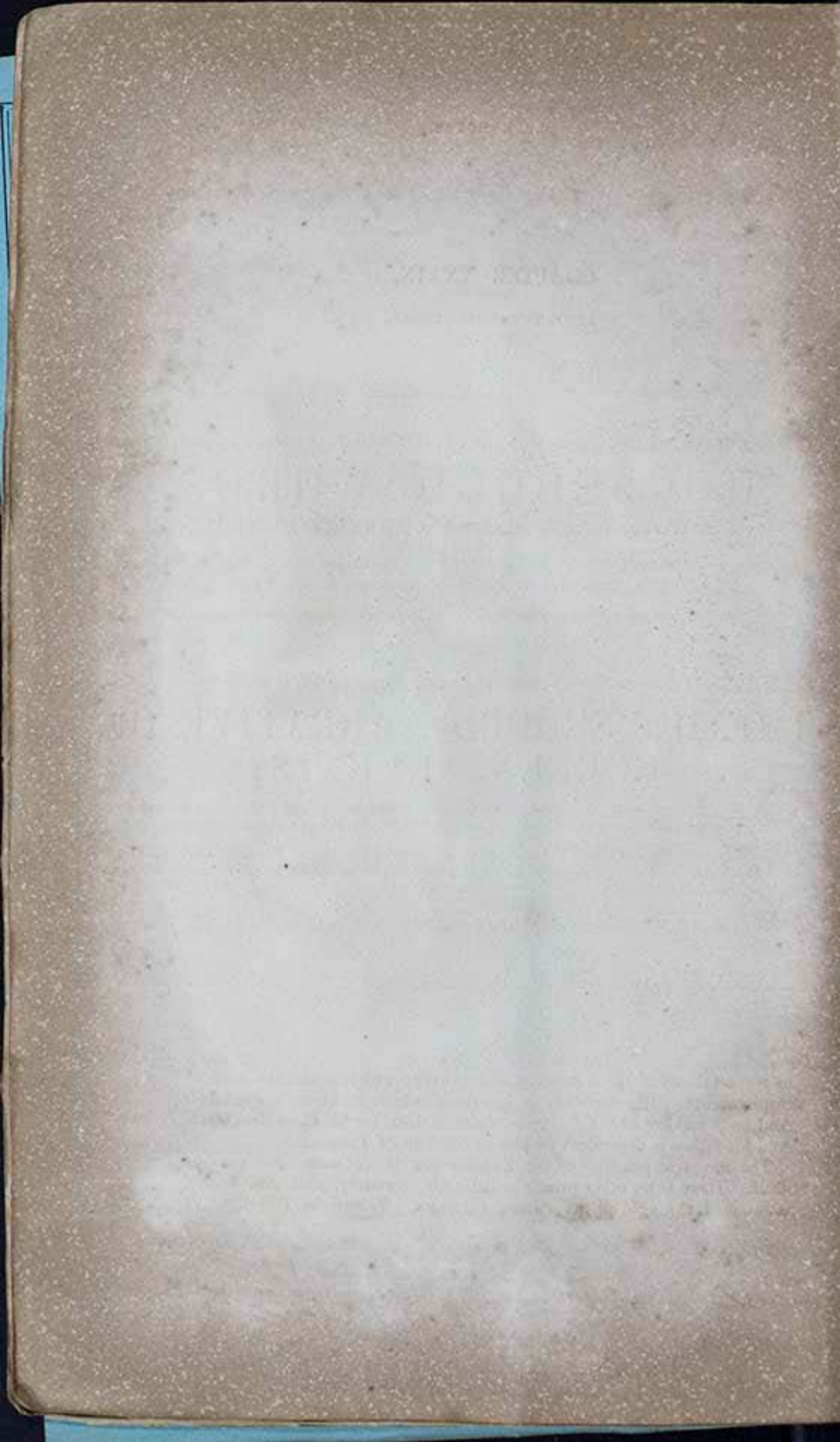
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CHAPTER XXXIX.

ATTORNEY AND CLIENT.

THE name of MR. VHOLES, preceded by the legend GROUND FLOOR, is inscribed upon a doorpost in Symond's Inn, Chancery Lane: a little, pale, wall-eyed, woe-begone inn, like a large dustbinn of two compartments and a sifter. It looks as if Symond were a sparing man in his day, and constructed his inn of old building materials, which took kindly to the dry rot and to dirt and all things decaying and dismal, and perpetuated Symond's memory with congenial shabbiness. Quartered in this dingy hatchment commemorative of Symond, are the legal bearings of Mr. Vholes.

Mr. Vholes's office, in disposition retiring and in situation retired, is squeezed up in a corner, and blinks at a dead wall. Three feet of knotty floored dark passage bring the client to Mr. Vholes's jet black door, in an angle profoundly dark on the brightest midsummer morning, and encumbered by a black bulk-head of cellarage staircase, against which belated civilians generally strike their brows. Mr. Vholes's chambers are on so small a scale, that one clerk can open the door without getting off his stool, while the other who elbows him at the same desk has equal facilities for poking the fire. A smell as of unwholesome sheep, blending with the smell of must and dust, is referable to the nightly (and often daily) consumption of mutton fat in candles, and to the fretting of parchment forms and skins in greasy drawers. The atmosphere is otherwise stale and close. The place was last painted or whitewashed beyond the memory of man, and the two chimneys smoke, and there is a loose outer surface of soot everywhere, and the dull cracked windows in their heavy frames have but one piece of character in them, which is a determination to be always dirty, and always shut, unless coerced. This accounts for the phenomenon of the weaker of the two usually having a bundle of firewood thrust between its jaws in hot weather.

Mr. Vholes is a very respectable man. He has not a large business, but he is a very respectable man. He is allowed by the greater attorneys who have made good fortunes, or are making them, to be a most respectable man. He never misses a chance in his practice; which is a mark of respectability. He never takes any pleasure; which is another mark of respectability. He is reserved and serious; which is another mark of respectability. His digestion is impaired, which is highly respectable. And he is making hay of the grass which is flesh, for his three daughters. And his father is dependent on him in the Vale of Taunton.

The one great principle of the English law is, to make business for itself. There is no other principle distinctly, certainly, and consistently maintained through all its narrow turnings. Viewed by this light it

becomes a coherent scheme, and not the monstrous maze the laity are apt to think it. Let them but once clearly perceive that its grand principle is to make business for itself at their expense, and surely they will cease to grumble.

But, not perceiving this quite plainly—only seeing it by halves in a confused way—the laity sometimes suffer in peace and pocket, with a bad grace, and *do* grumble very much. Then this respectability of Mr. Vholes is brought into powerful play against them. “Repeal this statute, my good sir?” says Mr. Kenge, to a smarting client, “repeal it, my dear sir? Never, with my consent. Alter this law, sir, and what will be the effect of your rash proceeding on a class of practitioners very worthily represented, allow me to say to you, by the opposite attorney in the case, Mr. Vholes? Sir, that class of practitioners would be swept from the face of the earth. Now you cannot afford—I would say, the social system cannot afford—to lose an order of men like Mr. Vholes. Diligent, persevering, steady, acute in business. My dear sir, I understand your present feelings against the existing state of things, which I grant to be a little hard in your case; but I can never raise my voice for the demolition of a class of men like Mr. Vholes.” The respectability of Mr. Vholes has even been cited with crushing effect before Parliamentary committees, as in the following blue minutes of a distinguished attorney’s evidence. “Question (number five hundred and seventeen thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine). If I understand you, these forms of practice indisputably occasion delay? Answer. Yes, some delay. Question. And great expense? Answer. Most assuredly they cannot be gone through for nothing. Question. And unspeakable vexation? Answer. I am not prepared to say that. They have never given *me* any vexation; quite the contrary. Question. But you think that their abolition would damage a class of practitioners? Answer. I have no doubt of it. Question. Can you instance any type of that class? Answer. Yes. I would unhesitatingly mention Mr. Vholes. He would be ruined. Question. Mr. Vholes is considered, in the profession, a respectable man? Answer”—which proved fatal to the enquiry for ten years—“Mr. Vholes is considered, in the profession, a *most* respectable man.”

So in familiar conversation, private authorities no less disinterested will remark that they don’t know what this age is coming to; that we are plunging down precipices; that now here is something else gone; that these changes are death to people like Vholes: a man of undoubted respectability, with a father in the Vale of Taunton, and three daughters at home. Take a few steps more in this direction, say they, and what is to become of Vholes’s father? Is he to perish? And of Vholes’s daughters? Are they to be shirt-makers, or governesses? As though, Mr. Vholes and his relations being minor cannibal chiefs, and it being proposed to abolish cannibalism, indignant champions were to put the case thus: Make man-eating unlawful, and you starve the Vholeses!

In a word, Mr. Vholes, with his three daughters and his father in the Vale of Taunton, is continually doing duty, like a piece of timber, to shore up some decayed foundation that has become a pit-fall and a nuisance. And with a great many people, in a great many instances, the question is never one of a change from Wrong to Right (which is quite an extraneous

consideration), but is always one of injury or advantage to that eminently respectable legion, Vholes.

The Chancellor is, within these ten minutes, "up" for the long vacation. Mr. Vholes, and his young client, and several blue bags hastily stuffed, out of all regularity of form, as the larger sort of serpents are in their first gorged state, have returned to the official den. Mr. Vholes, quiet and unmoved, as a man of so much respectability ought to be, takes off his close black gloves as if he were skinning his hands, lifts off his tight hat as if he were scalping himself, and sits down at his desk. The client throws his hat and gloves upon the ground—tosses them anywhere, without looking after them or caring where they go; flings himself into a chair, half sighing and half groaning; rests his aching head upon his hand, and looks the portrait of Young Despair.

"Again nothing done!" says Richard. "Nothing, nothing done!"

"Don't say nothing done, sir," returns the placid Vholes. "That is scarcely fair, sir, scarcely fair!"

"Why, what *is* done?" says Richard, turning gloomily upon him.

"That may not be the whole question," returns Vholes. "The question may branch off into what is doing, what is doing?"

"And what is doing?" asks the moody client.

Vholes, sitting with his arms on his desk, quietly bringing the tips of his five right fingers to meet the tips of his five left fingers, and quietly separating them again, and fixedly and slowly looking at his client, replies:

"A good deal is doing, sir. We have put our shoulders to the wheel, Mr. Carstone, and the wheel is going round."

"Yes, with Ixion on it. How am I to get through the next four or five accursed months?" exclaims the young man, rising from his chair and walking about the room.

"Mr. C," returns Vholes, following him close with his eyes wherever he goes, "your spirits are hasty, and I am sorry for it on your account. Excuse me if I recommend you not to chafe so much, not to be so impetuous, not to wear yourself out so. You should have more patience. You should sustain yourself better."

"I ought to imitate you, in fact, Mr. Vholes?" says Richard, sitting down again with an impatient laugh, and beating the Devil's Tattoo with his boot on the patternless carpet.

"Sir," returns Vholes, always looking at the client, as if he were making a lingering meal of him with his eyes as well as with his professional appetite. "Sir," returns Vholes, with his inward manner of speech and his bloodless quietude; "I should not have had the presumption to propose myself as a model, for your imitation or any man's. Let me but leave a good name to my three daughters, and that is enough for me; I am not a self-seeker. But, since you mention me so pointedly, I will acknowledge that I should like to impart to you a little of my—come sir, you are disposed to call it insensibility, and I am sure I have no objection—say insensibility—a little of my insensibility."

"Mr. Vholes," explains the client, somewhat abashed, "I had no intention to accuse you of insensibility."

"I think you had, sir, without knowing it," returns the equable

Vholes. "Very naturally. It is my duty to attend to your interests with a cool head, and I can quite understand that to your excited feelings I may appear, at such times as the present, insensible. My daughters may know me better; my aged father may know me better. But they have known me much longer than you have, and the confiding eye of affection is not the distrustful eye of business. Not that I complain, sir, of the eye of business being distrustful; quite the contrary. In attending to your interests, I wish to have all possible checks upon me; it is right that I should have them; I court inquiry. But your interests demand that I should be cool and methodical, Mr. Carstone; and I cannot be otherwise—no, sir, not even to please you."

Mr. Vholes, after glancing at the official cat who is patiently watching a mouse's hole, fixes his charmed gaze again on his young client, and proceeds in his buttoned-up half-audible voice, as if there were an unclean spirit in him that will neither come out nor speak out:

"What are you to do, sir, you inquire, during the vacation. I should hope you gentlemen of the army may find many means of amusing yourselves, if you give your minds to it. If you had asked me what I was to do, during the vacation, I could have answered you more readily. I am to attend to your interests. I am to be found here, day by day, attending to your interests. That is my duty, Mr. C; and term time or vacation makes no difference to me. If you wish to consult me as to your interests, you will find me here at all times alike. Other professional men go out of town. I don't. Not that I blame them for going; I merely say, I don't go. This desk is your rock, sir!"

Mr. Vholes gives it a rap, and it sounds as hollow as a coffin. Not to Richard, though. There is encouragement in the sound to him. Perhaps Mr. Vholes knows there is.

"I am perfectly aware, Mr. Vholes," says Richard, more familiarly and good-humouredly, "that you are the most reliable fellow in the world; and that to have to do with you, is to have to do with a man of business who is not to be hoodwinked. But put yourself in my case, dragging on this dislocated life, sinking deeper and deeper into difficulty every day, continually hoping and continually disappointed, conscious of change upon change for the worse in myself, and of no change for the better in anything else; and you will find it a dark-looking case sometimes, as I do."

"You know," says Mr. Vholes, "that I never give hopes, sir. I told you from the first, Mr. C, that I never give hopes. Particularly in a case like this, where the greater part of the costs comes out of the estate, I should not be considerate of my good name, if I gave hopes. It might seem as if costs were my object. Still, when you say there is no change for the better, I must, as a bare matter of fact, deny that."

"Aye?" returns Richard, brightening. "But how do you make it out?"

"Mr. Carstone, you are represented by——"

"You said just now—a rock."

"Yes, sir," says Mr. Vholes, gently shaking his head and rapping the hollow desk, with a sound as if ashes were falling on ashes, and dust on dust, "a rock. That's something. You are separately represented, and

no longer hidden and lost in the interests of others. *That's something.* The suit does not sleep; we wake it up, we air it, we walk it about. *That's something.* It's not all Jarndyce, in fact as well as in name. *That's something.* Nobody has it all his own way now, sir. And *that's something, surely."*

Richard, his face flushing suddenly, strikes the desk with his clenched hand.

"Mr. Vholes! If any man had told me, when I first went to John Jarndyce's house, that he was anything but the disinterested friend he seemed—that he was what he has gradually turned out to be—I could have found no words strong enough to repel the slander; I could not have defended him too ardently. So little did I know of the world! Whereas, now, I do declare to you that he becomes to me the embodiment of the suit; that, in place of its being an abstraction, it is John Jarndyce; that the more I suffer, the more indignant I am with him; that every new delay, and every new disappointment, is only a new injury from John Jarndyce's hand."

"No, no," says Vholes. "Don't say so. We ought to have patience, all of us. Besides, I never disparage, sir. I never disparage."

"Mr. Vholes," returns the angry client. "You know as well as I, that he would have strangled the suit if he could."

"He was not active in it," Mr. Vholes admits, with an appearance of reluctance. "He certainly was not active in it. But however, but however, he might have had amiable intentions. Who can read the heart, Mr. C!"

"You can," returns Richard.

"I, Mr. C?"

"Well enough to know what his intentions were. Are, or are not, our interests conflicting? Tell—me—that!" says Richard, accompanying his last three words with three raps on his rock of trust.

"Mr. C," returns Vholes, immovable in attitude and never winking his hungry eyes, "I should be wanting in my duty as your professional adviser, I should be departing from my fidelity to your interests, if I represented those interests as identical with the interests of Mr. Jarndyce. They are no such thing, sir. I never impute motives; I both have, and am, a father, and I never impute motives. But I must not shrink from a professional duty, even if it sows dissension in families. I understand you to be now consulting me professionally, as to your interests? You are so? I reply then, they are not identical with those of Mr. Jarndyce."

"Of course they are not!" cries Richard. "You found that out, long ago."

"Mr. C," returns Vholes, "I wish to say no more of any third party than is necessary. I wish to leave my good name unsullied, together with any little property of which I may become possessed through industry and perseverance, to my daughters Emma, Jane, and Caroline. I also desire to live in amity with my professional brethren. When Mr. Skimpole did me the honor, sir—I will not say the very high honor, for I never stoop to flattery—of bringing us together in this room, I mentioned to you that I could offer no opinion or advice as to your

interests, while those interests were intrusted to another member of the profession. And I spoke in such terms as I was bound to speak, of Kenge and Carboy's office, which stands high. You, sir, thought fit to withdraw your interests from that keeping nevertheless, and to offer them to me. You brought them with clean hands, sir, and I accepted them with clean hands. Those interests are now paramount in this office. My digestive functions, as you may have heard me mention, are not in a good state, and rest might improve them; but I shall not rest, sir, while I am your representative. Whenever you want me, you will find me here. Summon me anywhere, and I will come. During the long vacation, sir, I shall devote my leisure to studying your interests more and more closely, and to making arrangements for moving heaven and earth (including, of course, the Chancellor) after Michaelmas Term; and when I ultimately congratulate you, sir," says Mr. Vholes, with the severity of a determined man, "when I ultimately congratulate you, sir, with all my heart, on your accession to fortune—which, but that I never give hopes, I might say something further about—you will owe me nothing, beyond whatever little balance may be then outstanding of the costs as between solicitor and client, not included in the taxed costs allowed out of the estate. I pretend to no claim upon you, Mr. C, but for the zealous and active discharge—not the languid and routine discharge, sir: that much credit I stipulate for—of my professional duty. My duty prosperously ended, all between us is ended."

Vholes finally adds, by way of rider to this declaration of his principles, that as Mr. Carstone is about to rejoin his regiment, perhaps Mr. C will favor him with an order on his agent for twenty pounds on account.

"For there have been many little consultations and attendances of late, sir," observes Vholes, turning over the leaves of his Diary, "and these things mount up, and I don't profess to be a man of capital. When we first entered on our present relations, I stated to you openly—it is a principle of mine that there never can be too much openness between solicitor and client—that I was not a man of capital; and that if capital was your object, you had better leave your papers in Kenge's office. No, Mr. C, you will find none of the advantages, or disadvantages, of capital here, sir. This," Vholes gives the desk one hollow blow again, "is your rock; it pretends to be nothing more."

The client, with his dejection insensibly relieved, and his vague hopes rekindled, takes pen and ink and writes the draft: not without perplexed consideration and calculation of the date it may bear, implying scant effects in the agent's hands. All the while, Vholes, buttoned up in body and mind, looks at him attentively. All the while, Vholes's official cat watches the mouse's hole.

Lastly, the client, shaking hands, beseeches Mr. Vholes, for Heaven's sake and Earth's sake, to do his utmost, to "pull him through" the Court of Chancery. Mr. Vholes, who never gives hopes, lays his palm upon the client's shoulder, and answers with a smile, "Always here, sir. Personally, or by letter, you will always find me here, sir, with my shoulder to the wheel." Thus they part; and Vholes, left alone, employs himself in carrying sundry little matters out of his Diary into

his draft bill book, for the ultimate behoof of his three daughters. So might an industrious fox, or bear, make up his account of chickens or stray travellers with an eye to his cubs; not to disparage by that word the three raw-visaged, lank, and buttoned-up maidens, who dwell with the parent Vholes in an earthy cottage situated in a damp garden at Kennington.

Richard, emerging from the heavy shade of Symond's Inn into the sunshine of Chancery Lane—for there happens to be sunshine there to-day—walks thoughtfully on, and turns into Lincoln's Inn, and passes under the shadow of the Lincoln's Inn trees. On many such loungers have the speckled shadows of those trees often fallen; on the like bent head, the bitten nail, the lowering eye, the lingering step, the purposeless and dreamy air, the good consuming and consumed, the life turned sour. This lounge is not shabby yet, but that may come. Chancery, which knows no wisdom but in Precedent, is very rich in such Precedents; and why should one be different from ten thousand?

Yet the time is so short since his depreciation began, that as he saunters away, reluctant to leave the spot for some long months together, though he hates it, Richard himself may feel his own case as if it were a startling one. While his heart is heavy with corroding care, suspense, distrust, and doubt, it may have room for some sorrowful wonder when he recalls how different his first visit there, how different he, how different all the colors of his mind. But injustice breeds injustice; the fighting with shadows and being defeated by them, necessitates the setting up of substances to combat; from the impalpable suit which no man alive can understand, the time for that being long gone by, it has become a gloomy relief to turn to the palpable figure of the friend who would have saved him from this ruin, and make *him* his enemy. Richard has told Vholes the truth. Is he in a hardened or a softened mood, he still lays his injuries equally at that door; he was thwarted, in that quarter, of a set purpose, and that purpose could only originate in the one subject that is resolving his existence into itself; besides, it is a justification to him in his own eyes to have an embodied antagonist and oppressor.

Is Richard a monster in all this,—or would Chancery be found rich in such Precedents too, if they could be got for citation from the Recording Angel?

Two pairs of eyes not unused to such people look after him, as, biting his nails and brooding, he crosses the square, and is swallowed up by the shadow of the southern gateway. Mr. Guppy and Mr. Weevle are the possessors of those eyes, and they have been leaning in conversation against the low stone parapet under the trees. He passed close by them, seeing nothing but the ground.

"William," says Mr. Weevle, adjusting his whiskers; "there's combustion going on there! It's not a case of Spontaneous, but it's smouldering combustion it is."

"Ah!" says Mr. Guppy, "he wouldn't keep out of Jarndyce, and I suppose he's over head and ears in debt. I never knew much of him. He was as high as the Monument when he was on trial at our place. A good riddance to me, whether as clerk or client! Well, Tony, that as I was mentioning is what they're up to."

Mr. Guppy, refolding his arms, resettles himself against the parapet, as resuming a conversation of interest.

"They are still up to it, sir," says Mr. Guppy, "still taking stock, still examining papers, still going over the heaps and heaps of rubbish. At this rate they'll be at it these seven years."

"And Small is helping?"

"Small left us at a week's notice. Told Kenge, his grandfather's business was too much for the old gentleman, and he could better himself by undertaking it. There had been a coolness between myself and Small on account of his being so close. But he said you and I began it; and as he had me there—for we did—I put our acquaintance on the old footing. That's how I come to know what they're up to."

"You haven't looked in at all?"

"Tony," says Mr. Guppy, a little disconcerted, "to be unreserved with you, I don't greatly relish the house, except in your company, and therefore I have not; and therefore I proposed this little appointment for our fetching away your things. There goes the hour by the clock! Tony;" Mr. Guppy becomes mysteriously and tenderly eloquent; "it is necessary that I should impress upon your mind once more, that circumstances over which I have no control, have made a melancholy alteration in my most cherished plans, and in that unrequited image which I formerly mentioned to you as a friend. That image is shattered, and that idol is laid low. My only wish now, in connexion with the objects which I had an idea of carrying out in the court, with your aid as a friend, is to let 'em alone and bury 'em in oblivion. Do you think it possible, do you think it at all likely (I put it to you, Tony, as a friend), from your knowledge of that capricious and deep old character who fell a prey to the—Spontaneous element; do you, Tony, think it at all likely that, on second thoughts, he put those letters away anywhere, after you saw him alive, and that they were not destroyed that night?"

Mr. Weevle reflects for some time. Shakes his head. Decidedly thinks not.

"Tony," says Mr. Guppy, as they walk towards the court, "once again understand me, as a friend. Without entering into further explanations, I may repeat that the idol is down. I have no purpose to serve now, but burial in oblivion. To that I have pledged myself. I owe it to myself, and I owe it to the shattered image, as also to the circumstances over which I have no control. If you was to express to me by a gesture, by a wink, that you saw lying anywhere in your late lodgings, any papers that so much as looked like the papers in question, I would pitch them into the fire, sir, on my own responsibility."

Mr. Weevle nods. Mr. Guppy, much elevated in his own opinion by having delivered these observations, with an air in part forensic and in part romantic—this gentleman having a passion for conducting anything in the form of an examination, or delivering anything in the form of a summing up or a speech—accompanies his friend with dignity to the court.

Never, since it has been a court, has it had such a Fortunatus's purse of gossip as in the proceedings at the rag and bottle shop. Regularly, every morning at eight, is the elder Mr. Smallweed brought down to the

corner and carried in, accompanied by Mrs. Smallweed, Judy, and Bart; and regularly, all day, do they all remain there until nine at night, solaced by gipsy dinners, not abundant in quantity, from the cook's shop; rummaging and searching, digging, delving, and diving among the treasures of the late lamented. What those treasures are, they keep so secret, that the court is maddened. In its delirium it imagines guineas pouring out of teapots, crown-pieces overflowing punch-bowls, old chairs and mattresses stuffed with Bank of England notes. It possesses itself of the sixpenny history (with highly-coloured folding frontispiece) of Mr. Daniel Dancer and his sister, and also of Mr. Elwes, of Suffolk, and transfers all the facts from those authentic narratives to Mr. Krook. Twice when the dustman is called in to carry off a cart-load of old paper, ashes, and broken bottles, the whole court assembles and pries into the baskets as they come forth. Many times the two gentlemen who write with the ravenous little pens on the tissue paper are seen prowling in the neighbourhood—shy of each other, their late partnership being dissolved. The Sol skilfully carries a vein of the prevailing interest through the Harmonic nights. Little Swills, in what are professionally known as "patter" allusions to the subject, is received with loud applause; and the same vocalist "gags" in the regular business like a man inspired. Even Miss M. Melvilleson, in the revived Caledonian melody of "We're a' nodding," points the sentiment that "the dogs love broo" (whatever the nature of that refreshment may be) with such archness, and such a turn of the head towards next door, that she is immediately understood to mean, Mr. Smallweed loves to find money, and is nightly honored with a double encore. For all this, the court discovers nothing; and, as Mrs. Piper and Mrs. Perkins now communicate to the late lodger whose appearance is the signal for a general rally, it is in one continual ferment to discover everything, and more.

Mr. Weevle and Mr. Guppy, with every eye in the court's head upon them, knock at the closed door of the late lamented's house, in a high state of popularity. But, being contrary to the court's expectation admitted, they immediately become unpopular, and are considered to mean no good.

The shutters are more or less closed all over the house, and the ground-floor is sufficiently dark to require candles. Introduced into the back shop by Mr. Smallweed the younger, they, fresh from the sunlight, can at first see nothing save darkness and shadows; but they gradually discern the elder Mr. Smallweed, seated in his chair upon the brink of a well or grave of waste paper; the virtuous Judy groping therein, like a female sexton; and Mrs. Smallweed on the level ground in the vicinity, snowed up in a heap of paper fragments, print and manuscript, which would appear to be the accumulated compliments that have been sent flying at her in the course of the day. The whole party, Small included, are blackened with dust and dirt, and present a fiendish appearance not relieved by the general aspect of the room. There is more litter and lumber in it than of old, and it is dirtier if possible; likewise, it is ghostly with traces of its dead inhabitant, and even with his chalked writing on the wall.

On the entrance of visitors, Mr. Smallweed and Judy simultaneously fold their arms, and stop in their researches.

"Aha!" croaks the old gentleman. "How de do, gentlemen, how de do! Come to fetch your property, Mr. Weevle? That's well, that's well. Ha! ha! We should have been forced to sell you up, sir, to pay your warehouse room, if you had left it here much longer. You feel quite at home here, again, I daresay? Glad to see you, glad to see you!"

Mr. Weevle, thanking him, casts an eye about. Mr. Guppy's eye follows Mr. Weevle's eye. Mr. Weevle's eye comes back without any new intelligence in it. Mr. Guppy's eye comes back, and meets Mr. Smallweed's eye. That engaging old gentleman is still murmuring, like some wound-up instrument running down, "How de do, sir—how de—how—." And then having run down, he lapses into grinning silence, as Mr. Guppy starts at seeing Mr. Tulkinghorn standing in the darkness opposite, with his hands behind him.

"Gentleman so kind as to act as my solicitor," says Grandfather Smallweed. "I am not the sort of client for a gentleman of such note; but he is so good!"

Mr. Guppy slightly nudging his friend to take another look, makes a shuffling bow to Mr. Tulkinghorn, who returns it with an easy nod. Mr. Tulkinghorn is looking on as if he had nothing else to do, and were rather amused by the novelty.

"A good deal of property here, sir, I should say," Mr. Guppy observes to Mr. Smallweed.

"Principally rags and rubbish, my dear friend! rags and rubbish! Me and Bart, and my granddaughter Judy, are endeavouring to make out an inventory of what's worth anything to sell. But we haven't come to much as yet, we—haven't—come—to—hah!"

Mr. Smallweed has run down again; while Mr. Weevle's eye, attended by Mr. Guppy's eye, has again gone round the room and come back.

"Well, sir," says Mr. Weevle. "We won't intrude any longer, if you'll allow us to go up-stairs."

"Anywhere, my dear sir, anywhere! You're at home. Make yourself so, pray!"

As they go up-stairs, Mr. Guppy lifts his eyebrows inquiringly, and looks at Tony. Tony shakes his head. They find the old room very dull and dismal, with the ashes of the fire that was burning on that memorable night yet in the discolored grate. They have a great disinclination to touch any object, and carefully blow the dust from it first. Nor are they desirous to prolong their visit: packing the few moveables with all possible speed, and never speaking above a whisper.

"Look here," says Tony, recoiling. "Here's that horrible cat coming in!"

Mr. Guppy retreats behind a chair. "Small told me of her. She went leaping, and bounding and tearing about, that night, like a Dragon, and got out on the house-top, and roamed about up there for a fortnight, then came tumbling down the chimney very thin. Did you ever see such a brute? Looks as if she knew all about it, don't she? Almost looks as if she was Krook. Shoo-hoo! Get out, you goblin!"

Lady Jane in the doorway, with her tiger-snarl from ear to ear, and her club of a tail, shows no intention of obeying; but Mr. Tulkinghorn stumbling over her, she spits at his rusty legs, and swearing wrathfully, takes her arched back upstairs. Possibly to roam the housetops again, and return by the chimney.

"Mr. Guppy," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, "could I have a word with you?"

Mr. Guppy is engaged in collecting the Galaxy Gallery of British Beauty from the wall, and depositing those works of art in their old ignoble band-box. "Sir," he returns, reddening, "I wish to act with courtesy towards every member of the profession, and especially, I am sure, towards a member of it so well known as yourself—I will truly add, sir, so distinguished as yourself. Still, Mr. Tulkinghorn, sir, I must stipulate that if you have any word with me, that word is spoken in the presence of my friend."

"Oh, indeed?" says Mr. Tulkinghorn.

"Yes, sir. My reasons are not of a personal nature at all; but they are amply sufficient for myself."

"No doubt, no doubt." Mr. Tulkinghorn is as imperturbable as the hearthstone to which he has quietly walked. "The matter is not of that consequence that I need put you to the trouble of making any conditions, Mr. Guppy." He pauses here to smile, and his smile is as dull and rusty as his pantaloons. "You are to be congratulated, Mr. Guppy; you are a fortunate young man, sir."

"Pretty well so, Mr. Tulkinghorn; I don't complain."

"Complain? High friends, free admission to great houses, and access to elegant ladies! Why, Mr. Guppy, there are people in London who would give their ears to be you."

Mr. Guppy, looking as if he would give his own reddening and still reddening ears to be one of those people at present instead of himself, replies, "Sir, if I attend to my profession, and do what is right by Kenge and Carboy, my friends and acquaintances are of no consequence to them, nor to any member of the profession, not excepting Mr. Tulkinghorn of the Fields. I am not under any obligation to explain myself further; and with all respect for you, sir, and without offence—I repeat, without offence——"

"Oh, certainly!"

"—I don't intend to do it."

"Quite so," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, with a calm nod. "Very good: I see by these portraits that you take a strong interest in the fashionable great, sir?"

He addresses this to the astounded Tony, who admits the soft impeachment.

"A virtue in which few Englishmen are deficient," observes Mr. Tulkinghorn. He has been standing on the hearthstone, with his back to the smoked chimney-piece, and now turns round, with his glasses to his eyes. "Who is this? 'Lady Dedlock.' Ha! A very good likeness in its way, but it wants force of character. Good day to you, gentlemen; good day!"

When he has walked out, Mr. Guppy, in a great perspiration, nerves

himself to the hasty completion of the taking down of the Galaxy Gallery, concluding with Lady Dedlock.

"Tony," he says hurriedly to his astonished companion, "let us be quick in putting the things together, and in getting out of this place. It were in vain longer to conceal from you, Tony, that between myself and one of the members of a swanlike aristocracy whom I now hold in my hand, there has been undivulged communication and association. The time might have been, when I might have revealed it to you. It never will be more. It is due alike to the oath I have taken, alike to the shattered idol, and alike to circumstances over which I have no control, that the ole should be buried in oblivion. I charge you as a friend, by the interest you have ever testified in the fashionable intelligence, and by any little advances with which I may have been able to accommodate you, so to bury it without a word of inquiry!"

This charge Mr. Guppy delivers in a state little short of forensic lunacy, while his friend shows a dazed mind in his whole head of hair, and even in his cultivated whiskers.

CHAPTER XL.

NATIONAL AND DOMESTIC.

ENGLAND has been in a dreadful state for some weeks. Lord Coodle would go out, Sir Thomas Doodle wouldn't come in, and there being nobody in Great Britain (to speak of) except Coodle and Doodle, there has been no Government. It is a mercy that the hostile meeting between those two great men, which at one time seemed inevitable, did not come off; because if both pistols had taken effect, and Coodle and Doodle had killed each other, it is to be presumed that England must have waited to be governed until young Coodle and young Doodle, now in frocks and long stockings, were grown up. This stupendous national calamity, however, was averted by Lord Coodle's making the timely discovery, that if in the heat of debate he had said that he scorned and despised the whole ignoble career of Sir Thomas Doodle, he had merely meant to say that party differences should never induce him to withhold from it the tribute of his warmest admiration; while it as opportunely turned out, on the other hand, that Sir Thomas Doodle had in his own bosom expressly booked Lord Coodle to go down to posterity as the mirror of virtue and honor. Still England has been some weeks in the dismal strait of having no pilot (as was well observed by Sir Leicester Dedlock) to weather the storm; and the marvellous part of the matter is, that England has not appeared to care very much about it, but has gone on eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage, as the old world did in the days before the flood. But Coodle knew the danger, and Doodle knew the danger, and all their followers and hangers-on had the clearest possible perception of the danger. At last Sir Thomas Doodle has not

only condescended to come in, but has done it handsomely, bringing in with him all his nephews, all his male cousins, and all his brothers-in-law. So there is hope for the old ship yet.

Doodle has found that he must throw himself upon the country—chiefly in the form of sovereigns and beer. In this metamorphosed state he is available in a good many places simultaneously, and can throw himself upon a considerable portion of the country at one time. Britannia being much occupied in pocketing Doodle in the form of sovereigns, and swallowing Doodle in the form of beer, and in swearing herself black in the face that she does neither—plainly to the advancement of her glory and morality—the London season comes to a sudden end, through all the Doodleites and Coodleites dispersing to assist Britannia in those religious exercises.

Hence Mrs. Rouncewell housekeeper at Chesney Wold foresees, though no instructions have yet come down, that the family may shortly be expected, together with a pretty large accession of cousins and others who can in any way assist the great Constitutional work. And hence the stately old dame, taking Time by the forelock, leads him up and down the staircases, and along the galleries and passages and through the rooms, to witness before he grows any older that everything is ready; that floors are rubbed bright, carpets spread, curtains shaken out, beds puffed and patted, still-room and kitchen cleared for action, all things prepared as beseems the Dedlock dignity.

This present summer evening, as the sun goes down, the preparations are complete. Dreary and solemn the old house looks, with so many appliances of habitation, and with no inhabitants except the pictured forms upon the walls. So did these come and go, a Dedlock in possession might have ruminated passing along; so did they see this gallery hushed and quiet, as I see it now; so think, as I think, of the gap that they would make in this domain when they were gone; so find it, as I find it, difficult to believe that it could be, without them; so pass from my world, as I pass from theirs, now closing the reverberating door; so leave no blank to miss them, and so die.

Through some of the fiery windows, beautiful from without, and set, at this sunset hour, not in dull grey stone but in a glorious house of gold, the light excluded at other windows pours in, rich, lavish, overflowing like the summer plenty in the land. Then do the frozen Dedlocks thaw. Strange movements come upon their features, as the shadows of leaves play there. A dense Justice in a corner is beguiled into a wink. A staring Baronet, with a truncheon, gets a dimple in his chin. Down into the bosom of a stony shepherdess there steals a fleck of light and warmth, that would have done it good, a hundred years ago. One ancestress of Volumnia, in high-heeled shoes, very like her—casting the shadow of that virgin event before her full two centuries—shoots out into a halo and becomes a saint. A maid of honor of the court of Charles the Second, with large round eyes (and other charms to correspond), seems to bathe in glowing water, and it ripples as it glows.

But the fire of the sun is dying. Even now the floor is dusky, and shadow slowly mounts the walls, bringing the Dedlocks down like age and death. And now, upon my lady's picture over the great chimney-

piece, a weird shade falls from some old tree, that turns it pale, and flutters it, and looks as if a great arm held a veil or hood, watching an opportunity to draw it over her. Higher and darker rises shadow on the wall—now a red gloom on the ceiling—now the fire is out.

All that prospect, which from the terrace looked so near, has moved solemnly away, and changed—not the first nor the last of beautiful things that look so near and will so change—into a distant phantom. Light mists arise, and the dew falls, and all the sweet scents in the garden are heavy in the air. Now, the woods settle into great masses as if they were each one profound tree. And now the moon rises, to separate them, and to glimmer here and there in horizontal lines behind their stems, and to make the avenue a pavement of light among high cathedral arches fantastically broken.

Now, the moon is high; and the great house, needing habitation more than ever, is like a body without life. Now, it is even awful, stealing through it, to think of the live people who have slept in the solitary bed-rooms: to say nothing of the dead. Now is the time for shadow, when every corner is a cavern, and every downward step a pit, when the stained glass is reflected in pale and faded hues upon the floors, when anything and everything can be made of the heavy staircase beams excepting their own proper shapes, when the armour has dull lights upon it not easily to be distinguished from stealthy movement, and when barred helmets are frightfully suggestive of heads inside. But, of all the shadows in Chesney Wold, the shadow in the long drawing-room upon my lady's picture is the first to come, the last to be disturbed. At this hour and by this light it changes into threatening hands raised up, and menacing the handsome face with every breath that stirs.

"She is not well, ma'am," says a groom in Mrs. Rouncewell's audience-chamber.

"My Lady not well? What's the matter?"

"Why, my Lady has been but poorly, ma'am, since she was last here—I don't mean with the family, ma'am, but when she was here as a bird of passage-like. My Lady has not been out much, for her, and has kept her room a good deal."

"Chesney Wold, Thomas," rejoins the housekeeper, with proud complacency, "will set my Lady up! There is no finer air, and no healthier soil, in the world!"

Thomas may have his own personal opinions on this subject; probably hints them, in his manner of smoothing his sleek head from the nape of his neck to his temples; but he forbears to express them further, and retires to the servants' hall to regale on cold meat-pie and ale.

This groom is the pilot-fish before the nobler shark. Next evening, down come Sir Leicester and my Lady with their largest retinue, and down come the cousins and others from all the points in the compass. Thenceforth for some weeks, backward and forward rush mysterious men with no names, who fly about all those particular parts of the country on which Doodle is at present throwing himself in an auriferous and

malty shower, but who are merely persons of a restless disposition and never do anything anywhere.

On these national occasions, Sir Leicester finds the cousins useful. A better man than the Honorable Bob Stables to meet the Hunt at dinner, there could not possibly be. Better got up gentlemen than the other cousins, to ride over to polling-booths and hustings here and there, and show themselves on the side of England, it would be hard to find. Volumnia is a little dim, but she is of the true descent; and there are many who appreciate her sprightly conversation, her French conundrums so old as to have become in the cycles of time almost new again, the honor of taking the fair Dedlock in to dinner, or even the privilege of her hand in the dance. On these national occasions, dancing may be a patriotic service; and Volumnia is constantly seen hopping about, for the good of an ungrateful and unpensioning country.

My Lady takes no great pains to entertain the numerous guests, and, being still unwell, rarely appears until late in the day. But, at all the dismal dinners, leaden lunches, basilisk balls, and other melancholy pageants, her mere appearance is a relief. As to Sir Leicester, he conceives it utterly impossible that any thing can be wanting, in any direction, by any one who has the good fortune to be received under that roof; and in a state of sublime satisfaction, he moves among the company, a magnificent refrigerator.

Daily the cousins trot through dust, and canter over roadside turf, away to hustings and polling-booths (with leather gloves and hunting-whips for the counties, and kid gloves and riding-canes for the boroughs), and daily bring back reports on which Sir Leicester holds forth after dinner. Daily the restless men who have no occupation in life, present the appearance of being rather busy. Daily, Volumnia has a little cousinly talk with Sir Leicester on the state of the nation, from which Sir Leicester is disposed to conclude that Volumnia is a more reflecting woman than he had thought her.

"How are we getting on?" says Miss Volumnia, clasping her hands. "Are we safe?"

The mighty business is nearly over by this time, and Doodle will throw himself off the country in a few days more. Sir Leicester has just appeared in the long drawing-room after dinner; a bright particular star, surrounded by clouds of cousins.

"Volumnia," replies Sir Leicester, who has a list in his hand, "we are doing tolerably."

"Only tolerably!"

Although it is summer weather, Sir Leicester always has his own particular fire in the evening. He takes his usual screened seat near it, and repeats, with much firmness and a little displeasure, as who should say, I am not a common man, and when I say tolerably, it must not be understood as a common expression; "Volumnia, we are doing tolerably."

"At least there is no opposition to *you*," Volumnia asserts with confidence.

"No, Volumnia. This distracted country has lost its senses in many respects, I grieve to say, but——"

"It is not so mad as that. I am glad to hear it!"

Volumnia's finishing the sentence restores her to favor. Sir Leicester, with a gracious inclination of his head, seems to say to himself, "A sensible woman this, on the whole, though occasionally precipitate."

In fact, as to this question of opposition, the fair Dedlock's observation was superfluous: Sir Leicester, on these occasions, always delivering in his own candidateship, as a kind of handsome wholesale order to be promptly executed. Two other little seats that belong to him, he treats as retail orders of less importance; merely sending down the men, and signifying to the tradespeople, "You will have the goodness to make these materials into two members of parliament, and to send them home when done."

"I regret to say, Volumnia, that in many places the people have shown a bad spirit, and that this opposition to the Government has been of a most determined and most implacable description."

"W-r-etches!" says Volumnia.

"Even," proceeds Sir Leicester, glancing at the circumjacent cousins on sofas and ottomans, "even in many—in fact, in most—of those places in which the Government has carried it against a faction——"

(Note, by the way, that the Coodleites are always a faction with the Doodleites, and that the Doodleites occupy exactly the same position towards the Coodleites.)

"—Even in them I am shocked, for the credit of Englishmen, to be constrained to inform you that the Party has not triumphed without being put to an enormous expense. Hundreds," says Sir Leicester, eyeing the cousins with increasing dignity and swelling indignation, "hundreds of thousands of pounds!"

If Volumnia have a fault, it is the fault of being a trifle too innocent; seeing that the innocence which would go extremely well with a sash and tucker, is a little out of keeping with the rouge and pearl necklace. Howbeit, impelled by innocence, she asks,

"What for?"

"Volumnia," remonstrates Sir Leicester, with his utmost severity. "Volumnia!"

"No, no, I don't mean what for," cries Volumnia, with her favourite little scream. "How stupid I am! I mean what a pity!"

"I am glad," returns Sir Leicester, "that you do mean what a pity."

Volumnia hastens to express her opinion that the shocking people ought to be tried as traitors, and made to support the Party.

"I am glad, Volumnia," repeats Sir Leicester, unmindful of these mollifying sentiments, "that you do mean what a pity. It is disgraceful to the electors. But as you, though inadvertently, and without intending so unreasonable a question, asked me 'what for?' let me reply to you. For necessary expenses. And I trust to your good sense, Volumnia, not to pursue the subject, here or elsewhere."

Sir Leicester feels it incumbent on him to observe a crushing aspect towards Volumnia, because it is whispered abroad that these necessary expenses will, in some two hundred election petitions, be unpleasantly connected with the word bribery; and because some graceless jokers have

consequently suggested the omission from the Church service of the ordinary supplication in behalf of the High Court of Parliament, and have recommended instead that the prayers of the congregation be requested for six hundred and fifty-eight gentlemen in a very unhealthy state.

"I suppose," observes Volumnia, having taken a little time to recover her spirits after her late castigation, "I suppose Mr. Tulkinghorn has been worked to death."

"I don't know," says Sir Leicester, opening his eyes, "why Mr. Tulkinghorn should be worked to death. I don't know what Mr. Tulkinghorn's engagements may be. He is not a candidate."

Volumnia had thought he might have been employed. Sir Leicester could desire to know by whom, and what for? Volumnia, abashed again, suggests, by Somebody—to advise and make arrangements. Sir Leicester is not aware that any client of Mr. Tulkinghorn has been in need of his assistance.

Lady Dedlock, seated at an open window with her arm upon its cushioned ledge and looking out at the evening shadows falling on the park, has seemed to attend since the lawyer's name was mentioned.

A languid cousin with a moustache, in a state of extreme debility, now observes from his couch, that—man told him ya's'dy that Tulkinghorn had gone down to t'that iron place t'give legal 'pinion 'bout something; and that, contest being over t'day, 'twould be highly jawlly thing if Tulkinghorn should pear with news that Coodle man was floored.

Mercury in attendance with coffee informs Sir Leicester, hereupon, that Mr. Tulkinghorn has arrived, and is taking dinner. My Lady turns her head inward for the moment, then looks out again as before.

Volumnia is charmed to hear that her Delight is come. He is so original, such a stolid creature, such an immense being for knowing all sorts of things and never telling them! Volumnia is persuaded that he must be a Freemason. Is sure he is at the head of a lodge, and wears short aprons, and is made a perfect Idol of, with candlesticks and trowels. These lively remarks the fair Dedlock delivers in her youthful manner, while making a purse.

"He has not been here once," she adds, "since I came. I really had some thoughts of breaking my heart for the inconstant creature. I had almost made up my mind that he was dead."

It may be the gathering gloom of evening, or it may be the darker gloom within herself, but a shade is on my Lady's face, as if she thought "I would he were!"

"Mr. Tulkinghorn," says Sir Leicester, "is always welcome here, and always discreet wheresoever he is. A very valuable person, and deservedly respected."

The debilitated cousin supposes he is "'normously rich fler."

"He has a stake in the country," says Sir Leicester, "I have no doubt. He is, of course, handsomely paid, and he associates almost on a footing of equality with the highest society."

Every body starts. For a gun is fired close by.

"Good gracious, what's that!" cries Volumnia with her little withered scream.

"A rat," says my Lady. "And they have shot him."

Enter Mr. Tulkinghorn, followed by Mercuries with lamps and candles.

"No, no," says Sir Leicester, "I think not. My Lady, do you object to the twilight?"

On the contrary, my Lady prefers it.

"Volumnia?"

O! nothing is so delicious to Volumnia as to sit and talk in the dark!

"Then take them away," says Sir Leicester. "Tulkinghorn, I beg your pardon. How do you do?"

Mr. Tulkinghorn with his usual leisurely ease advances, renders his passing homage to my Lady, shakes Sir Leicester's hand, and subsides into the chair proper to him when he has anything to communicate, on the opposite side of the Baronet's little newspaper-table. Sir Leicester is apprehensive that my Lady, not being very well, will take cold at that open window. My Lady is obliged to him, but would rather sit there, for the air. Sir Leicester rises, adjusts her scarf about her, and returns to his seat. Mr. Tulkinghorn in the meanwhile takes a pinch of snuff.

"Now," says Sir Leicester. "How has that contest gone?"

"Oh, hollow from the beginning. Not a chance. They have brought in both their people. You are beaten out of all reason. Three to one."

It is a part of Mr. Tulkinghorn's policy and mastery to have no political opinions; indeed, *no* opinions. Therefore he says "you" are beaten, and not "we."

Sir Leicester is majestically wroth. Volumnia never heard of such a thing. The debilitated cousin holds that it's—sort of thing that's sure tapn slong's votes—giv'n—Mob.

"It's the place you know," Mr. Tulkinghorn goes on to say in the fast increasing darkness, when there is silence again, "where they wanted to put up Mrs. Rouncewell's son."

"A proposal which, as you correctly informed me at the time, he had the becoming taste and perception," observes Sir Leicester, "to decline. I cannot say that I by any means approve of the sentiments expressed by Mr. Rouncewell, when he was here for some half-hour, in this room; but there was a sense of propriety in his decision which I am glad to acknowledge."

"Ha!" says Mr. Tulkinghorn. "It did not prevent him from being very active in this election, though."

Sir Leicester is distinctly heard to gasp before speaking. "Did I understand you? Did you say that Mr. Rouncewell had been very active in this election?"

"Uncommonly active."

"Against—"

"O dear yes, against you. He is a very good speaker. Plain and emphatic. He made a damaging effect, and has great influence. In the business-part of the proceedings he carried all before him."

It is evident to the whole company, though nobody can see him, that Sir Leicester is staring majestically.

"And he was much assisted," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, as a wind-up, "by his son."

"By his son, sir?" repeats Sir Leicester, with awful politeness.

"By his son."

"The son who wished to marry the young woman in my Lady's service?"

"That son. He has but one."

"Then upon my honor," says Sir Leicester, after a terrific pause, during which he has been heard to snort and felt to stare; "then upon my honor, upon my life, upon my reputation and principles, the floodgates of society are burst open, and the waters have—a—obliterated the landmarks of the framework of the cohesion by which things are held together!"

General burst of cousinly indignation. Volumnia thinks it is really high time, you know, for somebody in power to step in and do something strong. Debilitated cousin thinks—Country's going—DAYVLE—steep-chase pace.

"I beg," says Sir Leicester, in a breathless condition, "that we may not comment further on this circumstance. Comment is superfluous. My Lady, let me suggest in reference to that young woman——"

"I have no intention," observes my Lady from her window, in a low but decided tone, "of parting with her."

"That was not my meaning," returns Sir Leicester. "I am glad to hear you say so. I would suggest that as you think her worthy of your patronage, you should exert your influence to keep her from these dangerous hands. You might show her what violence would be done, in such association, to her duties and principles; and you might preserve her for a better fate. You might point out to her that she probably would, in good time, find a husband at Chesney Wold by whom she would not be—" Sir Leicester adds, after a moment's consideration, "dragged from the altars of her forefathers."

These remarks he offers with his unvarying politeness and deference when he addresses himself to his wife. She merely moves her head in reply. The moon is rising; and where she sits there is a little stream of cold pale light, in which her head is seen.

"It is worthy of remark," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, "however, that these people are, in their way, very proud."

"Proud?" Sir Leicester doubts his hearing.

"I should not be surprised, if they all voluntarily abandoned the girl—yes, lover and all—instead of her abandoning them, supposing she remained at Chesney Wold under such circumstances."

"Well!" says Sir Leicester, tremulously, "Well! You should know, Mr. Tulkinghorn. You have been among them."

"Really, Sir Leicester," returns the lawyer, "I state the fact. Why, I could tell you a story—with Lady Dedlock's permission."

Her head concedes it, and Volumnia is enchanted. A story! O he is going to tell something at last! A ghost in it, Volumnia hopes?

"No. Real flesh and blood." Mr. Tulkinghorn stops for an instant, and repeats, with some little emphasis grafted upon his usual monotony, "Real flesh and blood, Miss Dedlock. Sir Leicester, these particulars have only lately become known to me. They are very brief. They exemplify what I have said. I suppress names for the present. Lady Dedlock will not think me ill-bred, I hope?"

By the light of the fire, which is low, he can be seen looking towards

the moonlight. By the light of the moon Lady Dedlock can be seen, perfectly still.

"A townsman of this Mr. Rouncewell, a man in exactly parallel circumstances as I am told, had the good fortune to have a daughter who attracted the notice of a great lady. I speak of really a great lady; not merely great to him, but married to a gentleman of your condition, Sir Leicester."

Sir Leicester condescendingly says, "Yes, Mr. Tulkinghorn;" implying that then she must have appeared of very considerable moral dimensions indeed, in the eyes of an ironmaster.

"The lady was wealthy and beautiful, and had a liking for the girl, and treated her with great kindness, and kept her always near her. Now this lady preserved a secret under all her greatness, which she had preserved for many years. In fact, she had in early life been engaged to marry a young rake—he was a captain in the army—nothing connected with whom came to any good. She never did marry him, but she gave birth to a child of which he was the father."

By the light of the fire he can be seen looking towards the moonlight. By the moonlight, Lady Dedlock can be seen in profile, perfectly still.

"The captain in the army being dead, she believed herself safe; but a train of circumstances with which I need not trouble you, led to discovery. As I received the story, they began in an imprudence on her own part one day, when she was taken by surprise; which shows how difficult it is for the firmest of us (she was very firm) to be always guarded. There was great domestic trouble and amazement, you may suppose; I leave you to imagine, Sir Leicester, the husband's grief. But that is not the present point. When Mr. Rouncewell's townsman heard of the disclosure, he no more allowed the girl to be patronised and honored, than he would have suffered her to be trodden underfoot before his eyes. Such was his pride, that he indignantly took her away, as if from reproach and disgrace. He had no sense of the honor done him and his daughter by the lady's condescension; not the least. He resented the girl's position, as if the lady had been the commonest of commoners. That is the story. I hope Lady Dedlock will excuse its painful nature."

There are various opinions on the merits, more or less conflicting with Volumnia's. That fair young creature cannot believe there ever was any such lady, and rejects the whole history on the threshold. The majority incline to the debilitated cousin's sentiment, which is in few words—"no business—Rouncewell's fernal townsman." Sir Leicester generally refers back in his mind to Wat Tyler, and arranges a sequence of events on a plan of his own.

There is not much conversation in all, for late hours have been kept at Chesney Wold since the necessary expenses elsewhere began, and this is the first night in many on which the family have been alone. It is past ten, when Sir Leicester begs Mr. Tulkinghorn to ring for candles. Then the stream of moonlight has swelled into a lake, and then Lady Dedlock for the first time moves, and rises, and comes forward to a table for a glass of water. Winking cousins, bat-like in the candle glare, crowd round to give it; Volumnia (always ready for something better if pro-

curable) takes another, a very mild sip of which contents her; Lady Dedlock, graceful, self-possessed, looked after by admiring eyes, passes away slowly down the long perspective by the side of that Nymph, not at all improving her as a question of contrast.

CHAPTER XLI.

IN MR. TULKINGHORN'S ROOM.

MR. TULKINGHORN arrives in his turret-room, a little breathed by the journey up, though leisurely performed. There is an expression on his face as if he had discharged his mind of some grave matter, and were, in his close way, satisfied. To say of a man so severely and strictly self-repressed that he is triumphant, would be to do him as great an injustice as to suppose him troubled with love or sentiment, or any romantic weakness. He is sedately satisfied. Perhaps there is a rather increased sense of power upon him, as he loosely grasps one of his veinous wrists with his other hand, and holding it behind his back walks noiselessly up and down.

There is a capacious writing-table in the room, on which is a pretty large accumulation of papers. The green lamp is lighted, his reading-glasses lie upon the desk, the easy chair is wheeled up to it, and it would seem as though he had intended to bestow an hour or so upon these claims on his attention before going to bed. But he happens not to be in a business mind. After a glance at the documents awaiting his notice—with his head bent low over the table, the old man's sight for print or writing being defective at night—he opens the french window and steps out upon the leads. There he again walks slowly up and down, in the same attitude; subsiding, if a man so cool may have any need to subside, from the story he has related down-stairs.

The time was once, when men as knowing as Mr. Tulkinghorn would walk on turret-tops in the star-light, and look up into the sky to read their fortunes there. Hosts of stars are visible to-night, though their brilliancy is eclipsed by the splendor of the moon. If he be seeking his own star, as he methodically turns and turns upon the leads, it should be but a pale one to be so rustily represented below. If he be tracing out his destiny, that may be written in other characters nearer to his hand.

As he paces the leads, with his eyes most probably as high above his thoughts as they are high above the earth, he is suddenly stopped in passing the window by two eyes that meet his own. The ceiling of his room is rather low; and the upper part of the door, which is opposite the window, is of glass. There is an inner baize door too, but the night being warm he did not close it when he came up-stairs. These eyes that meet his own, are looking in through the glass from the corridor outside. He knows them well. The blood has not flushed into his face so suddenly and redly for many a long year, as when he recognises Lady Dedlock.

He steps into the room, and she comes in too, closing both the doors behind her. There is a wild disturbance—is it fear or anger?—in her eyes. In her carriage and all else, she looks as she looked down-stairs two hours ago.

Is it fear, or is it anger, now? He cannot be sure. Both might be as pale, both as intent.

"Lady Dedlock?"

She does not speak at first, nor even when she has slowly dropped into the easy chair by the table. They look at each other, like two pictures.

"Why have you told my story to so many persons?"

"Lady Dedlock, it was necessary for me to inform you that I knew it."

"How long have you known it?"

"I have suspected it a long while—fully known it, a little while."

"Months?"

"Days."

He stands before her, with one hand on a chair-back and the other in his old-fashioned waistcoat and shirt-frill, exactly as he has stood before her at any time since her marriage. The same formal politeness, the same composed deference that might as well be defiance; the whole man the same dark, cold object, at the same distance, which nothing has ever diminished.

"Is this true concerning the poor girl?"

He slightly inclines and advances his head, as not quite understanding the question.

"You know what you related. Is it true? Do her friends know my story also? Is it the town-talk yet? Is it chalked upon the walls and cried in the streets?"

So! Anger, and fear, and shame. All three contending. What power this woman has, to keep these raging passions down! Mr. Tulkinghorn's thoughts take such form as he looks at her, with his ragged grey eyebrows a hair's-breadth more contracted than usual, under her gaze.

"No, Lady Dedlock. That was a hypothetical case, arising out of Sir Leicester's unconsciously carrying the matter with so high a hand. But it would be a real case if they knew—what we know."

"Then they do not know it yet?"

"No."

"Can I save the poor girl from injury before they know it?"

"Really, Lady Dedlock," Mr. Tulkinghorn replies, "I cannot give a satisfactory opinion on that point."

And he thinks, with the interest of attentive curiosity, as he watches the struggle in her breast, "The power and force of this woman are astonishing!"

"Sir," she says, for the moment obliged to set her lips with all the energy she has, that she may speak distinctly, "I will make it plainer. I do not dispute your hypothetical case. I anticipated it, and felt its truth as strongly as you can do, when I saw Mr. Rouncewell here. I knew very well that if he could have had the power of seeing me as I was, he would consider the poor girl tarnished by having for a moment been, although most innocently, the subject of my great and distinguished

patronage. But, I have an interest in her; or I should rather say—no longer belonging to this place—I had; and if you can find so much consideration for the woman under your foot as to remember that, she will be very sensible of your mercy."

Mr. Tulkinghorn, profoundly attentive, throws this off with a shrug of self-depreciation, and contracts his eyebrows a little more.

"You have prepared me for my exposure, and I thank you for that too. Is there anything that you require of me? Is there any claim that I can release, or any charge or trouble that I can spare my husband in obtaining *his* release, by certifying to the exactness of your discovery? I will write anything, here and now, that you will dictate. I am ready to do it."

And she would do it! thinks the lawyer, watchful of the firm hand with which she takes the pen!

"I will not trouble you, Lady Dedlock. Pray spare yourself."

"I have long expected this, as you know. I neither wish to spare myself, nor to be spared. You can do nothing worse to me than you have done. Do what remains, now."

"Lady Dedlock, there is nothing to be done. I will take leave to say a few words, when you have finished."

Their need for watching one another should be over now, but they do it all this time, and the stars watch them both through the opened window. Away in the moonlight lie the woodland fields at rest, and the wide house is as quiet as the narrow one. The narrow one! Where are the digger and the spade, this peaceful night, destined to add the last great secret to the many secrets of the Tulkinghorn existence? Is the man born yet, is the spade wrought yet? Curious questions to consider, more curious perhaps not to consider, under the watching stars upon a summer night.

"Of repentance or remorse, or any feeling of mine," Lady Dedlock presently proceeds, "I say not a word. If I were not dumb, you would be deaf. Let that go by. It is not for your ears."

He makes a feint of offering a protest, but she sweeps it away with her disdainful hand.

"Of other and very different things I come to speak to you. My jewels are all in their proper places of keeping. They will be found there. So, my dresses. So, all the valuables I have. Some ready money I had with me, please to say, but no large amount. I did not wear my own dress, in order that I might avoid observation. I went, to be henceforward lost. Make this known. I leave no other charge with you."

"Excuse me, Lady Dedlock," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, quite unmoved. "I am not sure that I understand you. You went?—"

"To be lost to all here. I leave Chesney Wold to-night. I go this hour."

Mr. Tulkinghorn shakes his head. She rises; but he, without removing hand from chair-back or from old-fashioned waistcoat and shirt-frill, shakes his head.

"What? Not go as I have said?"

"No, Lady Dedlock," he very calmly replies.

"Do you know the relief that my disappearance will be? Have you

forgotten the stain and blot upon this place, and where it is, and who it is?"

"No, Lady Dedlock, not by any means."

Without deigning to rejoin, she moves to the inner door and has it in her hand, when he says to her, without himself stirring hand or foot, or raising his voice:

"Lady Dedlock, have the goodness to stop and hear me, or before you reach the staircase I shall ring the alarm-bell and rouse the house. And then I must speak out, before every guest and servant, every man and woman, in it."

He has conquered her. She falters, trembles, and puts her hand confusedly to her head. Slight tokens these in any one else; but when so practised an eye as Mr. Tulkinghorn's sees indecision for a moment in such a subject, he thoroughly knows its value.

He promptly says again, "Have the goodness to hear me, Lady Dedlock," and motions to the chair from which she has risen. She hesitates, but he motions again, and she sits down.

"The relations between us are of an unfortunate description, Lady Dedlock; but, as they are not of my making, I will not apologise for them. The position I hold in reference to Sir Leicester is so well-known to you, that I can hardly imagine but that I must long have appeared in your eyes the natural person to make this discovery."

"Sir," she returns, without looking up from the ground, on which her eyes are now fixed. "I had better have gone. It would have been far better not to have detained me. I have no more to say."

"Excuse me, Lady Dedlock, if I add a little more to hear."

"I wish to hear it at the window, then. I can't breathe where I am."

His jealous glance as she walks that way, betrays an instant's misgiving that she may have it in her thoughts to leap over, and dashing against ledge and cornice, strike her life out upon the terrace below. But, a moment's observation of her figure as she stands in the window without any support, looking out at the stars—not up—gloomily out at those stars which are low in the heavens—reassures him. By facing round as she has moved, he stands a little behind her.

"Lady Dedlock, I have not yet been able to come to a decision satisfactory to myself, on the course before me. I am not clear what to do, or how to act next. I must request you, in the mean time, to keep your secret as you have kept it so long, and not to wonder that I keep it too."

He pauses, but she makes no reply.

"Pardon me, Lady Dedlock. This is an important subject. You are honoring me with your attention?"

"I am."

"Thank you. I might have known it, from what I have seen of your strength of character. I ought not to have asked the question, but I have the habit of making sure of my ground, step by step, as I go on. The sole consideration in this unhappy case is Sir Leicester."

"Then why," she asks in a low voice, and without removing her gloomy look from those distant stars, "do you detain me in his house?"

"Because he is the consideration. Lady Dedlock, I have no occasion

to tell you that Sir Leicester is a very proud man; that his reliance upon you is implicit; that the fall of that moon out of the sky, would not amaze him more than your fall from your high position as his wife."

She breathes quickly and heavily, but she stands as unflinchingly as ever he has seen her in the midst of her grandest company.

"I declare to you, Lady Dedlock, that with anything short of this case that I have, I would as soon have hoped to root up, by means of my own strength and my own hands, the oldest tree on this estate, as to shake your hold upon Sir Leicester, and Sir Leicester's trust and confidence in you. And even now, with this case, I hesitate. Not that he could doubt, (that, even with him, is impossible), but that nothing can prepare him for the blow."

"Not my flight?" she returned. "Think of it again."

"Your flight, Lady Dedlock, would spread the whole truth, and a hundred times the whole truth, far and wide. It would be impossible to save the family credit for a day. It is not to be thought of."

There is a quiet decision in his reply, which admits of no remonstrance.

"When I speak of Sir Leicester being the sole consideration, he and the family credit are one. Sir Leicester and the baronetcy, Sir Leicester and Chesney Wold, Sir Leicester and his ancestors and his patrimony; "Mr. Tulkinghorn very dry here; "are, I need not say to you, Lady Dedlock, inseparable."

"Go on!"

"Therefore," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, pursuing his case in his jog-trot style, "I have much to consider. This is to be hushed up, if it can be. How can it be, if Sir Leicester is driven out of his wits, or laid upon a death-bed? If I inflicted this shock upon him to-morrow morning, how could the immediate change in him be accounted for? What could have caused it? What could have divided you? Lady Dedlock, the wall-chalking and the street-crying would come on directly; and you are to remember that it would not affect you merely (whom I cannot at all consider in this business), but your husband, Lady Dedlock, your husband."

He gets plainer as he gets on, but not an atom more emphatic or animated.

"There is another point of view," he continues, "in which the case presents itself. Sir Leicester is devoted to you almost to infatuation. He might not be able to overcome that infatuation, even knowing what we know. I am putting an extreme case, but it might be so. If so, it were better that he knew nothing. Better for common sense, better for him, better for me. I must take all this into account, and it combines to render a decision very difficult."

She stands looking out at the same stars, without a word. They are beginning to pale, and she looks as if their coldness froze her.

"My experience teaches me," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, who has by this time got his hands in his pockets, and is going on in his business consideration of the matter, like a machine. "My experience teaches me, Lady Dedlock, that most of the people I know would do far better to leave marriage alone."

It is at the bottom of three-fourths of their troubles. So I thought when Sir Leicester married, and so I always have thought since. No more about that. I must now be guided by circumstances. In the meanwhile I must beg you to keep your own counsel, and I will keep mine."

"I am to drag my present life on, holding its pains at your pleasure, day by day?" she asks, still looking at the distant sky.

"Yes, I am afraid so, Lady Dedlock."

"It is necessary, you think, that I should be so tied to the stake?"

"I am sure that what I recommend is necessary."

"I am to remain upon this gaudy platform, on which my miserable deception has been so long acted, and it is to fall beneath me when you give the signal?" she says slowly.

"Not without notice, Lady Dedlock. I shall take no step without forewarning you."

She asks all her questions as if she were repeating them from memory, or calling them over in her sleep.

"We are to meet as usual?"

"Precisely as usual, if you please."

"And I am to hide my guilt, as I have done so many years?"

"As you have done so many years. I should not have made that reference myself, Lady Dedlock, but I may now remind you that your secret can be no heavier to you than it was, and is no worse and no better than it was. I know it certainly, but I believe we have never wholly trusted each other."

She stands absorbed in the same frozen way for some little time, before asking:

"Is there anything more to be said to-night?"

"Why," Mr. Tulkinghorn returns methodically, as he softly rubs his hands, "I should like to be assured of your acquiescence in my arrangements, Lady Dedlock."

"You may be assured of it."

"Good. And I would wish in conclusion to remind you, as a business precaution, in case it should be necessary to recal the fact in any communication with Sir Leicester, that throughout our interview I have expressly stated my sole consideration to be Sir Leicester's feelings and honor, and the family reputation. I should have been happy to have made Lady Dedlock a prominent consideration too, if the case had admitted of it; but unfortunately it does not."

"I can attest your fidelity, sir."

Both before and after saying it, she remains absorbed; but at length moves, and turns, unshaken in her natural and acquired presence, towards the door. Mr. Tulkinghorn opens both the doors exactly as he would have done yesterday, or as he would have done ten years ago, and makes his old-fashioned bow as she passes out. It is not an ordinary look that he receives from the handsome face as it goes into the darkness, and it is not an ordinary movement, though a very slight one, that acknowledges his courtesy. But, as he reflects when he is left alone, the woman has been putting no common constraint upon herself.

He would know it all the better, if he saw the woman pacing her own rooms with her hair wildly thrown from her flung back face, her hands

clasped behind her head, her figure twisted as if by pain. He would think so all the more, if he saw the woman thus hurrying up and down for hours, without fatigue, without intermission, followed by the faithful step upon the Ghost's Walk. But he shuts out the now chilled air, draws the window-curtain, goes to bed, and falls asleep. And truly when the stars go out and the wan day peeps into the turret chamber, finding him at his oldest, he looks as if the digger and the spade were both commissioned, and would soon be digging.

The same wan day peeps in at Sir Leicester pardoning the repentant country in a majestically condescending dream; and at the cousins entering on various public employments, principally receipt of salary; and at the chaste Volumnia, bestowing a dower of fifty thousand pounds upon a hideous old General, with a mouth of false teeth like a pianoforte too full of keys, long the admiration of Bath and the terror of every other community. Also into rooms high in the roof, and into offices in court-yards and over stables, where humbler ambition dreams of bliss in keeper's lodges, and in holy matrimony with Will or Sally. Up comes the bright sun, drawing everything up with it—the Wills and Sallys, the latent vapor in the earth, the drooping leaves and flowers, the birds and beasts and creeping things, the gardeners to sweep the dewy turf and unfold emerald velvet where the roller passes, the smoke of the great kitchen fire wreathing itself straight and high into the lightsome air. Lastly, up comes the flag over Mr. Tulkinghorn's unconscious head, cheerfully proclaiming that Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock are in their happy home, and that there is hospitality at the place in Lincolnshire.

CHAPTER XLII.

IN MR. TULKINGHORN'S CHAMBERS.

FROM the verdant undulations and the spreading oaks of the Dedlock property, Mr. Tulkinghorn transfers himself to the stale heat and dust of London. His manner of coming and going between the two places, is one of his impenetrabilities. He walks into Chesney Wold as if it were next door to his chambers, and returns to his chambers as if he had never been out of Lincoln's Inn Fields. He neither changes his dress before the journey, nor talks of it afterwards. He melted out of his turret-room this morning, just as now, in the late twilight, he melts into his own square.

Like a dingy London bird among the birds at roost in these pleasant fields, where the sheep are all made into parchment, the goats into wigs, and the pasture into chaff, the lawyer smoke-dried and faded, dwelling among mankind but not consorting with them, aged without experience of genial youth, and so long used to make his cramped nest in holes and corners of human nature that he has forgotten its broader and better range, comes sauntering home. In the oven made by the hot pavements

and hot buildings, he has baked himself dryer than usual; and he has, in his thirsty mind, his mellowed port-wine half a century old.

The lamplighter is skipping up and down his ladder on Mr. Tulkinghorn's side of the Fields, when that high-priest of noble mysteries arrives at his own dull court-yard. He ascends the door-steps and is gliding into the dusky hall, when he encounters, on the top step, a bowing and propitiatory little man.

"Is that Snagsby?"

"Yes sir. I hope you are well sir. I was just giving you up sir, and going home."

"Aye? What is it? What do you want with me?"

"Well sir," says Mr. Snagsby, holding his hat at the side of his head, in his deference towards his best customer. "I was wishful to say a word to you sir."

"Can you say it here?"

"Perfectly sir."

"Say it then." The lawyer turns, leans his arms on the iron railing at the top of the steps, and looks at the lamplighter lighting the court-yard.

"It is relating," says Mr. Snagsby, in a mysterious low voice: "it is relating—not to put too fine a point upon it—to the foreigner sir."

Mr. Tulkinghorn eyes him with some surprise. "What foreigner?"

"The foreign female sir. French, if I don't mistake? I am not acquainted with that language myself, but I should judge from her manners and appearance that she was French: anyways, certainly foreign. Her that was up-stairs sir, when Mr. Bucket and me had the honor of waiting upon you with the sweeping-boy that night."

"Oh! yes, yes. Mademoiselle Hortense."

"Indeed sir?" Mr. Snagsby coughs his cough of submission behind his hat. "I am not acquainted myself with the names of foreigners in general, but I have no doubt it *would* be that." Mr. Snagsby appears to have set out in this reply with some desperate design of repeating the name; but on reflection coughs again to excuse himself.

"And what can you have to say, Snagsby," demands Mr. Tulkinghorn, "about her?"

"Well sir," returns the stationer, shading his communication with his hat, "it falls a little hard upon me. My domestic happiness is very great—at least, it's as great as can be expected, I'm sure—but my little woman is rather given to jealousy. Not to put too fine a point upon it, she is very much given to jealousy. And you see, a foreign female of that genteel appearance coming into the shop, and hovering—I should be the last to make use of a strong expression, if I could avoid it, but hovering sir—in the court—you know it is—now ain't it? I only put it to yourself sir."

Mr. Snagsby having said this in a very plaintive manner, throws in a cough of general application to fill up all the blanks.

"Why, what do you mean?" asks Mr. Tulkinghorn.

"Just so sir," returns Mr. Snagsby; "I was sure you would feel it yourself, and would excuse the reasonableness of *my* feelings when coupled with the known excitableness of my little woman. You see, the

foreign female—which you mentioned her name just now, with quite a native sound I am sure—caught up the word Snagsby that night, being uncommon quick, and made inquiry, and got the direction and come at dinner-time. Now Guster, our young woman, is timid and has fits, and she, taking fright at the foreigner's looks—which are fierce—and at a grinding manner that she has of speaking—which is calculated to alarm a weak mind—gave way to it, instead of bearing up against it, and tumbled down the kitchen stairs out of one into another, such fits as I do sometimes think are never gone into, or come out of, in any house but ours. Consequently there was by good fortune ample occupation for my little woman, and only me to answer the shop. When she *did* say that Mr. Tulkinghorn, being always denied to her by his Employer (which I had no doubts at the time was a foreign mode of viewing a clerk), she would do herself the pleasure of continually calling at my place until she was let in here. Since then she has been, as I began by saying, hovering—Hovering sir,” Mr. Snagsby repeats the word with pathetic emphasis “in the court. The effects of which movement it is impossible to calculate. I shouldn't wonder if it might have already given rise to the painfulest mistakes even in the neighbours' minds, not mentioning (if such a thing was possible) my little woman. Whereas, Goodness knows,” says Mr. Snagsby, shaking his head, “I never had an idea of a foreign female, except as being formerly connected with a bunch of brooms and a baby, or at the present time with a tamborine and ear-rings. I never had, I do assure you sir!”

Mr. Tulkinghorn has listened gravely to this complaint, and inquires, when the stationer has finished, “And that's all, is it, Snagsby?”

“Why yes sir, that's all,” says Mr. Snagsby, ending with a cough that plainly adds, “and it's enough too—for me.”

“I don't know what Mademoiselle Hortense may want or mean, unless she is mad,” says the lawyer.

“Even if she was, you know sir,” Mr. Snagsby pleads, “it wouldn't be a consolation to have some weapon or another in the form of a foreign dagger, planted in the family.”

“No,” says the other. “Well, well! This shall be stopped. I am sorry you have been inconvenienced. If she comes again, send her here.”

Mr. Snagsby, with much bowing and short apologetic coughing, takes his leave, lightened in heart. Mr. Tulkinghorn goes up-stairs, saying to himself, “These women were created to give trouble, the whole earth over. The Mistress not being enough to deal with, here's the maid now! But I will be short with *this* jade at least!”

So saying, he unlocks his door, gropes his way into his murky rooms, lights his candles, and looks about him. It is too dark to see much of allegory over-head there; but that importunate Roman, who is for ever toppling out of the clouds and pointing, is at his old work pretty distinctly. Not honoring him with much attention, Mr. Tulkinghorn takes a small key from his pocket, unlocks a drawer in which there is another key, which unlocks a chest in which there is another, and so comes to the cellar-key, with which he prepares to descend to the regions of old wine. He is going towards the door with a candle in his hand, when a knock comes.

"Who's this?—Aye, aye, mistress, it's you, is it? You appear at a good time. I have just been hearing of you. Now! What do you want?"

He stands the candle on the chimney-piece in the clerks' hall, and taps his dry cheek with the key, as he addresses these words of welcome to Mademoiselle Hortense. That feline personage, with her lips tightly shut, and her eyes looking out at him sideways, softly closes the door before replying.

"I have had great deal of trouble to find you, sir."

"Have you!"

"I have been here very often, sir. It has always been said to me, he is not at home, he is engage, he is this and that, he is not for you."

"Quite right, and quite true."

"Not true. Lies!"

At times, there is a suddenness in the manner of Mademoiselle Hortense so like a bodily spring upon the subject of it, that such subject involuntarily starts and falls back. It is Mr. Tulkinghorn's case at present, though Mademoiselle Hortense, with her eyes almost shut up (but still looking, out sideways), is only smiling contemptuously and shaking her head.

"Now, mistress," says the lawyer, tapping the key hastily upon the chimney-piece. "If you have anything to say, say it, say it."

"Sir, you have not use me well. You have been mean and shabby."

"Mean and shabby, eh?" returns the lawyer, rubbing his nose with the key.

"Yes. What is it that I tell you? You know you have. You have attrapped me—caught me—to give you information; you have asked me to show you the dress of mine my Lady must have wore that night, you have prayed me to come in it here to meet that boy—Say! Is it not?" Mademoiselle Hortense makes another spring.

"You are a vixen, a vixen!" Mr. Tulkinghorn seems to meditate, as he looks distrustfully at her; then he replies, "Well, wench, well. I paid you."

"You paid me!" she repeats, with fierce disdain. "Two sovereign! I have not change them, I ref-use them, I des-pise them, I throw them from me!" Which she literally does, taking them out of her bosom as she speaks, and flinging them with such violence on the floor, that they jerk up again into the light before they roll away into corners, and slowly settle down there after spinning vehemently.

"Now!" says Mademoiselle Hortense, darkening her large eyes again.

"You have paid me? Eh my God, O yes!"

Mr. Tulkinghorn rubs his head with the key, while she entertains herself with a sarcastic laugh.

"You must be rich, my fair friend," he composedly observes, "to throw money about in that way!"

"I *am* rich," she returns, "I am very rich in hate. I hate my Lady, of all my heart. You know that."

"Know it? How should I know it?"

"Because you have known it perfectly, before you prayed me to give

you that information. Because you have known perfectly that I was en-r-r-r-aged!" It appears impossible for Mademoiselle to roll the letter r sufficiently in this word, notwithstanding that she assists her energetic delivery, by clenching both her hands, and setting all her teeth.

"Oh! I knew that, did I?" says Mr. Tulkinghorn, examining the wards of the key.

"Yes, without doubt. I am not blind. You have made sure of me because you knew that. You had reason! I det-est her." Mademoiselle Hortense folds her arms, and throws this last remark at him over one of her shoulders.

"Having said this, have you anything else to say, Mademoiselle?"

"I am not yet placed. Place me well. Find me a good condition! If you cannot, or do not choose to do that, employ me to pursue her, to chase her, to disgrace and to dishonor her. I will help you well, and with a good will. It is what *you* do. Do I not know that?"

"You appear to know a good deal," Mr. Tulkinghorn retorts.

"Do I not? Is it that I am so weak as to believe, like a child, that I come here in that dress to rec-ieve that boy, only to decide a little bet, a wager?—Eh my God, O yes!" In this reply, down to the word "wager" inclusive, Mademoiselle has been ironically polite and tender; then, has suddenly dashed into the bitterest and most defiant scorn, with her black eyes in one and the same moment very nearly shut, and staringly wide open.

"Now, let us see," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, tapping his chin with the key, and looking imperturbably at her, "how this matter stands."

"Ah! Let us see," Mademoiselle assents, with many angry and tight nods of her head.

"You come here to make a remarkably modest demand, which you have just stated, and it not being conceded, you will come again."

"And again," says Mademoiselle, with more tight and angry nods. "And yet again. And yet again. And many times again. In effect, for ever!"

"And not only here, but you will go to Mr. Snagsby's too, perhaps? That visit not succeeding either, you will go again perhaps?"

"And again," repeats Mademoiselle, cataleptic with determination. "And yet again. And yet again. And many times again. In effect, for ever."

"Very well. Now Mademoiselle Hortense, let me recommend you to take the candle and pick up that money of yours. I think you will find it behind the clerks' partition in the corner yonder."

She merely throws a laugh over her shoulder, and stands her ground with folded arms.

"You will not, eh?"

"No, I will not!"

"So much the poorer you; so much the richer I! Look, mistress, this is the key of my wine-cellar. It is a large key, but the keys of prisons are larger. In this city, there are houses of correction (where the treadmills are, for women) the gates of which are very strong and heavy, and no doubt the keys too. I am afraid a lady of your spirit and activity would

find it an inconvenience to have one of those keys turned upon her for any length of time. What do you think?"

"I think," Mademoiselle replies, without any action, and in a clear obliging voice, "that you are a miserable wretch."

"Probably," returns Mr. Tulkinghorn, quietly blowing his nose. "But I don't ask what you think of myself; I ask what you think of the prison."

"Nothing. What does it matter to me?"

"Why it matters this much, mistress," says the lawyer, deliberately putting away his handkerchief, and adjusting his frill, "the law is so despotic here, that it interferes to prevent any of our good English citizens from being troubled, even by a lady's visits, against his desire. And, on his complaining that he is so troubled, it takes hold of the troublesome lady, and shuts her up in prison under hard discipline. Turns the key upon her, mistress." Illustrating with the cellar key.

"Truly?" returns Mademoiselle, in the same pleasant voice. "That is droll! But—my faith!—still what does it matter to me?"

"My fair friend," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, "make another visit here, or at Mr. Snagsby's, and you shall learn."

"In that case you will send Me to the prison perhaps?"

"Perhaps."

It would be contradictory for one in Mademoiselle's state of agreeable jocularity to foam at the mouth, otherwise a tigerish expansion thereabouts might look as if a very little more would make her do it.

"In a word, mistress," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, "I am sorry to be unpolite, but if you ever present yourself uninvited here—or there—again, I will give you over to the police. Their gallantry is great, but they carry troublesome people through the streets in an ignominious manner; strapped down on a board, my good wench."

"I will prove you," whispers Mademoiselle, stretching out her hand, "I will try if you dare to do it!"

"And if," pursues the lawyer, without minding her, "I place you in that good condition of being locked up in jail, it will be some time before you find yourself at liberty again."

"I will prove you," repeats Mademoiselle in her former whisper.

"And now," proceeds the lawyer, still without minding her, "you had better go. Think twice, before you come here again."

"Think you," she answers, "twice two hundred times!"

"You were dismissed by your lady, you know," Mr. Tulkinghorn observes, following her out upon the staircase, "as the most implacable and unmanageable of women. Now turn over a new leaf, and take warning by what I say to you. For what I say, I mean; and what I threaten, I will do, mistress."

She goes down without answering or looking behind her. When she is gone, he goes down too; and returning with his cobweb-covered bottle, devotes himself to a leisurely enjoyment of its contents: now and then, as he throws his head back in his chair, catching sight of the pertinacious Roman pointing from the ceiling.



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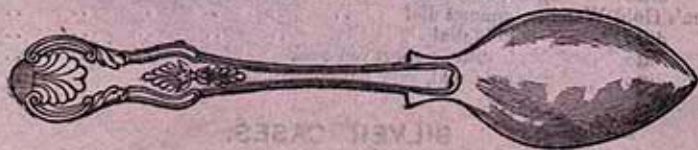
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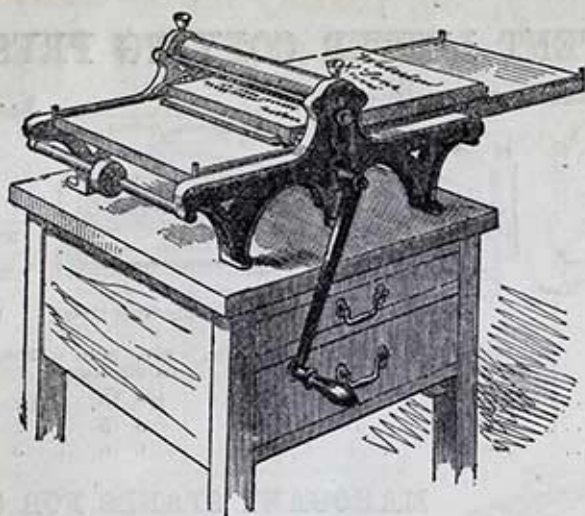
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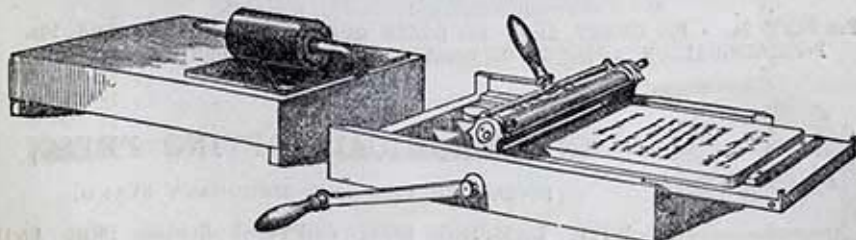
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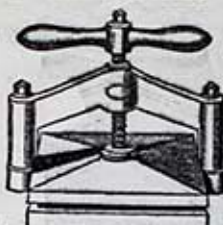
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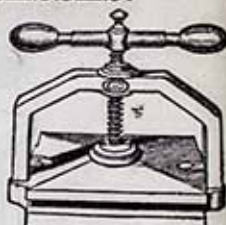
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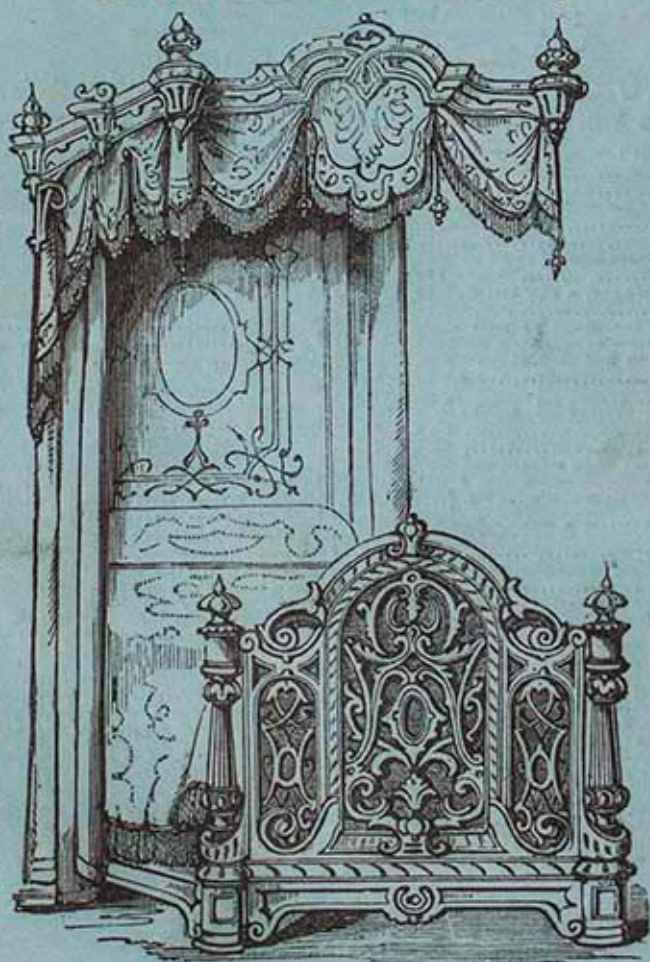
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