

**THE STORY**  
**OF**  
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**BY**  
**CHARLES DICKENS.**

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I.

DOMBEY sat in the corner of the darkened room in the great arm-chair by the bedside, and Son lay tucked up warm in a little basket bedstead, carefully disposed on a low settee immediately in front of the fire and close to it, as if his constitution were analogous to that of a muffin, and it was essential to toast him brown while he was very new.

Dombey was about eight-and-forty years of age. Son about eight-and-forty minutes. Dombey was rather bald, rather red, and though a handsome well-made man, too stern and pompous in

appearance, to be prepossessing. Son was very bald, and very red, and somewhat crushed and spotty in his general effect, as yet.

Dombey, exulting in the long-looked-for event, jingled and jingled the heavy gold watch-chain that depended from below his trim blue coat, whereof the buttons sparkled phosphorescently in the feeble rays of the distant fire.

“The house will once again, Mrs. Dombey,” said Mr. Dombey, “be not only in name but in fact Dombey and Son; Dom-bey and Son!”

The words had such a softening influence, that he appended a term of endearment to Mrs. Dombey’s name (though not without some hesitation, as being a man but little used to that form of address): and said, “Mrs. Dombey my—my dear.”

A transient flush of faint surprise overspread the sick lady’s face as she raised her eyes towards him.

“He will be christened Paul, my—Mrs. Dombey—of course.”

She feebly echoed, "Of course," or rather expressed it by the motion of her lips, and closed her eyes again.

"His father's name, Mrs. Dombey, and his grandfather's! I wish his grandfather were alive this day!" And again he said "Dom-bey and Son," in exactly the same tone as before.

Those three words conveyed the one idea of Mr. Dombey's life. The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships; rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises; stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre. Common abbreviations took new meanings in his eyes, and had sole reference to them. A. D. had no concern with anno Domini, but stood for anno Dombei—and Son.

He had been married ten years, and until this present day on which he sat jingling and jingling



his heavy gold watch-chain in the great arm-chair by the side of the bed, had had no issue.

—To speak of; none worth mentioning. There had been a girl some six years before, and the child, who had stolen into the chamber unobserved, was now crouching timidly, in a corner whence she could see her mother's face. But what was a girl to Dombey and Son! In the capital of the House's name and dignity, such a child was merely a piece of base coin that couldn't be invested—a bad Boy—nothing more.

Mr. Dombey's cup of satisfaction was so full at this moment, however, that he felt he could afford a drop or two of its contents, even to sprinkle on the dust in the by-path of his little daughter.

So he said, "Florence, you may go and look at your pretty brother, if you like, I dare say. Don't touch him!"

Next moment, the lady had opened her eyes and seen the child; and the child had run towards her; and, standing on tiptoe, the better to

hide her face in her embrace, had clung about her with a desperate affection very much at variance with her years.

“ Oh Lord bless me ! ” said Mr. Dombey, rising testily. “ A very ill-advised and feverish proceeding this, I am sure. I had better ask Doctor Peps if he'll have the goodness to step up stairs again.”

Doctor Parker Peps, one of the Court Physicians, and a man of immense reputation for assisting at the increase of great families, was walking up and down the drawing-room with his hands behind him, to the unspeakable admiration of the family Surgeon, who had regularly puffed the case for the last six weeks, among all his patients, friends, and acquaintances, as one to which he was in hourly expectation day and night of being summoned, in conjunction with Doctor Parker Peps.

“ Well Sir,” said Doctor Parker Peps in a round, deep, sonorous voice, muffled for the occasion, like the knocker ; “ do you find that your dear lady is at all roused by your visit ? ”

“Stimulated as it were?” said the family-practitioner faintly: bowing at the same time to the Doctor, as much as to say “Excuse my putting in a word, but this is a valuable connexion.”

Mr. Dombey was quite discomfited by the question. He had thought so little of the patient, that he was not in a condition to answer it. He said that it would be a satisfaction to him, if Doctor Parker Peps would walk up stairs again.

“Good! We must not disguise from you Sir, that there is a want of power in Her Grace the Duchess—I beg your pardon; I confound names; I should say, in your amiable lady. That there is a certain degree of languor, and a general absence of elasticity, which we would rather—not—”

The family-practitioner suggested, “See.”

“Quite so; which we would rather not see. It would appear that the system of Lady Cankaby—excuse me: I should say of Mrs. Dombey: I confuse the names of cases—”

“So very numerous—can’t be expected I’m sure



—quite wonderful if otherwise—Doctor Parker Peps's West End practice—”

“Thank you, quite so. It would appear, I was observing, that the system of our patient has sustained a shock, from which it can only hope to rally by a great and strong—”

The family-practitioner suggested, “And vigorous.”

“Quite so,—and vigorous effort. Mr. Pilkins here, who from his position of medical adviser in this family is best acquainted with the patient's constitution in its normal state (an acquaintance very valuable to us in forming our opinions on these occasions), is of opinion, with me, that Nature must be called upon to make a vigorous effort in this instance; and that if our interesting friend the Countess of Dombey—I *beg* your pardon; Mrs. Dombey—should not be—”

The family-practitioner suggested, “Able.”

“To make that effort successfully, then a crisis might arise, which we should both sincerely deplore.”

With that, they stood for a few seconds looking at the ground. Then, on the motion—made in dumb show—of Doctor Parker Peps, they went up stairs: the family-practitioner opening the room door for that distinguished professional, and following him out.

Mr. Dombey's meditations were soon interrupted, first by the rustling of garments on the staircase, and then by the sudden whisking into the room of a lady rather past the middle age than otherwise, but dressed in a very juvenile manner, particularly as to the tightness of her boddice, who, running up to him with a kind of screw in her face and carriage, expressive of suppressed emotion, flung her arms round his neck, and said, in a choking voice,

“My dear Paul! He's quite a Dombey! He's such a perfect Dombey!”

“Well, well!” returned her brother—for Mr. Dombey was her brother,—“I think he *is* like the family. But what is this about Fanny herself? How is Fanny?”

“My dear Paul, it’s nothing whatever. Take my word, it’s nothing whatever. There is exhaustion, certainly, but nothing like what I underwent myself either with George or Frederick. An effort is necessary. That’s all. If dear Fanny were a Dombey!—But I dare say she’ll make an effort; I have no doubt she’ll make an effort. Knowing it to be required of her, as a duty, of course she’ll make an effort. My dear Paul, it’s very weak and silly of me, I know, to be so trembly and shakey from head to foot; but I am so very queer that I must ask you for a glass of wine and a morsel of that cake. I thought I should have fallen out of the staircase window as I came down from seeing dear Fanny, and that tiddy ickle sing.” These last words originated in a sudden vivid reminiscence of the baby.

They were succeeded by a gentle tap at the door.

“Mrs. Chick,” said a very bland female voice outside, “how are you now, my dear friend?”

“My dear Paul, it’s Miss Tox. The kindest creature! I never could have got here without



her! Miss Tox, my brother, Mr. Dombey. Paul my dear, my very particular friend, Miss Tox."

The lady thus specially presented, was a long lean figure, wearing such a faded air that she seemed not to have been made in what linen-draperies call "fast colours" originally, and to have, by little and little, washed out. But for this she might have been described as the very pink of general propitiation and politeness. From a long habit of listening admiringly to everything that was said in her presence, and looking at the speakers as if she were mentally engaged in taking off impressions of their images upon her soul, her head had quite settled on one side. Her hands had contracted a spasmodic habit of raising themselves of their own accord as in involuntary admiration. Her eyes were liable to a similar affection. She had the softest voice that ever was heard; and her nose, stupendously aquiline, had a little knob in the very centre or key-stone of the bridge, whence it tended downwards towards her face, as



in an invincible determination never to turn up at anything.

Miss Tox's dress, though perfectly genteel and good, had a certain character of angularity and scantiness. She was accustomed to wear odd weedy little flowers in her bonnets and caps. Strange grasses were sometimes perceived in her hair; and it was observed by the curious, of all her collars, frills, tuckers, wristbands, and other gossamer articles—indeed of everything she wore which had two ends to it intended to unite—that the two ends were never on good terms, and wouldn't quite meet without a struggle. She had furry articles for winter wear, as tippets, boas, and muffs, which stood upon end in a rampant manner, and were not at all sleek. She was much given to the carrying about of small bags with snaps to them, that went off like little pistols when they were shut up, and when full-dressed, she wore round her neck the barrenest of locket, representing a fishy old eye, with no approach to speculation in it.

“I am sure,” said Miss Tox, with a prodigious curtsey, “that to have the honour of being presented to Mr. Dombey is a distinction which I have long sought, but very little expected at the present moment. My dear Mrs. Chick—may I say Louisa!”

Mrs. Chick took Miss Tox’s hand in hers, rested the foot of her wine-glass upon it, repressed a tear, and said in a low voice “Bless you! Miss Tox, Paul, knowing how much I have been interested in anticipation of the event of to-day, has been working at a little gift for Fanny, which I promised to present. It is only a pincushion for the toilette table, Paul, but I do say, and will say, and must say, that Miss Tox has very prettily adapted the sentiment to the occasion. I call ‘Welcome little Dombey’ Poetry, myself.”

“But do me the justice to remember, my dear Louisa,” said Miss Tox, in a tone of low and earnest entreaty, “that nothing but the—I have some difficulty in expressing myself—the dubiousness of the result would have induced me to take

so great a liberty: 'Welcome Master Dombey,' would have been much more congenial to my feelings. But the uncertainty attendant on angelic strangers, will, I hope, excuse what must otherwise appear an unwarrantable familiarity."

Mr. Dombey was hastily summoned out of the room at this moment.

"Now my dear Paul," said his sister rising, "if you have any reliance on my experience, you may rest assured that there is nothing wanting but an effort on Fanny's part. And that effort," she continued, taking off her bonnet, and adjusting her cap and gloves, in a business-like manner, "she must be encouraged, and really, if necessary, urged to make. Now my dear Paul, come up stairs with me."

The lady lay upon her bed, clasping her little daughter to her breast. The child clung close about her, with the same intensity as before, and never raised her head, or moved her soft cheek from her mother's face, or looked on those who stood around, or spoke, or moved, or shed a tear.



“Restless without the little girl,” the Doctor whispered Mr. Dombey. “We found it best to have her in again.”

There was such a solemn stillness round the bed; and the two medical attendants seemed to look on the impassive form with so much compassion and so little hope, that Mrs. Chick was for the moment diverted from her purpose. But presently summoning courage, and what she called presence of mind, she sat down by the bedside, and said in the low precise tone of one who endeavours to awaken a sleeper:

“Fanny! Fanny!”

There was no sound in answer but the loud ticking of Mr. Dombey’s watch and Doctor Parker Peps’s watch, which seemed in the silence to be running a race.

“Fanny, my dear, here’s Mr. Dombey come to see you. Won’t you speak to him? They want to lay your little boy—the baby, Fanny, you know; you have hardly seen him yet, I think—in bed; but they can’t till you rouse yourself a little.



Don't you think it's time you roused yourself a little? Eh?"

She bent her ear to the bed, and listened: at the same time looking round at the bystanders, and holding up her finger.

"Eh? What was it you said Fanny? I didn't hear you."

No word or sound in answer. Mr. Dombey's watch and Dr. Parker Peps's watch seemed to be racing faster.

"Now, really Fanny my dear, I shall have to be quite cross with you if you don't rouse yourself. It's necessary for you to make an effort, and perhaps a very great and painful effort which you are not disposed to make; but this is a world of effort you know, Fanny, and we must never yield, when so much depends upon us. Come! Try! I must really scold you if you don't!"

The race in the ensuing pause was fierce and furious. The watches seemed to jostle, and to trip each other up.

"Fanny! Only look at me. Only open your

eyes to show me that you hear and understand me; will you? Good Heaven, gentlemen, what is to be done!"

The two medical attendants exchanged a look across the bed; and the Physician, stooping down, whispered in the child's ear. Not having understood the purport of his whisper, the little creature turned her perfectly colourless face, and deep dark eyes towards him; but without loosening her hold in the least.

The whisper was repeated.

"Mama!"

The little voice, familiar and dearly loved, awakened some show of consciousness, even at that ebb. For a moment, the closed eye-lids trembled, and the nostril quivered, and the faintest shadow of a smile was seen.

"Mama! Oh dear Mama! Oh dear Mama!"

The Doctor gently brushed the scattered ringlets of the child, aside from the face and mouth of the mother. Ah! how calm they lay there; how little breath there was to stir them!

Thus, clinging fast to that slight spar within her arms, the mother drifted out upon the dark and unknown sea that rolls round all the world.

## II.

LITTLE PAUL'S wet-nurse was one Mrs. Polly Toodle, called, in Mr. Dombey's house, RICHARDS, for euphony's sake; and, under her charge, suffering no contamination from the blood of the Toodles, he at first seemed to grow stouter and stronger every day. Every day, too, he was more and more ardently cherished by Miss Tox, who was often in the habit of assuring Mrs. Chick, that "nothing could exceed her interest in all connected with the development of that sweet child." She would preside over the innocent repasts of the young heir, with ineffable satisfaction; almost with an air of joint proprietorship with Richards in the entertainment. At the little ceremonies of the bath and toilette, she assisted with enthusiasm. And being on one occasion secreted in a cupboard



(whither she had fled in modesty), when Mr. Dombey was introduced into the nursery by his sister, to behold his son, in the course of preparation for bed, taking a short walk uphill over Richards's gown, in a short and airy linen jacket, Miss Tox was so transported beyond the ignorant present as to be unable to refrain from crying out, "Is he not beautiful, Mr. Dombey! Is he not a Cupid, sir!" and then almost sinking behind the closet door with confusion and blushes.

The day of Paul's christening happened to be an iron-grey autumnal day, with a shrewd east wind blowing—a day in keeping with the proceedings. Mr. Dombey represented in himself the wind, the shade, and autumn of the christening. He stood in his library to receive the company, as hard and cold as the weather; and when he looked out at the trees in the little garden behind it, their brown and yellow leaves came fluttering down, as if he blighted them.

Ugh! They were black, cold rooms; and seemed to be in mourning, like the inmates of the house.

The books precisely matched as to size, and, drawn up in line, like soldiers, looked in their cold, hard, slippery uniforms, as if they had but one idea among them, and that was a freezer. The bookcase, glazed and locked, repudiated all familiarities. Mr. Pitt, in bronze, on the top, with no trace of his celestial origin about him, guarded the unattainable treasure like an enchanted Moor. A dusty urn at each high corner, dug up from an ancient tomb, preached desolation and decay, as from two pulpits; and the chimney-glass, reflecting Mr. Dombey and his portrait at one blow, seemed fraught with melancholy meditations.

But this was before the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Chick, his lawful relatives, who soon presented themselves.

Mr. Chick (Mr. Dombey always called him Mr. John) was a stout bald gentleman, with a very large face, his hands invariably in his pockets, and an unfortunate tendency in his nature to whistle, and hum tunes, at inappropriate seasons.

“ My dear Paul, the beginning, I hope, of many joyful days ! ”

“ Thank you, Louisa. How do you do, Mr. John ? ”

“ How do you do, Sir. ”

He gave Mr. Dombey his hand, as if he feared it might electrify him. Mr. Dombey took it as if it were a fish, or seaweed, or some such clammy substance, and immediately returned it to him.

“ Perhaps, Louisa, ” said Mr. Dombey, slightly turning his head in his cravat, as if it were a socket, “ you would have preferred a fire ? ”

“ Oh, my dear Paul, no, ” said Mrs. Chick, who had much ado to keep her teeth from chattering ; “ not for me. ”

“ Mr. John, ” said Mr. Dombey, “ you are not sensible of any chill ? ”

Mr. John, who had both his hands in his pockets over the wrists, and was on the very threshold of the canine chorus, Bow, wow, wow ! protested that he was perfectly comfortable.



He added in a low voice, "With my tiddle tol toor rul"—when he was providentially stopped by the footman, who announced:

"Miss Tox!"

Enter that fair enslaver, with a blue nose and an indescribably frosty face, referable to her being very thinly clad in a maze of fluttering odds and ends.

"How do you do, Miss Tox?"

Miss Tox in the midst of her spreading gauzes, went down altogether like an opera-glass shutting-up.

The baby soon appeared, carried in great glory by Richards; while Florence, in custody of an active young constable of a nurse, called Susan Nipper, brought up the rear. Though the whole nursery party were dressed by this time in lighter mourning than at first, there was enough in the appearance of the bereaved children to make the day no brighter. The baby too—it might have been the coldness of Miss Tox's nose, when she kissed it—began to cry.



“Mr. John,” said Mr. Dombey, referring to his watch, and assuming his hat and gloves. “Take my sister, if you please: my arm to-day is Miss Tox’s. You had better go first with Master Paul, Richards. Be very careful.”

In Mr. Dombey’s carriage, Dombey and Son, Miss Tox, Mrs. Chick, Richards, and Florence. In a little carriage following it, Susan Nipper and the owner Mr. Chick. Susan looking out of window, without intermission, as a relief from the embarrassment of confronting the large face of that gentleman, and thinking whenever anything rattled that he was putting up in paper an appropriate pecuniary compliment for herself.

Arrived at the church steps, they were received by a portentous beadle. Mr. Dombey dismounting first to help the ladies out, and standing near him at the coach door, looked like another beadle. A beadle less gorgeous but more dreadful; the beadle of private life; the beadle of our business and our bosoms. Within the church, the tall shrouded pulpit and reading desk; the dreary

perspective of empty pews and empty benches mounting to the roof and lost in the shadow of the great grim organ; the dusty matting and cold stone slabs; the grisly free seats in the aisles; and the damp corner by the bell-rope, where the black tressels used for funerals were stowed away, along with some shovels and baskets, and a coil or two of deadly-looking rope; the strange, unusual, uncomfortable smell, and the cadaverous light; were all in unison.

“There’s a wedding just on, Sir,” said the beadle, “but it’ll be over directly, if you’ll walk into the westry here.”

Before he turned again to lead the way, he gave Mr. Dombey a bow and a half smile of recognition, importing that he (the beadle) remembered to have had the pleasure of attending on him when he buried his wife, and hoped he had enjoyed himself since.

After a cold interval, a wheezy little pew-opener afflicted with an asthma, appropriate to the church-yard, if not to the church, summoned them to the

font. Here they waited some little time while the marriage party enrolled themselves; and meanwhile the wheezy little pew-opener—partly in consequence of her infirmity, and partly that the marriage party might not forget her—went about the building coughing like a grampus.

Presently the clerk (the only cheerful-looking object there, and *he* was an undertaker) came up with a jug of warm water, and said something, as he poured it into the font, about taking the chill off; which millions of gallons boiling hot could not have done for the occasion. Then the clergyman, an amiable and mild-looking young curate, but obviously afraid of the baby, appeared like the principal character in a ghost-story, “a tall figure all in white;” at sight of whom Paul rent the air with his cries, and never left off again till he was taken out.

Even when that event had happened, to the great relief of everybody, he was heard under the portico, during the rest of the ceremony, now fainter, now louder, now hushed, now bursting



forth again with an irrepressible sense of his wrongs. This so distracted the attention of the two ladies, that Mrs. Chick was constantly deploying into the centre aisle, to send out messages by the pew-opener, while Miss Tox kept her Prayer-book open at the Gunpowder Plot, and occasionally read responses from that service.

During the whole of these proceedings, Mr. Dombey remained as impassive and gentlemanly as ever, and perhaps assisted in making it so cold, that the young curate smoked at the mouth as he read. The only time that he unbent his visage in the least, was when the clergyman, in delivering (very unaffectedly and simply) the closing exhortation, relative to the future examination of the child by the sponsors, happened to rest his eye on Mr. Chick; and then Mr. Dombey might have been seen to express by a majestic look, that he would like to catch him at it.

The register signed, and the fees paid, and the pew-opener (whose cough was very bad again) remembered, and the beadle gratified, and the sexton

(who was accidentally on the door-steps, looking with great interest at the weather) not forgotten, they got into the carriages again, and drove home in the same bleak fellowship.

There, they found Mr. Pitt turning up his nose at a cold collation, set forth in a cold pomp of glass and silver, and looking more like a dead dinner lying in state than social refreshment.

“Mr. John,” said Mr. Dombey, “will you take the bottom of the table, if you please. What have you got there, Mr. John?”

“I have got a cold fillet of veal here, Sir,” replied Mr. Chick, rubbing his numbed hands hard together, “what have *you* got there, Sir?”

“This,” returned Mr. Dombey, “is some cold preparation of calf’s head, I think. I see cold fowls—ham—patties—salad—lobster. Miss Tox will do me the honour of taking some wine? Champagne to Miss Tox.”

There was a toothache in everything. The wine was so bitter cold that it forced a little scream from Miss Tox, which she had great difficulty in

turning into a "Hem!" The veal had come from such an airy pantry, that the first taste of it struck a sensation as of cold lead to Mr. Chick's extremities. Mr. Dombey alone remained unmoved. He might have been hung up for sale at a Russian fair as a specimen of a frozen gentleman.

The prevailing influence was too much even for his sister. She made no effort at flattery or small-talk, and directed all her efforts to looking as warm as she could.

"Well, Sir," said Mr. Chick, making a desperate plunge, after a long silence, and filling a glass of sherry; "I shall drink this, if you'll allow me, Sir, to little Paul."

"Bless him!" murmured Miss Tox, taking a sip of wine.

"Dear little Dombey!" murmured Mrs. Chick.

"Mr. John," said Mr. Dombey, with severe gravity, "my son would feel and express himself obliged to you, I have no doubt, if he could appreciate the favour you have done him. He will prove, in time to come, I trust, equal to any



responsibility that the obliging disposition of his relations and friends, in private, or the onerous nature of our position, in public, may impose upon him.”

The tone in which this was said admitting of nothing more, Mr. Chick relapsed into low spirits and silence. He was twice heard to hum a tune at the bottom of the table, but on both occasions it was a fragment of the Dead March in Saul. The party seemed to get colder and colder, and to be gradually resolving itself into a congealed and solid state, like the collation round which it was assembled. At length Mrs. Chick looked at Miss Tox, and Miss Tox returned the look, and they both rose and said it was really time to go. Mr. Dombey receiving this announcement with perfect equanimity, they all took leave of that gentleman, and presently departed.

It was a dull, grey, Autumn Day indeed. And the leaves fell sorrowfully.

## III.

FIRST nurses must give place to second nurses. We must all be weaned. Indeed, some of us are always being weaned all our lives long; some of us never get over it. After that sharp season had come and gone for the first time in Little Dombey's life, it began to seem as if no vigilance or care could make him a thriving boy. That dangerous ground in his steeple-chase towards manhood passed, he still found it very rough riding, and was grievously beset by all the obstacles in his course. Every tooth was a break-neck fence, and every pimple in the measles a stone-wall to him. He was down in every fit of the hooping-cough, and rolled upon by a whole field of small diseases that came trooping on each other's heels to prevent his getting up again. Some bird of prey got into

his throat, instead of the Thrush; and the very chickens turning ferocious—if they have anything to do with that infant malady to which they lend their name—worried him like Tiger-cats.

Thus he grew to be nearly five years old. He was a pretty little fellow; but there was something wan and wistful in his small face, that gave occasion to many significant shakes of his second nurse's head, and many long-drawn inspirations of his second nurse's breath. She said he was too old-fashioned.

He was childish and sportive enough at times, and not of a sullen disposition; but he had a strange, weird, thoughtful way, at other times, of sitting brooding in his miniature arm-chair, when he looked (and talked) like one of those terrible little Beings in the Fairy tales, who, at a hundred and fifty or two hundred years of age, fantastically represent the children for whom they have been substituted. At no time did he fall into this mood so surely, as when, his little chair being carried down into his father's room,



he sat there with him after dinner, by the fire.

On one of these occasions, when they had both been perfectly quiet for a long time, and Mr. Dombey only knew that the child was awake by occasionally glancing at his eye, while the bright fire was sparkling like a jewel, little Paul broke silence thus:

“ Papa! what’s money? ”

Mr. Dombey was in a difficulty. He would have liked to give him some explanation involving the terms circulating-medium, currency, depreciation of currency, paper, bullion, rates of exchange, value of precious metals in the market, and so forth: but looking down at the little chair, and seeing what a long way down it was, he answered; “ Gold, and silver, and copper. Guineas, shillings, half-pence. You know what they are? ”

“ Oh yes, I know what they are. I don’t mean that, Papa: I mean, what’s money, after all? ”

“ What is money after all! ” said Mr. Dombey, backing his chair a little, that he might the better

gaze in sheer amazement at the presumptuous atom that propounded such an inquiry.

“I mean, Papa, what can it do?” returned Paul, folding his arms (they were hardly long enough to fold), and looking at the fire, and up at him, and at the fire, and up at him again.

Mr. Dombey drew his chair back to its former place, and patted him on the head. “You’ll know better bye-and-bye, my man. Money, Paul, can do anything.” He took hold of the little hand, and beat it softly against one of his own as he said so.

But Paul got his hand free as soon as he could; and rubbing it gently to and fro on the elbow of his chair, as if his wit were in the palm, and he were sharpening it—and looking at the fire again, as though the fire had been his adviser and prompter—repeated, after a short pause:

“If money can do anything, I wonder it didn’t save me my Mama. It can’t make me strong and quite well, either. I am so tired sometimes and my bones ache so, that I don’t know what to do!”

Mr. Dombey became uneasy—and spoke of his uneasiness next day.

“Mr. Pilkins saw Paul this morning, I believe?” said Mr. Dombey to his sister.

“Yes, he did,” returned his sister. “Miss Tox and myself were present. Miss Tox and myself are always present. We make a point of it. Mr. Pilkins has seen him for some days past, and a very clever man I believe him to be. He says it is nothing to speak of; which I can confirm, if that is any consolation; but he recommended, to-day, sea-air.”

“Sea-air?”

“There is nothing to be made uneasy by, in that. My George and Frederick were both ordered sea-air, when they were about his age; and I have been ordered it myself a great many times. However, I must say I think, with Miss Tox, that a short absence from this house, the air of Brighton, and the bodily and mental training of so judicious a person as Mrs. Pipchin—”

“Who is Mrs. Pipchin, Louisa?” asked Mr.



Dombey; aghast at this familiar introduction of a name he had never heard before.

“Mrs. Pipchin, my dear Paul, is an elderly lady—Miss Tox knows her whole history—who has for some time devoted all the energies of her mind, with the greatest success, to the study and treatment of infancy, and who has been extremely well connected. Her husband broke his heart in—how did you say her husband broke his heart, my dear? I forget the precise circumstances.”

“In pumping water out of the Peruvian mines,” replied Miss Tox.

“Not being a Pumper himself, of course,” said Mrs. Chick, glancing at her brother; and it really did seem necessary to offer the explanation, for Miss Tox had spoken of him as if he had died at the handle; “but having invested money in the speculation, which failed.”

“Perhaps I should say of Mrs. Pipchin, my dear Sir,” observed Miss Tox, with an ingenuous blush, “having been so pointedly referred to, that the encomium which has been passed upon her

by your sweet sister is well merited. Many ladies and gentlemen, now grown up to be interesting members of society, have been indebted to her care. The humble individual who addresses you was once under her charge. I believe juvenile nobility itself is no stranger to her establishment."

"Do I understand that this respectable matron keeps an establishment, Miss Tox?" inquired Mr. Dombey, condescendingly.

"Why, I really don't know," rejoined that lady, "whether I am justified in calling it so. It is not a Preparatory School by any means. Should I express my meaning if I designate it an infantine Boarding-House of a very select description?"

There was something in this. Mrs. Pipchin's husband having broken his heart of the Peruvian mines was good. It had a rich sound. Broke his heart of the Peruvian mines, mused Mr. Dombey. Well! a very respectable way of doing it.

This celebrated Mrs. Pipchin was a marvellous ill-favoured, ill-conditioned old lady, of a stooping figure, with a mottled face, like bad marble, a hook

nose, and a hard grey eye, that looked as if it might have been hammered at on an anvil without sustaining any injury. Forty years at least had elapsed since the Peruvian mines had been the death of Mr. Pipchin; but his relict still wore black bombazeen. She was generally spoken of as "a great manager" of children; and the secret of her management was, to give them everything that they didn't like, and nothing that they did.

The Castle of this ogress and child-queller was in a steep bye-street at Brighton; where the soil was more than usually chalky, flinty, and sterile, and the houses were more than usually brittle and thin; where the small front gardens had the unaccountable property of producing nothing but marigolds, whatever was sown in them; and where snails were constantly discovered holding on to the street doors, and other public places they were not expected to ornament, with the tenacity of cupping-glasses. In the winter time the air couldn't be got out of the Castle, and in the



summer-time it couldn't be got in. There was such a continual reverberation of wind in it, that it sounded like a great shell, which the inhabitants were obliged to hold to their ears night and day, whether they liked it or no. It was not, naturally, a fresh-smelling house; and in the window of the front parlour, which was never opened, Mrs. Pipchin kept a collection of plants in pots, which imparted an earthy flavor to the establishment. However choice examples of their kind, too, these plants were of a kind peculiarly adapted to the embowerment of Mrs. Pipchin. There were half-a-dozen specimens of the cactus, writhing round bits of lath, like hairy serpents; another specimen shooting out broad claws, like a green lobster; and one uncomfortable flower-pot hanging to the ceiling, which appeared to have boiled over, and tickled people underneath with its long green ends.

Within three days after Mrs. Chick's first allusion to her, this excellent old lady had the satisfaction of receiving Florence and her little brother,

Paul (called by Mrs. Pipchin, Little Dombey), as inmates of the Castle.

Mrs. Chick and Miss Tox, who had brought them down on the previous night (which they all passed at an Hotel), had just driven away from the door, on their journey home again; and Mrs. Pipchin, with her back to the fire, stood, reviewing the new-comers like an old soldier. Mrs. Pipchin's middle-aged niece, her good-natured and devoted slave, but possessing a gaunt and iron-bound aspect, and much afflicted with boils on her nose, was divesting Master Bitherstone (a young gentleman in custody) of the clean collar he had worn on parade. Miss Pankey, the only other little boarder at present, had that moment been walked off to the Castle Dungeon (an empty apartment at the back devoted to correctional purposes), for having sniffed thrice in the presence of visitors.

At one o'clock there was a dinner, chiefly of the farinaceous and vegetable kind, when Miss Pankey (a mild little blue-eyed morsel of a child, who was shampoo'd every morning, and seemed in



danger of being rubbed away altogether) was led in from captivity by the ogress herself, and instructed that nobody who sniffed before visitors ever went to Heaven. When this great truth had been thoroughly impressed upon her, she was regaled with rice. Mrs. Pipchin's niece, Berinthia, took cold pork. Mrs. Pipchin, whose constitution required warm nourishment, made a special repast of mutton-chops, which were brought in hot and hot, between two plates, and smelt very nice.

For tea there was plenty of milk and water, and bread and butter, with a little black tea-pot for Mrs. Pipchin and Berry, and buttered toast unlimited for Mrs. Pipchin, which was brought in hot and hot, like the chops. Though Mrs. Pipchin got very greasy, outside, over this dish, it didn't seem to lubricate her, internally, at all.

After tea, Berry brought out a little workbox, with the Royal Pavilion on the lid, and fell to working busily; while Mrs. Pipchin, having put on her spectacles, and opened a great volume bound in green baize, began to nod. And when-



ever Mrs. Pipchin caught herself falling forward into the fire, and woke up, she filliped Master Bitherstone on the nose for nodding too.

At last it was the children's bed time, and after prayers they went to bed. As little Miss Pankey was afraid of sleeping alone in the dark, Mrs. Pipchin always made a point of driving her upstairs like a sheep; and Little Dombey found it cheerful to hear Miss Pankey moaning long afterwards, in the least eligible chamber, and Mrs. Pipchin now and then going in to shake her.

The breakfast next morning was like the tea over night, except that Mrs. Pipchin took her roll instead of toast, and seemed a little more irate when it was over. Master Bitherstone read aloud to the rest a pedigree from Genesis (judiciously selected by Mrs. Pipchin), getting over the names with the ease and clearness of a young gentleman tumbling up the treadmill. That done, Miss Pankey was borne away to be shampoo'd; and Master Bitherstone to have something else done

to him with salt water, from which he always returned very blue and dejected. Paul and Florence went out in the meantime on the beach with Wickam, and at about noon Mrs. Pipchin presided over some Early Readings. It being a part of Mrs. Pipchin's system not to encourage a child's mind to develop and expand itself like a young flower, but to open it by force like an oyster, the moral of these lessons was of a violent and stunning character: the hero—always a naughty boy—seldom, in the mildest catastrophe, being finished off by anything less than a lion, or a bear.

Such was life at Mrs. Pipchin's. Sunday evening was the most melancholy evening in the week; for, Mrs. Pipchin always made a point of being particularly cross on Sunday nights; Miss Pankey was generally brought back from an aunt's at Rottingdean, in deep distress; and Master Bitherstone, whose relatives were all in India, and who was required to sit, between the services, in an erect position with his head against the parlour wall, moving neither hand nor foot, suffered so

acutely in his young spirits that he once asked Florence, on a Sunday night, if she could give him any idea of the way back to Bengal.

At the exemplary Pipchin, Little Dombey would sit staring in his little arm-chair by the fire, for any length of time.

Once she asked him when they were alone, what he was thinking about.

“You,” said Paul, without the least reserve.

“And what are you thinking about me?”

“I am thinking how old you must be.”

“You mustn’t say such things as that, young gentleman. That ’ll never do.”

“Why not?” asked Paul.

“Never you mind, Sir. Remember the story of the little boy that was gored to death by a mad bull for asking questions.”

“If the bull was mad, how did he know that the boy had asked questions? Nobody can go and whisper secrets to a mad bull. I don’t believe that story.”

“You don’t believe it, Sir?”



“No.”

“Not if it should happen to have been a tame bull, you little Infidel?” said Mrs. Pipchin.

As Paul had not considered the subject in that light, and had founded his conclusions on the alleged lunacy of the bull, he allowed himself to be put down for the present. But he sat turning it over in his mind, with such an obvious intention of fixing Mrs. Pipchin presently, that even that hardy old lady deemed it prudent to retreat until he should have forgotten the subject.

Such was life at Mrs. Pipchin's: and Mrs. Pipchin said, and they all said, that Little Dombey (who watched it all from his little arm-chair by the fire), was an old, old fashioned child.

But as Little Dombey was no stronger at the expiration of weeks of this life, than he had been on his first arrival, a little carriage was got for him, in which he could lie at his ease, with an alphabet and other elementary works of reference, and be wheeled down to the sea-side. Consistent

in his odd tastes, the child set aside a ruddy-faced lad who was proposed as the drawer of this carriage and selected, instead, the lad's grandfather—a weazen, old, crab-faced man, in a suit of battered oilskin, who had got tough and stringy from long pickling in salt water, and who smelt like a weedy sea-beach when the tide is out.

With this notable attendant to pull him along, and Florence always walking by his side, he went down to the margin of the ocean every day; and there he would sit or lie in his carriage for hours together: never so distressed as by the company of children—his sister Florence alone excepted, always.

“Go away, if you please,” he would say, to any child who came to bear him company. “Thank you, but I don't want you.”

Some small voice, near his ear, would ask him how he was, perhaps.

“I am very well, I thank you. But you had better go and play, if you please.”

Then he would turn his head, and watch the

child away, and say to Florence, "We don't want any others, do we? Kiss me, Floy."

He had even a dislike, at such times, to the company of his nurse, and was well pleased when she strolled away, as she generally did, to pick up shells and acquaintances. His favorite spot was quite a lonely one, far away from most loungers; and with Florence sitting by his side at work, or reading to him, or talking to him, and the wind blowing on his face, and the water coming up among the wheels of his bed, he wanted nothing more.

"Floy," he said one day, "where's India, where that boy Bitherstone's friends live?"

"Oh, it's a long, long distance off."

"Weeks off?"

"Yes, dear. Many weeks' journey, night and day."

"If you were in India, Floy, I should—what is that Mama did? I forget."

"Love me?"

"No, no. Don't I love you now, Floy? What



is it?—Died. If you were in India, I should die, Floy.”

She hurriedly put her work aside, and laid her head down on his pillow, caressing him. And so would she, she said, if he were there. He would be better soon.

“Oh! I am a great deal better now! I don't mean that. I mean that I should die of being so sorry and so lonely, Floy!”

Another time, in the same place, he fell asleep, and slept quietly for a long time. Awakening suddenly, he listened, started up, and sat listening.

Florence asked him what he thought he heard.

“I want to know what it says. The sea, Floy, what is it that it keeps on saying?”

She told him that it was only the noise of the rolling waves.

“Yes, yes. But I know that they are always saying something. Always the same thing. What place is over there?” He rose up, looking eagerly at the horizon.

She told him that there was another country opposite, but he said he didn't mean that; he meant farther away—farther away!

Very often afterwards, in the midst of their talk, he would break off, to try to understand what it was that the waves were always saying; and would rise up in his couch to look towards that invisible region, far away.

## IV.

AT length Mr. Dombey, one Saturday, when he came down to Brighton to see Paul, who was then six years old, resolved to make a change, and enrol him as a small student under Doctor Blimber.

Whenever a young gentleman was taken in hand by Doctor Blimber, he might consider himself sure of a pretty tight squeeze. The Doctor only undertook the charge of ten young gentlemen, but he had, always ready a supply of learning for a hundred, on the lowest estimate; and it was at once the business and delight of his life to gorge the unhappy ten with it.

In fact, Doctor Blimber's establishment was a great hot-house, in which there was a forcing apparatus incessantly at work. All the boys blew before their time. Mental green-peas were pro-



duced at Christmas, and intellectual asparagus all the year round. Mathematical gooseberries were common at untimely seasons. Every description of Greek and Latin vegetable was got off the driest twigs of boys, under the frostiest circumstances. Nature was of no consequence at all. No matter what a young gentleman was intended to bear, Doctor Blimber made him bear to pattern, somehow or other.

This was all very pleasant and ingenious, but the system of forcing was attended with its usual disadvantages. There was not the right taste about the premature productions, and they didn't keep well. Moreover, one young gentleman, with a swollen nose and an excessively large head (the oldest of the ten who had "gone through" everything), suddenly left off blowing one day, and remained in the establishment a mere stalk. And people did say that the Doctor had rather overdone it with young Toots, and that when he began to have whiskers he left off having brains.

There young Toots was, at any rate ; possessed of the gruffest of voices and the shrillest of minds ; sticking ornamental pins into his shirt, and keeping a ring in his waistcoat pocket to put on his little finger by stealth, when the pupils went out walking ; constantly falling in love by sight with nurserymaids, who had no idea of his existence ; and looking at the gas-lighted world over the little iron bars in the left hand corner window of the front three pairs of stairs, after bed-time, like a greatly overgrown cherub who had sat up aloft much too long.

The Doctor was a portly gentleman in a suit of black, with strings at his knees, and stockings below them. He had a bald head, highly polished ; a deep voice ; and a chin so very double, that it was a wonder how he ever managed to shave into the creases ; he had likewise a pair of little eyes that were always half shut up, and a mouth that was always half expanded into a grin, as if he had, that moment, posed a boy, and were waiting to convict him from his own lips. Inso-

much, that when the Doctor put his right hand into the breast of his coat, and with his other hand behind him, and a scarcely perceptible wag of his head, made the commonest observation to a nervous stranger, it was like a sentiment from the sphynx, and settled his business.

Miss Blimber, although a slim and graceful maid, did no soft violence to the gravity of the house. There was no light nonsense about Miss Blimber. She kept her hair short and crisp, and wore spectacles. She was dry and sandy with working in the graves of deceased languages. None of your live languages for Miss Blimber. They must be dead—stone dead—and then Miss Blimber dug them up like a Ghoul.

Mrs. Blimber, her mama, was not learned herself, but she pretended to be, and that did quite as well. She said at evening parties, that if she could have known Cicero, she thought she could have died contented.

As to Mr. Feeder, B.A., Doctor Blimber's assistant, he was a kind of human barrel-organ,



with a little list of tunes at which he was continually working, over and over again, without any variation. He might have been fitted up with a change of barrels, perhaps, in early life, if his destiny had been favourable; but it had not been; and he had only one, with which, in a monotonous round, it was his occupation to bewilder the young ideas of Doctor Blimber's young gentlemen.

Upon the Doctor's door-steps one day, Paul stood with a fluttering heart, with his small right hand in his father's. His other hand was locked in that of Florence. How tight the tiny pressure of that one; and how loose and cold the other!

The Doctor was sitting in his portentous study, with a globe at each knee, books all round him, Homer over the door, and Minerva on the mantelshelf. "And how do you do, Sir," he said to Mr. Dombey, "and how is my little friend?" Grave as an organ was the Doctor's speech; and when he ceased, the great clock in the hall seemed (to Paul at least) to take him up, and to go on saying 'how,

is, my, lit, tle, friend, how, is, my, lit, tle, friend,' over and over again.

The little friend being something too small to be seen at all from where the Doctor sat, over the books on his table, the Doctor made several futile attempts to get a view of him round the legs; which Mr. Dombey perceiving, relieved the Doctor from his embarrassment by taking Paul up in his arms, and sitting him on another little table, over against the Doctor, in the middle of the room.

“Ha!” said the Doctor, leaning back in his chair with his hand in his breast. “Now I see my little friend. How do you do, my little friend?”

The clock in the hall wouldn't subscribe to this alteration in the form of words, but continued to repeat ‘how, is, my, lit, tle, friend, how, is, my, lit, tle, friend!’

“Very well, I thank you, Sir,” returned Paul, answering the clock quite as much as the Doctor.

“Ha!” said Dr. Blimber. “Shall we make a man of him?”

“Do you hear, Paul?” added Mr. Dombey; Paul being silent.

“Shall we make a man of him?” repeated the Doctor.

“I had rather be a child,” replied Paul.

“Indeed!” said the Doctor. “Why?”

The child sat on the table looking at him, with a curious expression of suppressed emotion in his face, and beating one hand proudly on his knee as if he had the rising tears beneath it, and crushed them. But his other hand strayed a little way the while, a little farther—farther from him yet—until it lighted on the neck of Florence. “This is why,” it seemed to say, and then the steady look was broken up and gone; the working lip was loosened; and the tears came streaming forth.

“Mr. Dombey,” said Doctor Blimber, “You would wish my little friend to acquire—”

“Everything, if you please, Doctor.”

“Yes,” said the Doctor, who with his half-shut eyes, and his usual smile, seemed to survey Paul with the sort of interest that might attach to some



choice little animal he was going to stuff. "Yes, exactly. Ha! We shall impart a great variety of information to our little friend, and bring him quickly forward, I dare say. I dare say." And again he leered at Paul, as if he would have liked to tackle him with the Greek alphabet on the spot.

"Permit me," said the Doctor. "Allow me to present Mrs. Blimber and my daughter, who will be associated with the domestic life of our young Pilgrim to Parnassus. Mrs. Blimber," for the lady, who had perhaps been in waiting, opportunely entered, followed by her daughter, that fair Sexton in spectacles, "Mr. Dombey. My daughter Cornelia, Mr. Dombey. Mr. Dombey, my love, is so confiding as to—do you see our little friend?"

Mrs. Blimber, in an access of politeness, of which Mr. Dombey was the object, apparently did not, for she was backing against the little friend, and very much endangering his position on the table. But, on this hint, she turned to admire his classical and intellectual lineaments.

Cornelia looked at Mr. Dombey through her spectacles, as if she would have liked to crack a few quotations with him. But this design, if she entertained it, was frustrated by a knock at the room-door.

“Who is that?” said the Doctor. “Oh! Come in, Toots; come in. Mr. Dombey, Sir.” Toots bowed. “Our head boy, Mr. Dombey.”

The Doctor might have called him their head and shoulders boy, for he was at least that much taller than any of the rest. He blushed very red at finding himself among strangers, and chuckled aloud.

“An addition to our little portico, Toots; Mr. Dombey’s son.”

Young Toots blushed again; and finding, from a solemn silence which prevailed, that he was expected to say something, said to Paul, “How are you?” in a voice so deep, and a manner so sheepish, that if a lamb had roared it couldn’t have been more surprising.

“Ask Mr. Feeder, if you please, Toots, to

prepare a few introductory volumes for Mr. Dombey's son, and to allot him a convenient seat for study. My dear, I believe Mr. Dombey has not seen the dormitories."

"If Mr. Dombey will walk up stairs," said Mrs. Blimber, "I shall be more than proud to show him the dominions of the drowsy God."

While they were gone, Paul sat upon the table, holding Florence by the hand, and glancing timidly from the Doctor round and round the room, while the Doctor, leaning back in his chair, with his hand in his breast as usual, held a book from him at arm's length, and read. There was something very awful in this manner of reading. It was such a determined, unimpassioned, inflexible, cold-blooded way of going to work. It left the Doctor's countenance exposed to view; and when the Doctor smiled suspiciously at his author, or knit his brows, or shook his head and made wry faces at him, as much as to say, 'Don't tell me, Sir. I know better,' it was terrific.



Mr. Dombey and his conductress were soon heard coming down stairs again, talking all the way; and presently they re-entered the Doctor's study.

“I think,” said Mr. Dombey, “I have now given all the trouble I need, and may take my leave. Paul, my child, Good bye.”

“Good bye, Papa.”

The limp and careless little hand that Mr. Dombey took in his, was singularly out of keeping with the wistful face. But he had no part in its sorrowful expression. It was not addressed to him. No, no. To Florence—all to Florence.

“Take him round the house, Cornelia,” said the Doctor, when Florence's sweet face was gone, and his childish bosom so heaved and swelled, that the globes, the books, Blind Homer, and Minerva, went spinning round the room; “take him round the house, Cornelia, and familiarise him with his new sphere. Go with that young lady, Dombey.”

Cornelia took him first to the schoolroom, which was situated at the back of the hall, and was

approached through two baize doors, which deadened and muffled the young gentlemen's voices. Here, were eight young gentlemen in various stages of mental prostration, all very hard at work, and very grave indeed. Toots, as an old hand, had a desk to himself in one corner: and a magnificent man, of immense age, he looked, in Paul's young eyes, behind it.

Mr. Feeder, B.A., who sat at another little desk, had his Virgil stop on, and was slowly grinding that tune to four young gentlemen. Of the remaining four, two, who grasped their foreheads convulsively, were engaged in solving mathematical problems; one with his face like a dirty window, from much crying, was endeavouring to flounder through a hopeless number of lines before dinner; and one sat looking at his task in stony stupefaction and despair.

The appearance of a new boy did not create the sensation that might have been expected. Mr. Feeder, B.A. (who was in the habit of shaving his head for coolness, and had nothing but little

bristles on it), gave him a bony hand, and told him he was glad to see him—which Paul would have been very glad to have told *him*, if he could have done so with the least sincerity. Then Paul, instructed by Cornelia, shook hands with the four young gentlemen at Mr. Feeder's desk; then with the two young gentlemen at work on the problems, who were very feverish; then with the young gentleman at work against time, who was very inky; and lastly with the young gentleman in a state of stupefaction, who was flabby and quite cold.

Paul having been already introduced to Toots, that pupil merely chuckled and breathed hard, as his custom was, and pursued the occupation in which he was engaged. It was not a severe one; for on account of his having "gone through" so much (in more senses than one), and also of his having, as before hinted, left off blowing in his prime, Toots now had licence to pursue his own course of study; which was chiefly to write long letters to himself from persons of distinction,



addressed "P. Toots, Esquire, Brighton, Sussex," and to preserve them in his desk with great care.

These ceremonies passed, Cornelia led Paul up stairs to the top of the house ; which was rather a slow journey, on account of Paul being obliged to land both feet on every stair, before he mounted another. But they reached their journey's end at last ; and there, in a front room, looking over the wild sea, Cornelia showed him a nice little bed with white hangings, close to the window, on which there was already beautifully written on a card in round text—down strokes very thick, and up strokes very fine—DOMBEY ; while two other little bedsteads in the same room were announced, through like means, as respectively appertaining unto BRIGGS and TOZER.

Just as they got down stairs again into the hall, Paul saw a weak-eyed young serving-man seize a very large drumstick, and fly at a gong that was hanging up, as if he had gone mad, or wanted vengeance. Instead of receiving warning, however, or being instantly taken into custody, the

young man left off unchecked, after having made a dreadful noise. Then Cornelia Blimber said to Dombey that dinner would be ready in a quarter of an hour, and perhaps he had better go into the schoolroom among his "friends."

So, Dombey, deferentially passing the great clock which was still as anxious as ever to know how he found himself, opened the schoolroom door a very little way, and strayed in like a lost boy: shutting it after him with some difficulty. His friends were all dispersed about the room except the stony friend, who remained immoveable. Mr. Feeder was stretching himself in his grey gown, as if, regardless of expense, he were resolved to pull the sleeves off.

"Heigh ho hum!" cried Mr. Feeder, shaking himself like a cart-horse. "Oh dear me, dear me! Ya-a-a-ah!"

Paul was quite alarmed by Mr. Feeder's yawning; it was done on such a great scale, and he was so terribly in earnest. All the boys too (Toots excepted) seemed knocked up, and were

getting ready for dinner—some newly tying their neckcloths, which were very stiff indeed; and others washing their hands or brushing their hair, in an adjoining ante-chamber—as if they didn't think they should enjoy their dinner at all.

Young Toots who was ready beforehand, and had therefore nothing to do, and had leisure to bestow upon Paul, said, with heavy good nature:

“Sit down, Dombey.”

“Thank you, Sir.”

His endeavouring to hoist himself on to a very high window-seat, and his slipping down again, appeared to prepare Toots's mind for the reception of a discovery.

“You're a very small chap.”

“Yes, Sir, I'm small. Thank you, Sir.”

For, Toots had lifted him into the seat, and done it kindly too.

“Who's your tailor?” inquired Toots, after looking at him for some moments.

“It's a woman that has made my clothes as yet,” said Paul. “My sister's dress-maker.”



“My tailor’s Burgess and Co. Fash’nable  
But very dear.”

Paul had wit enough to shake his head, as if he would have said it was easy to see *that*.

“I say! Your father’s regularly rich, ain’t he?”

“Yes, Sir. He’s Dombey and Son.”

“And which?”

“And Son, Sir.”

Mr. Toots made one or two attempts, in a low voice, to fix the firm in his mind; but not quite succeeding, said he would get Paul to mention the name again to-morrow morning, as it was rather important. And indeed he purposed nothing less than writing himself a private and confidential letter from Dombey and Son immediately.

By this time the other pupils (always excepting the stony boy) gathered round. They were polite, but pale; and spoke low; and they were depressed in spirits.

“You sleep in my room, don’t you?” asked a

solemn young gentleman whose shirt-collar curled up the lobes of his ears.

“Master Briggs?” inquired Paul.

“Tozer.”

Paul answered yes; and Tozer pointing out the stony pupil, said that was Briggs.

“Is yours a strong constitution?” inquired Tozer.

Paul said he thought not. Tozer replied that *he* thought not also, judging from Paul's looks, and that it was a pity, for it need be. He then asked Paul if he were going to begin with Cornelia: and on Paul saying “yes,” all the young gentlemen (Briggs excepted) gave a low groan.

It was drowned in the tintinnabulation of the gong, which sounding again with great fury, there was a general move towards the dining-room; still excepting Briggs the stony boy, who remained where he was, and as he was; and on its way to whom Paul presently encountered a round of bread, genteelly served on a plate and napkin, and with a silver fork lying crosswise on the top of it.

Doctor Blimber was already in his place in the dining-room, at the top of the table, with Miss Blimber and Mrs. Blimber on either side of him. Mr. Feeder in a black coat was at the bottom. Paul's chair was next to Miss Blimber; but it being found, when he sat in it, that his eye-brows were not much above the level of the table-cloth, some books were brought in from the Doctor's study, on which he was elevated, and on which he always sat from that time—carrying them in and out himself, on after occasions, like a little elephant and castle.

Grace having been said by the Doctor, dinner began. There was some nice soup; also roast meat, boiled meat, vegetables, pie, and cheese. Every young gentleman had a massive silver fork, and a napkin; and all the arrangements were stately and handsome. In particular, there was a butler in a blue coat and bright buttons, who gave quite a winey flavour to the table-beer; he poured it out so superbly.

Nobody spoke, unless spoken to, except Doctor



Blimber, Mrs. Blimber, and Miss Blimber, who conversed occasionally. Whenever a young gentleman was not actually engaged with his knife and fork or spoon, his eye, with an irresistible attraction, sought the eye of Dr. Blimber, Mrs. Blimber, or Miss Blimber, and modestly rested there. Toots appeared to be the only exception to this rule. He sat next Mr. Feeder on Paul's side of the table, and frequently looked behind and before the intervening boys to catch a glimpse of Paul.

Only once during dinner was there any conversation that included the young gentlemen. It happened at the epoch of the cheese, when the Doctor, having taken a glass of port wine, and hemmed twice or thrice, said:

“It is remarkable, Mr. Feeder, that the Romans—”

At the mention of this terrible people, their implacable enemies, every young gentleman fastened his gaze upon the Doctor, with an assumption of the deepest interest. One of the number who happened to be drinking, and who caught the

Doctor's eye glaring at him through the side of his tumbler, left off so hastily that he was convulsed for some moments.

“It is remarkable, Mr. Feeder, that the Romans, in those gorgeous and profuse entertainments of which we read in the days of the Emperors, when luxury had attained a height unknown before or since, and when whole provinces were ravaged to supply the splendid means of one Imperial Banquet—”

Here the offender, who had been swelling and straining, and waiting in vain for a full stop, broke out violently.

“Johnson,” said Mr. Feeder, in a low reproachful voice, “take some water.”

The Doctor, looking very stern, made a pause until the water was brought, and then resumed:

“And when, Mr. Feeder—”

But Mr. Feeder, who saw that Johnson must break out again, and who knew that the Doctor would never come to a period before the young gentlemen until he had finished all he meant to

say, couldn't keep his eye off Johnson; and thus was caught in the fact of not looking at the Doctor, who consequently stopped.

"I beg your pardon, Sir," said Mr. Feeder, reddening. "I beg your pardon, Doctor Blimber."

"And when," said the Doctor, raising his voice, "when, Sir, as we read, and have no reason to doubt—incredible as it may appear to the vulgar of our time—the brother of Vitellius prepared for him a feast, in which were served, of fish, two thousand dishes—"

"Take some water, Johnson—dishes, Sir."

"Of various sorts of fowl, five thousand dishes—"

"Or try a crust of bread."

"And one dish called, from its enormous dimensions, the Shield of Minerva, and made, among other costly ingredients, of the brains of pheasants—"

"Ow, ow, ow!" (from Johnson.)

"Woodcocks—"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"The sounds of the fish called scari—"



“ You ’ll burst some vessel in your head, Johnson. You had better let it come,” said Mr. Feeder.

“ And the spawn of the lamprey, brought from the Carpathian Sea. When we read of costly entertainments such as these, and still remember, that we have a Titus—”

“ What would be your mother’s feelings if you died of apoplexy ! ” said Mr. Feeder.

“ A Domitian—”

“ And you ’re blue, you know,” said Mr. Feeder.

“ A Nero, a Tiberius, a Caligula, a Heliogabalus and many more ; it is, Mr. Feeder—if you are doing me the honour to attend — remarkable ; **VERY** remarkable, Sir—”

But Johnson, unable to suppress it any longer, burst at that moment into such an overwhelming fit of coughing, that, although both his immediate neighbours thumped him on the back, and Mr. Feeder himself held a glass of water to his lips, and the butler walked him up and down several times between his own chair and the sideboard, like a sentry, it was full five minutes before he

was moderately composed. Then there was a profound silence.

“Gentlemen,” said Doctor Blimber, “rise for Grace! Cornelia, lift Dombey down—” nothing of whom but his scalp was accordingly seen above the table-cloth. “Johnson will repeat to me to-morrow morning before breakfast, without book, and from the Greek Testament, the epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians. We will resume our studies, Mr. Feeder, in half-an-hour.”

Tea was served in a style no less polite than the dinner; and after tea, the young gentlemen rising and bowing, withdrew to fetch up the unfinished tasks of that day, or to get up the already looming tasks of to-morrow. In the meantime Mr. Feeder withdrew to his own room; and Paul sat in a corner wondering whether Florence was thinking of him, and what they were all about at Mrs. Pipchin’s.

Mr. Toots, who had been detained by an important letter from the Duke of Wellington, found

Paul out after a time ; and having looked at him for a long while, as before, inquired if he was fond of waistcoats.

Paul said "Yes, Sir."

"So am I," said Toots.

No word more spake Toots that night ; but he stood looking at Paul as if he liked him ; and as there was company in that, and Paul was not inclined to talk, it answered his purpose better than conversation.

At eight o'clock or so, the gong sounded again for prayers in the dining-room, where the butler afterwards presided over a side table, on which bread and cheese and beer were spread for such young gentlemen as desired to partake of those refreshments. The ceremonies concluded by the Doctor's saying, "Gentlemen, we will resume our studies at seven to-morrow;" and then, for the first time, Paul saw Cornelia Blimber's eye, and saw that it was upon him. When the Doctor had said these words, "Gentlemen, we will resume our studies at seven



to-morrow," the pupils bowed again, and went to bed.

In the confidence of their own room up-stairs, Briggs said his head ached ready to split, and that he should wish himself dead if it wasn't for his mother, and a blackbird he had at home. Tozer didn't say much, but he sighed a good deal, and told Paul to look out, for his turn would come to-morrow. After uttering those prophetic words, he undressed himself moodily, and got into bed. Briggs was in his bed too, and Paul in his bed too, before the weak-eyed young man appeared to take away the candle, when he wished them good night and pleasant dreams. But his benevolent wishes were in vain, as far as Briggs and Tozer were concerned; for Paul, who lay awake for a long while, and often woke afterwards, found that Briggs was ridden by his lesson as a nightmare: and that Tozer, whose mind was affected in his sleep by similar causes, in a minor degree, talked unknown tongues, or scraps of Greek and Latin—it was all one to Paul—which,

in the silence of night, had an inexpressibly wicked and guilty effect.

Paul had sunk into a sweet sleep, and dreamed that he was walking hand in hand with Florence through beautiful gardens, when they came to a large sunflower which suddenly expanded itself into a gong, and began to sound. Opening his eyes, he found that it was a dark, windy morning, with a drizzling rain: and that the real gong was giving dreadful note of preparation, down in the hall.

So, he got up directly, and found Briggs with hardly any eyes, for nightmare and grief had made his face puffy, putting his boots on; while Tozer stood shivering and rubbing his shoulders, in a very bad humour. Poor Paul couldn't dress himself easily, not being used to it, and asked them if they would have the goodness to tie some strings for him; but as Briggs merely said "Bother!" and Tozer, "Oh yes!" he did the best he could for himself, and proceeded softly on his journey down-stairs. As he passed a door that

stood ajar, a voice from within cried "Is that Dombey?" On Paul replying, "Yes Ma'am:" for he knew the voice to be Miss Blimber's: Miss Blimber, said "Come in, Dombey." And in he went.

"Now, Dombey," said Miss Blimber. "I'm going out for a constitutional."

Paul wondered what that was, and why she didn't send the footman out to get it in such unfavourable weather. But he made no observation on the subject: his attention being devoted to a little pile of new books, on which Miss Blimber appeared to have been recently engaged.

"These are yours, Dombey," said Miss Blimber. "I am going out for a constitutional; and while I am gone, that is to say in the interval between this and breakfast, Dombey, I wish you to read over what I have marked in these books, and to tell me if you quite understand what you have got to learn."

They comprised a little English, and a deal of



Latin—names of things, declensions of articles and substantives, exercises thereon, and preliminary rules—a trifle of orthography, a glance at ancient history, a wink or two at modern ditto, a few tables, two or three weights and measures, and a little general information. When poor Paul had spelt out number two, he found he had no idea of number one; fragments whereof afterwards obtruded themselves into number three, which slid into number four, which grafted itself on to number two. So that whether twenty Romuluses made a Remus, or *hic hæc hoc* was troy weight, or a verb always agreed with an ancient Briton, or three times four was Taurus a bull, were open questions with him.

“Oh, Dombey, Dombey!” said Miss Blimber, when she came back, “this is very shocking.”

Miss Blimber expressed herself with a gloomy delight, as if she had expected this result, and were glad to find that they must be in constant communication. Miss Blimber divided his books into tasks on subjects A, B, and C, and Paul with-

drew with the top task, and laboured away at it, down below: sometimes remembering every word of it, and sometimes forgetting it all, and everything else besides: until at last he ventured up stairs again to repeat the lesson, when it was nearly all driven out of his head before he began, by Miss Blimber's shutting up the book, and saying, "Go on, Dombey!" a proceeding so suggestive of the knowledge inside of her, that Paul looked upon the young lady with consternation, as a kind of learned Guy Faux, or artificial Bogle, stuffed full of scholastic straw.

He acquitted himself very well, nevertheless; and Miss Blimber, commending him as giving promise of getting on fast, immediately provided him with subject B; from which he passed to C, and even D before dinner. It was hard work, resuming his studies, soon after dinner; and he felt giddy and confused and drowsy and dull. But all the other young gentlemen had similar sensations, and were obliged to resume their studies too. The studies went round like a mighty wheel,



and the young gentlemen were always stretched upon it:

After tea there were exercises again, and preparations for next day by candle-light. And in due course there was bed; where, but for that resumption of the studies which took place in dreams, were rest and sweet forgetfulness.

Such spirits as Little Dombey had, he soon lost, of course. But he retained all that was strange and old and thoughtful in his character; and even became more strange and old and thoughtful. He loved to be alone, and liked nothing so well as wandering about the house by himself, or sitting on the stairs listening to the great clock in the hall. He was intimate with all the paper-hanging in the house; saw things that no one else saw in the patterns; found out miniature tigers and lions running up the bedroom walls. He had much to think of, in association with a print that hung on the staircase, where, in the centre of a wondering group, one figure that he knew, a figure



with a light about its head—benignant, mild, and merciful—stood pointing upward. He watched the waves and clouds at twilight, with his earnest eyes, and breasted the window of his solitary cage when birds flew by, as if he would have emulated them, and soared away.

The solitary child lived on surrounded by this arabesque-work of his musing fancy, and no one understood him. Mrs. Blimber thought him “odd,” and sometimes the servants said that Little Dombey “moped;” but that was all.

Unless young Toots had some idea on the subject.

He would say to Little Dombey, fifty times a-day, “I say—it’s of no consequence, you know—but—how are you?”

Paul would answer, “Quite well, Sir, thank you.”

“Shake hands.”

Which Paul, of course, would immediately do. Mr. Toots generally said again, after a long interval of staring and hard breathing, “I say—it’s not of the slightest consequence, you know, but I

should wish to mention it—how are you, you know?”

To which Paul would again reply, “Quite well, Sir, thank you.”

One evening a great purpose seemed to flash on Mr. Toots. He went off from his desk to look after Little Dombey, and finding him at the window of his little bedroom, blurted out all at once, as if he were afraid he should forget it: “I say—Dombey—what do you think about?”

“O! I think about a great many things.”

“*Do* you though?—I don’t, myself.”

“I was thinking when you came in, about last night. It was a beautiful moonlight night. When I had listened to the water for a long time, I got up, and looked out at it. There was a boat over there; the sail like an arm, all silver. It went away into the distance, and what do you think it seemed to do as it moved with the waves?”

“Pitch?”

“It seemed to beckon—seemed to beckon me to come.”

This was on a Friday night; and it made such a prodigious impression on Mr. Toots, that he had it on his mind as long afterwards as Saturday morning.

Oh Saturdays! Oh happy Saturdays, when Florence always came for Paul at noon, and never would, in any weather, stay away, though Mrs. Pipchin snarled and growled, and worried her bitterly. Those Saturdays were Sabbaths for at least two little Christians among all the Jews, and did the holy Sabbath work of knitting up a brother's and a sister's love.



## V.

WHEN the Midsummer vacation approached, no indecent manifestations of joy were exhibited by the leaden-eyed young gentlemen assembled at Dr. Blimber's. Any such violent expression as "breaking up," would have been quite inapplicable to that polite establishment. The young gentlemen oozed away, semi-annually, to their own homes, but they never broke up.

Tozer, who was constantly galled and tormented by a starched white cambric neck-kerchief, which he wore at the express desire of Mrs. Tozer, his parent, who, designing him for the Church, was of opinion that he couldn't be in that forward state of preparation too soon—Tozer said, indeed, that, choosing between two evils, he thought he would rather stay where he was, than go home. However

inconsistent this declaration might appear with that passage in Tozer's Essay on the subject wherein he had observed "that the thoughts of home and all its recollections, awakened in his mind the most pleasing emotions of anticipation and delight," and wherein he had also likened himself to a Roman General, flushed with a recent victory over the Icenii, or laden with Carthaginian spoil, advancing within a few hours' march of the Capitol (presupposed for the purposes of the simile, to be the dwelling-place of Mrs. Tozer), still it was very sincerely made. For, it seemed that Tozer had a dreadful uncle, who not only volunteered examinations of him, in the holidays, on abstruse points, but twisted innocent events and things, and wrenched them to the same fell purpose. So that if this uncle took him to the Play, or, on a similar pretence of kindness, carried him to see a Giant, or a Dwarf, or a Conjuror, or anything, Tozer knew he had read up some classical allusion to the subject beforehand, and was thrown into a state of mortal apprehension.

As to Briggs, *his* father never would leave him alone. So numerous and severe were the mental trials of that unfortunate youth in vacation time, that the friends of the family (then resident near Bayswater, London) seldom approached the ornamental piece of water in Kensington Gardens, without a vague expectation of seeing Master Briggs's hat floating on the surface, and an unfinished exercise lying on the bank. Briggs, therefore, was not at all sanguine on the subject of holidays: and these two sharers of Little Paul's bedroom were so fair a sample of the young gentlemen in general, that the most elastic among them contemplated the arrival of those festive periods with genteel resignation.

Mr. Feeder, B.A., seemed to think that he would enjoy the holidays very much. Mr. Toots projected a life of holidays from that time forth; for, as he regularly informed Paul every day, it was his "last half" at Doctor Blimber's, and he was going to begin to come into his property directly.

It was perfectly understood between Paul and



Mr. Toots, that they were intimate friends, notwithstanding their distance in point of years and station. As the vacation approached, and Mr. Toots breathed harder and stared oftener in Paul's society, than he had done before, Paul knew that he meant he was sorry they were going to lose sight of each other, and felt very much obliged to him for his patronage and good opinion.

Mrs. Blimber was by this time quite sure that Paul was the oddest child in the world; and the Doctor did not controvert his wife's opinion. But he said that study would do much; and he said, "Bring him on, Cornelia! Bring him on!"

Cornelia had always brought him on as vigorously as she could; and Paul had had a hard life of it. But, over and above the getting through his tasks, he had long had another purpose always present to him, and to which he still held fast. It was, to be a gentle, useful, quiet little fellow, always striving to secure the love and attachment of the rest; and though he was yet often to be seen watching the waves and

clouds from his solitary window, he was oftener found, too, among the other boys, modestly rendering them some little voluntary service. Thus it came to pass, that even among those rigid and absorbed young anchorites who mortified themselves beneath the roof of Dr. Blimber, Paul was an object of general interest; a fragile little plaything that they all liked, and whom no one would have thought of treating roughly. But he could not change his nature: and so they all agreed that Little Dombey was old-fashioned.

There were some immunities, however, attaching to the character enjoyed by no one else. They could have better spared a newer-fashioned child, and that alone was much. When the others only bowed to Doctor Blimber and family on retiring for the night, Paul would stretch out his morsel of a hand, and boldly shake the Doctor's; also Mrs. Blimber's; also Cornelia's. If anybody was to be begged off from impending punishment, Paul was always the delegate. The weak-eyed young man himself had once consulted him, in



reference to a little breakage of glass and china. And it was darkly rumoured that the butler, regarding him with favour such as that stern man had never shown before to mortal boy, had mingled porter with his table-beer to make him strong.

Over and above these extensive privileges, Paul had free right of entry to Mr. Feeder's room, from which apartment he had twice led Mr. Toots into the open air in a state of faintness, consequent on an unsuccessful attempt to smoke a very blunt cigar: one of a bundle which that young gentleman had covertly purchased on the shingle from a most desperate smuggler, who had acknowledged, in confidence, that two hundred pounds was the price set upon his head, dead or alive, by the Custom House. It was a snug room, Mr. Feeder's, with his bed in another little room inside of it; and a flute which Mr. Feeder couldn't play yet, but was going to make a point of learning, he said, hanging up over the fireplace. There were some books in it, too, and a fishing-rod; for Mr. Feeder said he should certainly make



a point of learning to fish, when he could find time. Mr. Feeder had amassed, with similar intentions, a beautiful little curly second-hand key-bugle, a chess-board and men, a Spanish Grammar, a set of sketching materials, and a pair of boxing-gloves. The art of self-defence Mr. Feeder said he should undoubtedly make a point of learning, as he considered it the duty of every man to do : for it might lead to the protection of a female in distress.

But, Mr. Feeder's great possession was a large green jar of snuff, which Mr. Toots had brought down as a present, at the close of the last vacation ; and for which he had paid a high price, as having been the genuine property of the Prince Regent. Neither Mr. Toots nor Mr. Feeder could partake of this or any other snuff, even in the most stinted and moderate degree, without being seized with convulsions of sneezing. Nevertheless it was their great delight to moisten a box-full with cold tea, stir it up on a piece of parchment with a paper-knife, and devote themselves to its

consumption then and there. In the course of which cramming of their noses, they endured surprising torments, with the constancy of martyrs; and, drinking table-beer at intervals, felt all the glories of dissipation.

Going into this room one evening, when the holidays were very near, Paul found Mr. Feeder filling up the blanks in some printed letters, while some others, already filled up and strewn before him, were being folded and sealed by Mr. Toots. Mr. Feeder said, "Aha, Dombey, there you are, are you? That's yours."

"Mine, Sir?" said Paul.

"Your invitation," returned Mr. Feeder.

Paul, looking at it, found, in copper-plate print, with the exception of his own name and the date, which were in Mr. Feeder's penmanship, that Doctor and Mrs. Blimber requested the pleasure of Mr. P. Dombey's company at an early party on Wednesday Evening the Seventeenth Instant; and that the hour was half-past seven o'clock; and that the object was Quadrilles. Mr. Toots also

showed him, by holding up a companion sheet of paper, that Doctor and Mrs. Blimber requested the pleasure of Mr. Toots's company at an early party on Wednesday Evening the Seventeenth Instant, when the hour was half-past seven o'clock, and when the object was Quadrilles. He also found, on glancing at the table where Mr. Feeder sat, that the pleasure of Mr. Briggs's company, and of Mr. Tozer's company, and of every young gentleman's company, was requested by Doctor and Mrs. Blimber on the same genteel occasion.

Mr. Feeder then told him, to his great joy that his sister was invited, and that it was a half-yearly event, and that, as the holidays began that day, he could go away with his sister, after the party, if he liked, which Paul interrupted him to say he *would* like, very much. Mr. Feeder then gave him to understand that he would be expected to inform Doctor and Mrs. Blimber, in superfine small-hand, that Mr. P. Dombey would be happy to have the honour of waiting on them, in accordance with their polite invitation.



Paul thanked Mr. Feeder for these hints, and pocketing his invitation, sat down on a stool by the side of Mr. Toots, as usual. But Paul's head, which had long been ailing more or less, and was sometimes very heavy and painful, felt so uneasy that night, that he was obliged to support it on his hand. And yet it drooped so, that by little and little it sunk on Mr. Toots's knee, and rested there, as if it had no care to be ever lifted up again.

That was no reason why he should be deaf; but he must have been, he thought, for, bye and bye, he heard Mr. Feeder calling in his ear, and gently shaking him to rouse his attention. And when he raised his head, quite scared, and looked about him, he found that Doctor Blimber had come into the room; and that the window was open, and that his forehead was wet with sprinkled water; though how all this had been done without his knowledge, was very curious indeed.

It was very kind of Mr. Toots to carry him to

the top of the house so tenderly ; and Paul told him that it was. But, Mr. Toots said he would do a great deal more than that, if he could ; and indeed he did more as it was : for he helped Paul to undress, and helped him to bed, in the kindest manner possible, and then sat down by the bedside and chuckled very much ; while Mr. Feeder, B.A., leaning over the bottom of the bedstead, set all the little bristles on his head bolt upright with his bony hands, and then made believe to spar at Paul with great science, on account of his being all right again. Which was so uncommonly facetious, and kind too in Mr. Feeder, that Paul, not being able to make up his mind whether it was best to laugh or cry at him, did both at once.

How Mr. Toots melted away, and Mr. Feeder changed into Mrs. Pipchin, Paul never thought of asking ; neither was he at all curious to know ; but when he saw Mrs. Pipchin standing at the bottom of the bed, instead of Mr. Feeder, he cried out, “ Mrs. Pipchin, don’t tell Florence ! ”

“ Don’t tell Florence what, my little Dombey ? ”

said Mrs. Pipchin, coming round to the bedside, and sitting down in the chair.

“About me,” said Paul.

“No, no,” said Mrs. Pipchin.

“What do you think I mean to do when I grow up, Mrs. Pipchin?”

Mrs. Pipchin couldn't guess.

“I mean to put my money all together in one Bank—never try to get any more—go away into the country with my darling Florence—have a beautiful garden, fields, and woods, and live there with her all my life!”

“Indeed, Sir?”

“Yes. That's what I mean to do, when I—”  
He stopped, and pondered for a moment.

Mrs. Pipchin's grey eye scanned his thoughtful face.

—“If I grow up,” said Paul.

There was a certain calm Apothecary, who attended at the establishment when any of the young gentlemen were ill, and somehow *he* got into the room and appeared at the bedside, with



Mrs. Blimber. How they came there, or how long they had been there, Paul didn't know; but when he saw them, he sat up in bed, and answered all the Apothecary's questions at full length, and whispered to him that Florence was not to know anything about it, if he pleased, and that he had set his mind upon her coming to the party. He was very chatty with the Apothecary, and they parted excellent friends. Lying down again with his eyes shut, he heard the Apothecary say, out of the room and quite a long way off—or he dreamed it—that there was a want of vital power (what was that, Paul wondered?) and great constitutional weakness. That, as the little fellow had set his heart on parting with his schoolmates on the seventeenth, it would be better to indulge the fancy if he grew no worse. That, he was glad to hear from Mrs. Pipchin, that the little fellow would go to his friends in London on the eighteenth. That, he would write to Mr. Dombey, when he should have gained a better knowledge of the case, and before that day. That, there was

no immediate cause for—what? Paul lost that word. And that the little fellow had a fine mind, but was an old-fashioned boy.

What old fashion could that be, Paul wondered with a palpitating heart, that was so visibly expressed in him?

He lay in bed all that day, dozing and dreaming, and looking at Mr. Toots; but got up on the next, and went down stairs. Lo and behold, there was something the matter with the great clock; and a workman on a pair of steps had taken its face off, and was poking instruments into the works by the light of a candle! This was a great event for Paul, who sat down on the bottom stair, and watched the operation attentively: now and then glancing at the clock face, leaning all askew, against the wall hard by: and feeling a little confused by a suspicion that it was ogling him.

The workman on the steps was very civil; and as he said, when he observed Paul, "How do you do, Sir?" Paul got into conversation with him,

and told him he hadn't been quite well lately. The ice being thus broken, Paul asked him a multitude of questions about chimes and clocks: as, whether people watched up in the lonely church steeples by night to make them strike, and how the bells were rung when people died, and whether those were different bells from wedding bells, or only sounded dismal in the fancies of the living. Finding that his new acquaintance was not very well informed on the subject of the Curfew Bell of ancient days, Paul gave him an account of that institution; and also asked him, as a practical man, what he thought about King Alfred's idea of measuring time by the burning of candles? To which the workman replied, that he thought it would be the ruin of the clock trade if it was to come up again. In fine, Paul looked on, until the clock had quite recovered its familiar aspect, and resumed its sedate inquiry; when the workman, putting away his tools in a long basket, bade him good day, and went away. Though not before he had whispered something, on the door-



mat, to the footman, in which there was the phrase “old-fashioned”—for Paul heard it.

What could that old fashion be, that seemed to make the people sorry! What could it be!

In those days immediately before the holidays, when the other young gentlemen were labouring for dear life through a general resumption of the studies of the whole half year, Paul was such a privileged pupil as had never been seen in that house before. He could hardly believe it himself; but his liberty lasted from hour to hour, and from day to day; and Little Dombey was caressed by every one. Doctor Blimber was so particular about him, that he requested Johnson to retire from the dinner-table one day, for having thoughtlessly spoken to him, as “poor Little Dombey;” which Paul thought rather hard and severe, though he had flushed at the moment, and wondered why Johnson should pity him. And now it was that Paul began to think it must surely be old-fashioned, to be very thin and light, and easily

tired, and soon disposed to lie down anywhere and rest; for he couldn't help feeling that these were more and more his habits every day.

At last the party-day arrived; and Doctor Blimber said at breakfast, "Gentlemen, we will resume our studies on the twenty-fifth of next month." Mr. Toots immediately threw off his allegiance, and put on his ring: and mentioning the Doctor in casual conversation shortly afterwards, spoke of him as "Blimber"! This act of freedom inspired the older pupils with admiration and envy; but the younger spirits were appalled, and seemed to marvel that no beam fell down and crushed him.

Not the least allusion was made to the ceremonies of the evening, either at breakfast or at dinner; but there was a bustle in the house all day, and in the course of his perambulations, Paul made acquaintance with various strange benches and candlesticks, and met a harp in a green great-coat standing on the landing outside the drawing-room door. There was something queer, too,

about Mrs. Blimber's head at dinner-time, as if she had screwed her hair up too tight; and though Miss Blimber showed a graceful bunch of plaited hair on each temple, she seemed to have her own little curls in paper underneath, and in a playbill too; for Paul read "Theatre Royal" over one of her sparkling spectacles, and "Brighton" over the other.

There was a grand array of white waistcoats and cravats in the young gentlemen's bedrooms as evening approached, and such a smell of singed hair, that Doctor Blimber sent up the footman with his compliments, and wished to know if the house was on fire. But, it was only the hair-dresser curling the young gentlemen, and overheating his tongs in the ardour of business.

When Paul was dressed—which was very soon done, for he felt unwell and drowsy, and was not able to stand about it very long—he went down into the drawing-room; where he found Doctor Blimber pacing up and down the room full dressed, but with a dignified and unconcerned



demeanour, as if he thought it barely possible that one or two people might drop in bye and bye. Shortly afterwards, Mrs. Blimber appeared, looking lovely, Paul thought, and attired in such a number of skirts that it was quite an excursion to walk round her. Miss Blimber came down soon after her mama; a little squeezed in appearance, but very charming.

Mr. Toots and Mr. Feeder were the next arrivals. Each of these gentlemen brought his hat in his hand, as if he lived somewhere else; and when they were announced by the butler, Doctor Blimber said, "Aye, aye, aye! God bless my soul!" and seemed extremely glad to see them. Mr. Toots was one blaze of jewellery and buttons; and he felt the circumstance so strongly, that when he had shaken hands with the Doctor, and had bowed to Mrs. Blimber and Miss Blimber, he took Paul aside, and said, "What do you think of this, Dombey!"

But notwithstanding his modest confidence in himself, Mr. Toots appeared to be involved in a

good deal of uncertainty whether, on the whole, it was judicious to button the bottom button of his waistcoat; and whether, on a calm revision of all the circumstances, it was best to wear his wristbands turned up or turned down. Observing that Mr. Feeder's were turned up, Mr. Toots turned his up; but the wristbands of the next arrival being turned down, Mr. Toots turned his down. The differences in point of waistcoat-buttoning, not only at the bottom, but at the top too, became so numerous and complicated as the arrivals thickened, that Mr. Toots was continually fingering that article of dress, as if he were performing on some instrument; and appeared to find the incessant execution it demanded, quite bewildering.

All the young gentlemen, tightly cravatted, curled, and pumped, and with their best hats in their hands, having been at different times announced and introduced, Mr. Baps, the dancing-master, came, accompanied by Mrs. Baps, to whom Mrs. Blimber was extremely kind and

condescending. Mr. Baps was a very grave gentleman, with a slow and measured manner of speaking; and before he had stood under the lamp five minutes, he began to talk to Toots (who had been silently comparing pumps with him) about what you were to do with your raw materials when they came into your ports in return for your drain of gold. Mr. Toots, to whom the question seemed perplexing, suggested "Cook 'em." But Mr. Baps did not appear to think that would do.

Paul now slipped away from the cushioned corner of a sofa, which had been his post of observation, and went down stairs into the tea room to be ready for Florence, whom he had not seen for nearly a fortnight, as he had remained at Doctor Blimber's on the previous Saturday and Sunday, lest he should take cold. Presently she came: looking so beautiful in her simple ball dress, with her fresh flowers in her hand, that when she knelt down on the ground to take Paul round the neck and kiss him, he could hardly make up his mind to let her go again.



“But what is the matter, Floy?” asked Paul, almost sure that he saw a tear on her face.

“Nothing, darling; nothing.”

Paul touched her cheek gently with his finger—and it *was* a tear! “Why, Floy!”

“We’ll go home together, and I’ll nurse you, love.”

“Nurse me! Floy. Do *you* think I have grown old-fashioned? Because, I know they say so, and I want to know what they mean, Floy.”

From his nest among the sofa-pillows, where Florence came at the end of every dance, Paul could see and hear almost everything that passed at the Ball, as if the whole were being done for his amusement. There was one thing in particular that Paul observed. Mr. Feeder, after imbibing several custard-cups of negus, began to enjoy himself. The dancing in general was ceremonious, and the music rather solemn—but after the custard-cups, Mr. Feeder told Mr. Toots that he was going to throw a little spirit into the thing.

After that, Mr. Feeder not only began to dance as if he meant dancing and nothing else, but secretly to stimulate the music to perform wild tunes. Further, he became particular in his attentions to the ladies; and dancing with Miss Blimber, whispered to her—whispered to her!—though not so softly but that Paul heard him say this remarkable poetry,

“Had I a heart for falsehood framed,  
I ne'er could injure You!”

This, Paul heard him repeat to four young ladies, in succession. Well might Mr. Feeder say to Mr. Toots, that he was afraid he should be the worse for it to-morrow!

Once when there was a pause in the dancing, a lady told Paul that he seemed very fond of music. Paul replied, that he was; and that if she was too, she ought to hear his sister, Florence, sing. Florence was at first very much frightened at being asked to sing before so many people, and begged earnestly to be excused, yet on Paul calling her to him, and saying, “Do, Floy!

Please! For me, my dear!" she went straight to the piano, and began. When they all drew a little away, that Paul might see her: and when he saw her sitting there alone, so young, and good, and beautiful, and kind to him; and when he heard her thrilling voice, so natural and sweet, and such a golden link between him and all his life's love and happiness, rising out of the silence; he turned his face away, and hid his tears. Not, as he told them when they spoke comfortingly, not that the music was too plaintive or too sorrowful, but it was so very dear to him.

A buzz at last went round among the young gentlemen, of "Dombey's going!" "Little Dombey's going!" and there was a general move after Paul and Florence down the staircase and into the hall, in which the whole Blimber family were included. Such a circumstance, Mr. Feeder said aloud, as had never happened in the case of any former young gentleman within his experience; but it would be difficult to say if this were sober fact or custard-cups. The servants with the butler



at their head, had all an interest in seeing Little Dombey go ; and even the weak-eyed young man, taking out his books and trunks to the coach that was to carry him and Florence to Mrs. Pipchin's for the night, melted visibly.

Once, for a last look, Little Dombey turned and gazed upon the faces thus addressed to him, surprised to see how shining and how bright, and numerous they were, and how they were all piled and heaped up, as faces are at crowded theatres. They swam before him, as he looked, like faces in an agitated glass ; and next moment he was in the dark coach outside, holding close to Florence. From that time, whenever he thought of Doctor Blimber's, it came back as he had seen it in this last view ; and it never seemed to be a real place again, but always a dream, full of eyes.

This was not quite the last of Doctor Blimber's, however. There was something else. There was Mr. Toots. Who, unexpectedly letting down one of the coach-windows, and looking in, said, with a most egregious chuckle, " Is Dombey there ? " and

immediately put the window up again, without waiting for an answer. Nor was this quite the last of Mr. Toots, even; for before the coachman could drive off, he as suddenly let down the other window, and looking in with a precisely similar chuckle, said in a precisely similar tone of voice, "Is Dombey there?" and disappeared precisely as before.

How Florence laughed! Paul often remembered it, and laughed himself whenever he did so.

But there was much, soon afterwards—next day, and after that—which Paul could only recollect confusedly. As, why they stayed at Mrs. Pipchin's days and nights, instead of going home; why he lay in bed, with Florence sitting by his side; whether that had been his father in the room, or only a tall shadow on the wall; whether he had heard his doctor say, of some one, that if they had removed him before the occasion on which he had built up fancies, strong in proportion to his own weakness, it was very possible he might have pined away.

But, he could remember, when he got to his old

London home and was carried up the well-remembered stairs, that there had been the rumbling of a coach for many hours together, while he lay upon the seat, with Florence still beside him, and old Mrs. Pipchin sitting opposite. He remembered his old bed too, when they laid him down in it: his aunt, Miss Tox, and Susan. But, there was something else, and recent too, that still perplexed him.

“I want to speak to Florence, if you please. To Florence by herself, for a moment!”

She bent down over him, and the others stood away.

“Floy, my pet, wasn't that Papa in the hall, when they brought me from the coach?”

“Yes, dear.”

“He didn't cry, and go into his room, Floy, did he, when he saw me coming in?”

Florence shook her head, and pressed her lips against his cheek.

“I'm very glad he didn't cry, Floy. I thought he did. Don't tell them that I asked.”



## VI.

LITTLE DOMBEY had never risen from his little bed. He lay there, listening to the noises in the street, quite tranquilly; not caring much how the time went, but watching it and watching everything about him with observing eyes.

When the sunbeams struck into his room through the rustling blinds, and quivered on the opposite wall, like golden water, he knew that evening was coming on, and that the sky was red and beautiful. As the reflection died away, and a gloom went creeping up the wall, he watched it deepen, deepen, deepen, into night. Then, he thought how the long unseen streets were dotted with lamps, and how the peaceful stars were shining overhead. His fancy had a strange tendency to wander to the River, which he knew

was flowing through the great city; and now he thought how black it was, and how deep it would look, reflecting the hosts of stars—and more than all, how steadily it rolled away to meet the sea.

As it grew later in the night, and footsteps in the street became so rare that he could hear them coming, count them as they passed, and lose them in the hollow distance, he would lie and watch the many-coloured ring about the candle, and wait patiently for day. His only trouble was, the swift and rapid river. He felt forced, sometimes, to try to stop it—to stem it with his childish hands—or choke its way with sand—and when he saw it coming on, resistless, he cried out! But a word from Florence, who was always at his side, restored him to himself; and leaning his poor head upon her breast, he told Floy of his dream, and smiled.

When day began to dawn again, he watched for the sun; and when its cheerful light began to sparkle in the room, he pictured to himself—

pictured! he saw—the high church towers rising up into the morning sky, the town reviving, waking, starting into life once more, the river glistening as it rolled (but rolling fast as ever), and the country bright with dew. Familiar sounds and cries came by degrees into the street below; the servants in the house were roused and busy; faces looked in at the door, and voices asked his attendants softly how he was. Paul always answered for himself, “I am better. I am a great deal better, thank you! Tell Papa so!”

By little and little, he got tired of the bustle of the day, the noise of carriages and carts, and people passing and re-passing: and would fall asleep, or be troubled with a restless and uneasy sense again—the child could hardly tell whether this were in his sleeping or his waking moments—of that rushing river. “Why, will it never stop, Floy?” he would sometimes ask her. “It is bearing me away, I think!”

But, Floy could always soothe and reassure



him; and it was his daily delight to make her lay her head down on his pillow, and take some rest.

“You are always watching me, Floy. Let me watch *you*, now!”

They would prop him up with cushions in a corner of his bed, and there he would recline, the while she lay beside him: bending forward oftentimes to kiss her, and whispering to those who were near that she was tired, and how she had sat up so many nights beside him.

Thus, the flush of the day, in its heat and light, would gradually decline; and again the golden water would be dancing on the wall.

He was visited by as many as three grave doctors—they used to assemble down-stairs, and come up together—and the room was so quiet, and Paul was so observant of them (though he never asked of anybody what they said), that he even knew the difference in the sound of their watches. But his interest centered in Sir Parker Peps, who always took his seat on the side of the bed. For

Paul had heard them say long ago, that that gentleman had been with his mama when she clasped Florence in her arms, and died. And he could not forget it, now. He liked him for it. He was not afraid.

The people round him changed as unaccountably as on that first night at Dr. Blimber's—except Florence—Florence never changed—and what had been Sir Parker Peps, would be his father, sitting with his head leaning on his hand. Old Mrs. Pipchin dozing in an easy chair, often changed to Miss Tox, or his aunt : and Paul was quite content to shut his eyes again, and see what happened next, without emotion. But, this figure with its head leaning on its hand returned so often, and remained so long, and sat so still and solemn, never speaking, never being spoken to, and rarely lifting up its face, that Paul began to wonder languidly, if it were real.

“ Floy ! What is that ? ”

“ Where, dearest ? ”

“ There ! at the bottom of the bed.”

“ There ’s nothing there, except Papa ! ”

The figure lifted up its head, and rose, and coming to the bedside, said :

“ My own boy ! Don’t you know me ? ”

Paul looked it in the face. The face, so altered to his thinking, thrilled while he gazed, as if it were in pain ; and before he could reach out both his hands to take it between them and draw it towards him, the figure turned away quickly from the little bed, and went out at the door.

Paul looked at Florence with a fluttering heart, but he knew what she was going to say, and stopped her. The next time he observed the figure sitting at the bottom of the bed, he called to it.

“ Don’t be so sorry for me, dear Papa ! Indeed I am quite happy ! ”

His father coming, and bending down to him, Paul held him round the neck, and repeated those words to him several times, and very earnestly ; and Paul never saw him in his room again at any time, whether it were day or night, but he called out, “ Don’t be so sorry for me ! Indeed I am



quite happy!" This was the beginning of his always saying in the morning that he was a great deal better, and that they were to tell his father so.

How many times the golden water danced upon the wall; how many nights the dark river rolled towards the sea in spite of him; Paul never counted, never sought to know. If their kindness or his sense of it, could have increased they were more kind, and he more grateful every day; but, whether there were many days or few, appeared of little moment now, to the gentle boy.

One night he had been thinking of his mother and her picture in the drawing-room down stairs, and had thought she must have loved sweet Florence better than his father did, to have held her in her arms when she felt that she was dying,—for even he, her brother, who had such dear love for her, could have no greater wish than that. The train of thought suggested to him to inquire if he had ever seen his mother? For,

he could not remember whether they had told him yes, or no; the river running very fast, and confusing his mind.

“Floy, did I ever see mama?”

“No, darling, why?”

“Did I never see any kind face, like a mama’s, looking at me when I was a baby, Floy?”

“Oh yes, dear!”

“Whose, Floy?”

“Your old nurse’s. Often.”

“And where is my old nurse? Is she dead too? Floy, are we *all* dead, except you?”

There was a hurry in the room for an instant—longer, perhaps; but it seemed no more—then all was still again: and Florence, with her face quite colourless, but smiling, held his head upon her arm. Her arm trembled very much.

“Show me that old nurse, Floy, if you please!”

“She is not here, darling. She shall come to-morrow.”

“Thank you, Floy!”

Paul closed his eyes with those words, and fell

asleep. When he awoke, the sun was high, and the broad day was clear and warm. He lay a little, looking at the windows, which were open, and the curtains rustling in the air, and waving to and fro. Then, he said, "Floy, is it to-morrow? Is she come?"

Some one seemed to go in quest of her. The next thing that happened was a noise of footsteps on the stairs, and then Paul woke—woke mind and body—and sat upright in his bed. He saw them now about him. There was no gray mist before them, as there had been sometimes in the night. He knew them every one, and called them by their names.

"And who is this? Is this my old nurse?" asked the child, regarding with a radiant-smile, a figure coming in.

Yes, yes. No other stranger would have shed those tears at sight of him, and called him her dear boy, her pretty boy, her own poor blighted child. No other woman would have stooped down by his bed, and taken up his wasted hand, and put it to



her lips and breast, as one who had some right to fondle it. No other woman would have so forgotten everybody there but him and Floy, and been so full of tenderness and pity.

“Floy! this is a kind good face! I am glad to see it again. Don’t go away, old nurse! Stay here! Good bye!”

“Good bye, my child?” cried Mrs. Pipchin, hurrying to his bed’s head. “Not good bye?”

“Ah, yes! Good bye!—Where is Papa?”

He felt his father’s breath upon his cheek, before the words had parted from his lips. The feeble hand waved in the air, as if it cried, ‘good bye!’ again.

“Now lay me down; and Floy, come close to me, and let me see you!”

Sister and brother wound their arms around each other, and the golden light came streaming in, and fell upon them, locked together.

“How fast the river runs, between its green banks and the rushes, Floy! But, it’s very near the sea. I hear the waves! They always said so!”

Presently, he told her that the motion of the boat upon the stream was lulling him to rest. How green the banks were now, how bright the flowers growing on them, how tall the rushes! Now, the boat was out at sea, but gliding smoothly on. And now, there was a shore before him. Who stood on the bank!—

He put his hands together, as he had been used to do, at his prayers. He did not remove his arms to do it; but they saw him fold them so, behind his sister's neck.

“Mama is like you, Floy. I know her by the face! But tell them that the picture on the stairs at school, is not Divine enough. The light about the head is shining on me as I go!”

The golden ripple on the wall came back again, and nothing else stirred in the room. The old, old, fashion! The fashion that came in with our first garments, and will last unchanged until our race has run its course, and the wide firmament is rolled up like a scroll. The old, old fashion—Death!

Oh, thank God, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of Immortality! And look upon us, Angels of young children, with regards not quite estranged, when the swift river bears us to the ocean!

THE END.