HARD TIMES.
BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Day and night again, day and night again. No Stephen Blackpool. Where was the man, and why did he not come back? Every night, Sissy went to Rachael's lodging, and sat with her in her small neat room. All day, Rachael toiled as such people must toil, whatever their anxieties. The smoke-serpents were indifferent who was lost or found, who turned out bad or good; the melancholy mad elephants, like the Hard Fact men, abated nothing of their set routine, whatever happened. Day and night again, day and night again. The monotony was unbroken. Even Stephen Blackpool's disappearance was falling into the general way, and becoming monotonous a wonder as any piece of machinery in Coketown.

"I misdoubt," said Rachael, "if there is as many as twenty left in all this place, who have any trust in the poor dear lad now." She said it to Sissy, as they sat in her lodging, lighted only by the lamp at the street corner. Sissy had come there when it was already dark, to await her return from work; and they had since sat at the window where Rachael had found her, wanting no brighter light to shine on their sorrowful talk.

"If it hadn't been mercifully brought about that I was to have you to speak to," pursued Rachael, "times are when I think my mind would not have kept right. But get hope and strength through you; and you believe that though appearances may rise against him, he will be proved clear."

"I do believe so," returned Sissy, "with my whole heart. I feel so certain, Rachael, that the confidence you hold in yours against all discouragement, is not like to be wrong that I have no more doubt of him than if I had known him through as many years of trial as you have."

"And I, my dear," said Rachael, with a tremble in her voice, "have known him through them all, to be, according to his quiet ways, so faithful to everything honest and good, that if he was never to be heard of more, and I was to live to be a hundred years old, I could say with my last breath, God knows my heart, I have never once left trusting Stephen Blackpool!"

"We all believe, up at the Lodge, Rachael, that he will be freed from suspicion, sooner or later."

"The better I know it to be so believed there, my dear," said Rachael, "and the kinder I feel, that you come away from there, purely to comfort me, and keep me company, and be seen wi' me when I am not yet free from all suspicion myself, the more grieved I am that I should ever have spoken those mistrusting words to the young lady. Yet—"

"You don't mistrust her now, Rachael?"

"Now that you have brought us more together, no. But I can't at all times keep out of my mind—"

Her voice so sunk into a low and slow communing with herself, that Sissy, sitting by her side, was obliged to listen with attention.

"I can't at all times keep out of my mind, mistrusings of some one. I can't think who 'tis, I can't think how or why it may be done, but I mistrust that some one has put Stephen out of the way. I mistrust that by his coming back of his own accord, and showing himself innocent before them all, some one would be confounded, who — to prevent that — has stopped him, and put him out of the way."

"That is a dreadful thought," said Sissy, turning pale.

"It is a dreadful thought to think he may be murdered."

Sissy shuddered, and turned paler yet.

"When it makes its way into my mind, dearest," said Rachael, "and it will come sometimes, though I do all I can to keep it out, wi' counting on to high numbers as I work, and saying over and over again pieces that I knew when I were a child,—I fall into such a wild, hot hurry, that, however tired I am, I want to walk fast, miles and miles. I must get the better of this before bed-time. I'll walk home wi' you."

"He might fall ill upon the journey back," said Sissy, faintly offering a worn-out scrap of hope; "and in such a case, there are many places on the road where he might stop."

"But he is in none of them. He has been sought for in all, and he's not there."
“True,” was Sissy’s reluctant admission.

“He’d walk the journey in two days. If he was footsore and couldn’t walk, I sent him, in the letter he got, the money to ride, lest he should have none of his own to spare.”

“Let us hope that to-morrow will bring something better, Rachael. Come into the air!”

Her gentle hand adjusted Rachael’s shawl upon her shining black hair in the usual manner of her wearing it, and they went out. The night being fine, little knots of Hands were here and there lingering at street-corners; but it was supper-time with the greater part of them, and there were but few people in the streets.

“You are not so hurried now, Rachael, and your hand is cooler.”

“I get better dear, if I can only walk, and breathe a little fresh. Times when I can’t, I turn weak and confused.”

“But you must not begin to fail, Rachael, for you may be wanted at any time to stand by Stephen. To-morrow is Saturday. If no news comes to-morrow, let us walk in the country on Sunday morning, and strengthen you for another week. Will you go?”

“Yes, dear.”

They were by this time in the street where Mr. Bounderby’s house stood. The way to Sissey’s destination led them past the door, and they were going straight towards it. Some train had newly arrived in Coketown, which had put a number of vehicles in motion, and scattered a considerable bustle about the town. Several coaches were rattling before them and behind them as they approached Mr. Bounderby, and one of the latter drew up with such briskness as they might be supposed to reside, as have been afforded by the young woman Rachael, fortunately now present to identify, I have had the happiness to succeed, and to bring that person with me—I need not say most unwillingly on her part. It has not been, sir, and connecting together such imperfect clues to the part of the country in which that person might be supposed to reside, as have been afforded by the young woman Rachael, as they closed in after Mrs. Sparsit and her prize; and the whole body

“Fetch Mr. Bounderby down!” cried Mrs. Sparsit: “Rachael, young woman; you know who this is?”

“It’s Mrs. Pegler,” said Rachael.

“I should think it is!” cried Mrs. Sparsit, exulting. “Fetch Mr. Bounderby. Stand away, everybody!” Here old Mrs. Pegler, muffling herself up, and shrinking from observation, whispered a word of entreaty. “Don’t tell me,” said Mrs. Sparsit, aloud, “I have told you twenty times, coming along, that I will not leave you till I have handed you over to him myself!”

Mr. Bounderby now appeared, accompanied by Mr. Gradgrind and the whelp, with whom he had been holding conference upstairs. Mr. Bounderby looked more astonished than hospitable, at sight of this uninvited party in his dining-room.

“Why, what’s the matter now!” said he.

“Mrs. Sparsit, ma’am?”

“Sir,” explained that worthy woman, “I trust it is my good fortune to produce a person you have much desired to find. Stimulated by my wish to relieve your mind, sir, and connecting together such imperfect clues to the part of the country in which that person might be supposed to reside, as have been afforded by the young woman Rachael, fortunately now present to identify, I have had the happiness to succeed, and to bring that person with me—I need not say most unwillingly on her part. It has not been, sir, without some trouble that I have effected this; but trouble in your service is to me a pleasure, and hunger, thirst, and cold, a real gratification.”

Hereupon, no other than the mysterious old woman descended. Whom Mrs. Sparsit incontinently collared.

“Leave her alone, everybody!” cried Mrs. Sparsit, with great energy. “Let nobody touch her. She belongs to me. Come in, ma’am!” then said Mrs. Sparsit, reversing her former word of command. “Come in, ma’am, or we’ll have you dragged in!”

The spectacle of a matron of classical deportment, seizing an ancient woman by the throat, and halting her into a dwelling-house, would have been, under any circumstances, sufficient temptation to all true English stragglers so blest as to witness it, to force a way into that dwelling-house and see the matter out. But when the phenomenon was enhanced by the notoriety and mystery by this time associated all over the town, with the Bank robbery, it would have lured the strugglers in, with an irresistible attraction, though the roof had been expected to fall upon their heads. Accordingly, the chance witnesses on the ground, consisting of the busiest of the neighbours to the number of some five-and-twenty, closed in after Sissy and Rachael, as they closed in after Mrs. Sparsit and her prize; and the whole body made a disorderly irruption into Mr. Bounderby’s dining room, where the people behind lost not a moment’s time in mounting on the chairs, to get the better of the people in front. 

“Fetch Mr. Bounderby down!” cried Mrs. Sparsit. “Rachael, young woman; you know who this is?”

His highly unexpected demand, in great wrath.

“Sir!” exclaimed Mrs. Sparsit, faintly.

“Why don’t you mind your own business, ma’am?” roared Bounderby. “How dare you go and poke your officious nose into my family affairs?”

“Mrs. Sparsit, ma’am!”

“Why is it you mean by this!” was his highly unexpected demand, in great wrath. “I ask you, what do you mean by this, Mrs. Sparsit, ma’am!”

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This allusion to her favorite feature overpowered Mrs. Sparsit. She sat down stiffly in a chair, as if she were frozen; and, with a fixed stare at Mr. Bounderby, slowly grated her mittens against one another, as if they were frozen too.

"My dear Josiah!" cried Mrs. Pegler, trembling. "My darling boy! I am not to blame. It was not my fault, Josiah. I told this lady over and over again, that I knew she was doing what would not be agreeable to you, but she would do it."

"What did you let her bring you for? Couldn't you knock her cap off, or her tooth out, or scratch her, or do something or other to her?" asked Bounderby.

"My own boy! She threatened me that if I resisted her, I should be brought by constables, and it was better to come quietly than make that stir in such a—" Mrs. Pegler glanced timidly but proudly round the walls—"such a fine house as this. Indeed, indeed, it is not my fault! My dear, noble, stately boy! I have always lived quiet and secret, Josiah, my dear, I have never broken the condition once. I have never said I was your mother. I have admired you at a distance; and if I have come to town sometimes, with long times between, to take a proud peep at you, I have done it unbeknown, my love, and gone away again."

Mr. Bounderby, with his hands in his pockets, walked in impatient mortification up and down at the side of the long dining-table, while the spectators greedily took in every syllable of Mrs. Pegler's appeal, and at each succeeding syllable became more and more round-eyed. Mr. Bounderby still walking up and down when Mrs. Pegler had done, Mr. Gradgrind addressed that maligned old lady:

"I am surprised, madam," he observed with severity, "that in your old age you have the face to claim Mr. Bounderby for your son, after your unnatural and inhuman treatment of him."

"Me unnatural!" cried poor old Mrs. Pegler. "Me inhuman! To my dear boy?"

"Dear!" repeated Mr. Gradgrind. "Yes; dear in his self-made prosperity, madam, I dare say. Not very dear, however, when you deserted him in his infancy, and left him to the brutality of a drunken grandmother."

"I deserted my Josiah!" cried Mrs. Pegler, clasping her hands. "Now, Lord forgive you, sir, for your wicked imaginations, and for your scandal against the memory of my poor mother, who died in my arms before Josiah was born. May you repent of it, sir, and live to know better!"

She was so very earnest and injured, that Mr. Gradgrind, shocked by the possibility which dawned upon him, said in a gentler tone:

"Do you deny, then, madam, that you left your son to—to be brought up in the gutter?"

"Josiah in the gutter!" exclaimed Mrs. Pegler. "No such a thing, sir. Never! For shame on you! My dear boy knows, and will give you to know, that though he come of humble parents, he come of parents that loved him as dear as the best could, and never thought it hardship on themselves to pinch a bit that he might have a chance to cypher beautiful, and I've his books at home to show it! Aye, have I!" said Mrs. Pegler with indignant pride. "And my dear boy knows, and will give you to know, sir, that after his beloved father died when he was eight year old, his mother, too, could pinch a bit, as it was her duty and her pleasure and her pride to do it, to help him out in life, and put him 'prentice. And a steady lad he was, and a kind master he had to lend him a hand, and well he worked his own way forward to be rich and thriving. And I'll give you to know, sir—for this my dear boy won't—that though his mother kept but a little village shop, he never forgot her, but pensioned me on thirty pound a-year—more than I want, for I put by out of it—only making the condition that I was to keep down in my own part, and make no boasts about him, and not trouble him. And I never have, except with looking at him once a year, when he has never knowed it. And it's right," said poor old Mrs. Pegler, in affectionate championship, "that I should keep down in my own part, and I have no doubts that if I was here I should do a many unbecitting things, and I am well contented, and I can keep my pride in my Josiah to myself, and I can love for love's own sake! And I am ashamed of you, sir," said Mrs. Pegler, lastly, "for your slanders and suspicions. And I never stood here before, nor ever wanted to stand here when my dear son said no. And I shouldn't be here now, if it hadn't been for being brought here. And for shame upon you, O shame, to accuse me of being a bad mother to my son, with my son standing here to tell you so different!"

The bystanders, on and off the dining-room chairs, raised a murmur of sympathy with Mrs. Pegler, and Mr. Gradgrind felt himself innocently placed in a very distressing predicament, when Mr. Bounderby, who had never ceased walking up and down, and had every moment swelled larger and larger and grown redder and redder, stopped short.

"I don't exactly know," said Mr. Bounderby, "how I come to be favored with the attendance of the present company, but I don't inquire. When they're quite satisfied, perhaps they'll be so good as to disperse; whether they're satisfied or not, perhaps they'll be so good as to disperse. I'm not bound to deliver a lecture on my family affairs, I have not undertaken to do it, and I'm not a going to do it. Therefore those who expect any explanation whatever upon that branch of the subject, will be disappointed—particularly Tom Gradgrind, and he can't know it too soon. In reference to the Bank robbery, there has been a mistake made, concerning
my mother. If there hadn’t been over-officiousness it wouldn’t have been made, and I hate over-officiousness at all times, whether or no. Good evening!”

Although Mr. Bounderby carried it off in these terms, holding the door open for the company to depart, there was a blustering sheepishness upon him, at once extremely crest-fallen and superelevatively absurd. Detected as the Bully of humility, who had built his windy reputation upon lies, and in his boastfulness had put the honest truth as far away from him as if he had advanced the mean claim (there is no meaner) to tack himself on to a pedigree, he cut a most ridiculous figure. With the people filing off at the door he held, who he knew would carry what had passed to the whole town, to be given to the four winds, he could not have looked a Bully more shorn and forlorn, if he had had his ears cropped. Even that unlucky female Mrs. Sparsit, fallen from her pinnacle to Bounderby. He seemed to feel that as long as they had gone very far, and spoke with there parted. Mr. Gradgrind joined them occupy a bed at her son’s for that night, man and self-made Humbug, Josiah Boun-

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Rachael and Sissy, leaving Mrs. Pegler to occupy a bed at her son’s for that night, walked together to the gate of Stone Lodge and there parted. Mr. Gradgrind joined them before they had gone very far, and spoke with much interest of Stephen Blackpool; for whom he thought this signal failure of the suspicions muck interest of Stephen Blackpool; for whom before they had gone very far, and spoke with there parted. Mr. Gradgrind joined them supply a bed at her son’s for that night, man and self-made Humbug, Josiah Boun-

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As Coketown cast ashes not only on its own head but on the neighbourhood’s too—after the manner of those pious persons who do penance for their own sins by putting other people into sackcloth—it was customary for those who now and then thirsted for a draught of pure air, which is not absolutely the most wicked among the vanities of life, to get a few miles away by the railroad, and then begin their walk, or their lounge in the fields. Sissy and Rachael helped themselves out of the smoke by the usual means, and were put down at a station about midway between the town and Mr. Bounderby’s retreat.

Though the green landscape was blotted here and there with heaps of coal, it was green elsewhere, and there were trees to see, and there were larks singing (though it was  Sunday), and there were pleasant scents in the air, and all was overarched by a bright blue sky. In the distance one way, Coketown showed as a black mist; in another distance, hills began to rise; in a third, there was a faint change in the light of the horizon, where it shone upon the far-off sea. Under their feet, the grass was fresh; beautiful shadows of branches flickered upon it, and speckled it; hedgerows were luxuriant; everything was at peace. Engines at pits’ mouths, and lean old horses that had worn the circle of their daily labor into the ground, were alike quiet; wheels had ceased for a short space to turn; and the great wheel of earth seemed to revolve without the shocks and noises of another time. They walked on, across the fields and down the shady lanes, sometimes getting over a fragment of a fence so rotten that it dropped at a touch of the foot, sometimes passing near a wreck of bricks and beams overgrown with grass, marking the site of deserted works. They followed paths and tracks, however slight. Mounds where the grass was rank and high, and where brambles, dockweed and such-like vegetation, were confusedly heaped together, they always avoided; for dismal stories were told in that country of the old pits hidden beneath such indications.

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As Sissy said it, her eyes were attracted by another of those rotten fragments of fence
She had unclasped her hand, and was in unsteady motion, before Eachael caught her in both arms with a scream that resounded over the wide landscape. Before them, at their very feet, was the brink of a black ragged chasm, hidden by the thick grass. They sprang back, and fell upon their knees, each hiding her face upon the other's neck.

"O, my good God! He's down there!" Sissy faltered.

They were afraid to look; but they did examine it, and found no mark of violence, inside or out. It had been lying there some days, for rain and dew had stained it, and the mark of its shape was on the grass where it had fallen. They looked fearfully about, without moving, but could see nothing more. "Eachael," Sissy whispered, "I will go on a little by myself;" and she had unclasped her hand, and was in the act of stepping forward, when Eachael caught her in both arms with a scream that resounded over the wide landscape. Before them, at their very feet, was the brink of a black ragged chasm, hidden by the thick grass. They sprang back, and fell upon their knees, each hiding her face upon the other's neck.

"O, my good God! He's down there! Down there!" At first this, and her terrific screams, were all that could be got from Eachael, by any tears, by any prayers, by any representations, by any means. It was impossible to hush her; and it was deadly necessary to hold her, or she would have flung herself down the shaft.

"Eachael, dear Eachael, good Eachael, for the love of Heaven not these dreadful cries! Think of Stephen, think of Stephen, think of Stephen!"

By an earnest repetition of this entreaty, poured out in all the agony of such a moment, Sissy at last brought her to be silent, and to trust her now. After standing for a moment to see her running, wringing her hands as she ran, she turned and went upon her own search; she stopped at the hedge to tie her shawl there as a guide to the place, then threw her bonnet aside, and ran as she had never run before.

"Run, Sissy, run, in Heaven's name! Don't stop for breath. Run, run! Quickening herself by carrying such entreaties in her thoughts, she ran from field to field, and lane to lane, and place to place, as she had never run before; until she came to a shed by an engine-house, where two men lay in the shade asleep on straw.

First to wake them, and next to tell them, all so wild and breathless as she was, what had brought her there, were difficulties; but they no sooner understood her than their spirits were on fire like hers. One of the men was in a drunken slumber, but on his comrade's shouting to him that a man had fallen down the Old Hell Shaft, he started out to a pool of dirty water, put his head in it, and came back sober.

With these two men she ran to another half-a-mile further, and with that one to another, while they ran elsewhere. Then a horse was found; and she got another man to ride for life or death to the railroad, and send a message to Louisa, which she wrote and gave him. By this time a whole village was up; and windlasses, ropes, poles, buckets, candles, lanterns, all things necessary, were fast collecting and being brought into one place, to be carried to the Old Hell Shaft.

It seemed now hours and hours since she had left the lost man lying in the grave where he had been buried alive. She could not bear to run away from it any longer—it was like deserting him—and she hurried swiftly back, accompanied by half-a-dozen laborers, including the drunken man whom the news had sobered, and who was the best man of all. When they came to the Old Hell Shaft, they found it as lonely as she had left it. The men called and listened as she had done, and examined the edge of the chasm, and settled how it had happened, and then sat down to wait until the implements they wanted should come up.

Every sound of insects in the air, every stirring of the leaves, every whisper among these men, made Sissy tremble, for she
thought it was a cry at the bottom of the pit. But the wind blew idly over it, and no sound arose to the surface, and they sat upon the grass, waiting and waiting. After they had waited some time, straggling people who had heard of the accident began to come up; then the real help of implements began to arrive. In the midst of this, Rachael returned; and with her party there was a surgeon, who brought some wine and medicines. But the expectation among the people that the man would be found alive, was very slight indeed.

There being now people enough present, to impede the work, the sobered man put himself at the head of the rest, or was put there by the general consent, and made a large ring round the Old Hell Shaft, and appointed men to keep it. Besides such volunteers as were accepted to work, only Sissy and Rachael were at first permitted within this ring; but, later in the day, when the message brought an express from Coketown, Mr. Gradgrind and Louisa, and Mr. Bounderby, and the whelp, were also there.

The sun was four hours lower than when Sissy and Rachael had first sat down upon the grass, before a means of enabling two men to descend securely was rigged with poles and ropes. Difficulties had arisen in the construction of this machine, simple as it was; requisites had been found wanting, and messages had had to go and return. It was five o'clock in the afternoon of the bright autumnal Sunday, before a candle was sent down to try the air, while three or four rough faces stood crowded close together, attentively watching it: the men at the windlass lowering as they were told. The candle was brought up again, feebly burning, and then some water was cast in. Then the bucket was hooked on; and the sobered man and another got in with lights, giving the word "Lower away!"

As the rope went out, tight and strained, and the windlass creaked, there was not a breath among the one or two hundred men and women looking on, that came as it was wont to come. The signal was given and the windlass stopped, with abundant rope to spare. Apparently so long an interval ensued that only one was returning.

When he said "Alive!" a great shout arose, and many eyes had tears in them.

"But he's hurt very bad," he added, as soon as he could make himself heard again, "Where's doctor? He's hurt so very bad sir, that we don't know how to get him up!"

They all consulted together, and looked anxiously at the surgeon, as he asked some questions, and shook his head on receiving the replies. The sun was setting now; and the red light in the evening sky touched every face there, and caused it to be distinctly seen in all its wrapt suspense.

The consultation ended in the man returning to the windlass, and the pitman going down again, carrying the wine and some other small matters with him. Then the other man came up. In the meantime, under the surgeon's directions, some men brought a hurdle, on which others made a thick bed of spare clothes covered with loose straw, while he himself contrived some bandages and slings from shawls and handkerchiefs. As these were made, they were hung upon an arm of the pitman who had last come up, with instructions how to use them; and as he stood, shown by the light he carried, leaning his powerful loose hand upon one of the poles, and sometimes glancing round upon the people, he was not the least conspicuous figure in the scene. It was dark now, and torches were kindled.

It appeared from the little this man said to those about him, which was quickly repeated all over the circle, that the lost man had fallen upon a mass of crumbled rubbish with which the pit was half choked up, and that his fall had been further broken by some jagged earth at the side. He lay upon his back with one arm doubled under him, and according to his own belief had hardly stirred since he fell, except that he had moved his free hand to a side pocket, in which he remembered to have some bread and meat (of which he had swallowed crumbs), and had likewise scooped up a little water in it now and then. He had come straight away from his work, on being written to, and had walked the whole journey; and was on his way to Mr. Bounderby's country-house after dark, when he fell. He was crossing that dangerous country at such a dangerous time, because he was innocent of what was laid to his charge, and couldn't rest from coming the nearest way to deliver himself up. The Old Hell Shaft, the pitman said, with a curse upon it, was worthy of its bad name to the last; for though Stephen could speak now, he believed it would soon be found to have mangled the life out of him.

When all was ready, this man, still taking his last hurried charges from his comrades and the surgeon after the windlass had begun to lower him, disappeared into the pit. The rope went out as before, the signal was made as before, and the windlass stopped. No
man removed his hand from it now. Every one waited with his grasp set, and his body bent down to the work, ready to reverse and wind in. At length the signal was given, and all the ring leaned forward.

For now, the rope came in, tightened and strained to its utmost as it appeared, and the men turned heavily, and the windlass complained. It was scarcely endurable to look at the rope, and think of its giving way. But ring after ring was coiled upon the barrel of the windlass safely, and the connecting chains appeared, and finally the bucket with the two men holding on at the sides—a sight to make the head swim, and oppress the heart—and tenderly supporting between them, slung and tied within, the figure of a poor, crushed, human creature.

A low murmur of pity went round the throng, and the women wept aloud, as this form, almost without form, was moved very slowly from its iron deliverance, and laid upon the bed of straw. At first none but the surgeon went close to it. He did what he could in its adjustment on the couch, but the best that he could do was to cover it. That gently done, he called to him Rachael and Sissy. And at that time the pale, worn, patient face was seen looking up at the sky, with the broken right hand lying bare on the outside of the covering garments, as if waiting to be taken by another hand.

They gave him drink, moistened his face with water, and administered some drops of cordial and wine. Though he lay quite motionless looking up at the sky, he smiled and said, "Rachael."

She stooped down on the grass at his side, and bent over him until her eyes were between his and the sky, for he could not so much as turn them to look at her.

"Rachael, my dear."

She took his hand. He smiled again and said, "Don't let 't go."

"Thou'rt in great pain, my own dear Stephen?"

"I ha' been, but not now. I ha' been—dreadful, and dree, and long, my dear—but 'tis over now. Ah Rachael, aw a muddle! Fro' first to last, a muddle!"

The spectre of his old look seemed to pass his face, as if waiting to be seen more clear, and had made it his dying prayer. When I fell, I was in anger with her, and hurrying on to be as unjust to her as others was to me. But in our judgments, like as in our doings, we must bear and forbear. In my pain an trouble lookin up yonder, - wi' it shin-in on me — I ha' seen more clear, and had made it my dying prayer that aw th' world may on'y come togeth'er more, an' get a better understanin' o' one anther, than when I was in't my own weak self."

Lois, hearing what he said, bent over him on the opposite side to Rachael, so that he could see her.

"You ha' heard?" he said after a few moments silence. "I ha' not forgot yo, ledy."

"Yes, Stephen, I have heard you. And your prayer is mine."

"You ha' a father. Will yo tak a mes-sage to him?"

"He is here," said Lois, with dread. "Shall I bring him to you?"

"If yo please."

Lois returned with her father. Standing hand-in-hand, they both looked down upon the solemn countenance.

"Sir, yo will clear me an mak my name good wi' aw men. This I leave to yo."

"If aw th' things that touch us, my dear, was not so muddled, I should'n ha' had'a need to coom heer. If we was not in a muddle among ourseln, I should'n ha' been by my own fellow weavers and workin' brothers, so mistook. If Mr. Bounderby had ever knowd me right—if he'd ever know'd me at aw—he would'n ha' took'n offence wi' me. He would'n ha' suspect'n' me. But look up yonder, Rachael! Look above!"

Following his eyes, she saw that he was gazing at a star.

"It ha' shined upon me," he said reverently, "in my pain and trouble down below. It ha' shined into my mind. I ha' look'n at't an thowt o' thee, Rachael, till the muddle in my mind have cleared awa, above a bit, I hope. If soom ha' been wandin' in unnerstanin' me better, I, too, ha' been wandin' in unnerstanin' them better. When I got thy letter, I easily believe that what the young lady sen an done to me, an' what her brother sen an done to me was one, an' that there were a wicked plot betwixt 'em. When I fell, I was in anger wi' her, an hurrying on t' be as unjust t' her as others was t' me. But in our judgments, like as in our doings, we must bear and forbear. In my pain an trouble lookin up yonder,—wi' it shin-in on me—I ha' seen more clear, and ha' made it my dying prayer that aw th' world may on'y come togeth'er more, an get a better unnerstanin' o' one anther, than when I was in't my own weak self."

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"Sir, yo will clear me an mak my name good wi' aw men. This I leave to yo."

"Shall I bring him to you?"
Mr. Gradgrind was troubled and asked how? "Sir," was the reply; "yor son will tell yo how. Ask him. I mak no charges: I leave none ahint me: not a single word. I ha' seen an spok'n wi' yor son, one night. I ask no more o' yo than that, yo clear me—an I trust to yo to do it."

The bearers being now ready to carry him away, and the surgeon being anxious for his removal, those who had torches or lanterns, prepared to go in front of the litter. Before it was raised, and while they were arranging how to go, he said to Rachael, looking upward at the star:

"Often as I coom to myseln, and found it shinin on me down there in my trouble, I thowt it were the star as guided to Oui Saviour's home. I awmust think it be the very star!"

They lifted him up, and he was overjoyed to find that they were about to take him in the direction whither the star seemed to him to lead.

"Rachael, beloved lass! Don't let go my hand. We may walk togeether t'night, my dear!"

"I will hold thy hand, and keep beside thee, Stephen, all the way."

"Bless thee! Will soombody be pleased to coover my face!"

They carried him very gently along the fields, and down the lanes, and over the wide landscape; Rachael always holding the hand in hers. Very few whispers broke the mournful silence. It was soon a funeral procession. The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility, and sorrow, and forgiveness, he had gone to his Redeemer's rest.

IMITATION.

We copy each other more than most of us are aware; and what is further significant, a very large portion of all that we do is simply copying. A very few thinkers can cut out work for a large body of doers; an original artist with pen or pencil can supply where work for a large body of doers; an original copyist to work, who realise his idea upon the material, and produce brass guns, bronze statues, and bells—copies, intended themselves to produce copies; the wood-engraving; the blocks used by paper-stainers; the blocks which impart pattern to oil-cloth and painted table-covers; the blocks employed in the better kind of calico-printing all belong to a system of raised lines for printing, or the production of copies. When we copy a letter by any one of the numerous copying machines, or print from a lithographic stone or a zincographic plate, or steal a printed page by the anastatic process, or copy shells and leaves by the nature-printing process, or transfer a pattern to blue earthenware from thin printed paper —what do we, in effect, but print or copy from chemical lines?

Fac-simile by casting. A truly wide world of imitation. We make a mould in sand by means of a hand-made model; we pour molten iron into the mould, and obtain a cannon, a cylinder, a pipe, a fan, a girder, a stove-grate, a girder, a rail, a scrapper, all copies. We use steel instead of iron, and obtain an infinity of polished castings. We employ a mixed metal of copper with tin or with zinc, and we produce brass candlesticks and chandeliers, brass ornaments, brass guns, bronze statues, and bells—copies also. We call to our aid the softer metal and summon into existence armies of useful articles in tin, lead, pewter, Britannia metal, and the like. We use a cold solution instead of hot metal, and obtain by casting, plaster statues, and thousands of copied beauties from the works of the greatest geniuses. We pour melted wax into moulds, and produce those superb copies of humanity which adorn the windows of the perruquier's shops; we pour melted stearine into moulds, and there come forth excellent candles; we pour liquid clay into moulds, and our Copeland's and Mintons show us their delicate Parian statuettes and translucent table-porcelain.
BEFORE the ring formed round the Old Hell Shaft was broken, one figure had disappeared from within it. Mr. Bounderby and his shadow had not stood near Louisa, who held her father's arm, but in a retired place by themselves. When Mr. Gradgrind was summoned to the couch, Sissy, attentive to all that happened, slipped behind that wicked shadow—a sight in the horror of his face, if there had been eyes there for any sight but one—and whispered in his ear. Without turning his head, he conferred with her a few moments, and vanished. Thus the whelp had gone out of the circle before the people moved.

When the father reached home, he sent a message to Mr. Bounderby's, desiring his son to come to him directly. The reply was, that Mr. Bounderby having missed him in the crowd, and seen nothing of him since, had supposed him to be at Stone Lodge.

"I believe, father," said Louisa, "he will not come back to town to-night." Mr. Gradgrind turned away, and said no more.

In the morning, he went down to the Bank himself as soon as it was opened, and seeing his son's place empty (he had, not the courage to look in at first), went back along the street to meet Mr. Bounderby on his way there. To whom he said that, for reasons he would soon explain, but entreated not then to be asked for, he had found it necessary to employ his son at a distance for a little while. Also, that he was charged with the duty of vindicating Stephen Blackpool's memory, and declaring the thief, Mr. Bounderby, quite confounded, stood stock still in the street after his father-in-law had left him, swelling like an Immense soap-bubble, without its beauty.

Mr. Gradgrind went home, locked himself in his room, and kept it all that day. When Sissy and Louisa tapped at his door, he said, without opening it, "Not now, my dears; in the evening." On their return in the evening, he said, "I am not able yet—tomorrow." He ate nothing all day, and had no candle after dark; and they heard him walking to and fro late at night.

But, in the morning he appeared at breakfast at the usual hour, and took his usual place at the table. Aged and bent, he looked, and quite bowed down; and yet he looked a wiser man, and a better man, than in the days when in this life he wanted nothing but facts. Before he left the room, he appointed a time for them to come to him; and so, with his gray head drooping, went away.

"Dear father," said Louisa, when they kept their appointment, "you have three young children left. They will be different, I will be different yet, with Heaven's help."

She gave her hand to Sissy, as if she meant with her help too.

"Your wretched brother," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Do you think he had planned this robbery, when he went with you to the lodging?"

"I fear so, father. I know he had wanted money very much, and had spent a great deal."

"The poor man being about to leave the town, it came into his evil brain to cast suspicion on him?"

"I think it must have flashed upon him while he sat there, father. For, I asked him to go there with me. The visit did not originate with him."

"He had some conversation with the poor man. Did he take him aside?"

"He took him out of the room. I asked him afterwards, why he had done so, and he made a plausible excuse; but, since last night, father, and when I remember the circumstances by its light, I am afraid I can imagine too truly what passed between them."

"Let me know," said her father, "if your thoughts present your guilty brother in the same dark view as mine."

"I fear, father," hesitated Louisa, "that he must have made some representation to Stephen Blackpool—perhaps in my name, perhaps in his own—which induced him to do in good faith and honesty, what he had never done before, and to wait about the Bank those two or three nights before he left the town."

"Too plain!" returned the father. "Too plain!"

He shaded his face, and remained silent for some moments. Recovering himself, he said:

"And now, how is he to be found? How is he
...to be saved from justice? In the few hours that I can possibly allow to elapse before I publish the truth, how is he to be found by us, and only by us? Ten thousand pounds could not effect it.'

"Sissy has effected it, father."

He raised his eyes to where she stood, like a good fairy in his house, and said in a tone of softened gratitude and grateful kindness, "It is always you, my child!"

"We had our fears," Sissy explained, glancing at Louisa, "before yesterday; and when I saw you brought to the side of the litter last night, and heard what passed (being close to Rachael all the time), I went to him when no one saw, and said to him, 'Don't look at me. See where your father is. Escape at once, for his sake and your own!' He was in a tremble before I whispered to him, and he started and trembled more then, and said, 'Where can I go? I have very little money, and I don't know who will hide me!' I thought of father's old circus. I have not forgotten where Mr. Sleary goes at this time of year, and I read of him in a paper only yesterday; and when "Thank Heaven!" exclaimed his father.

"He may be got abroad yet."

It was the more hopeful, as the town to which Sissy had directed him was within three hours' journey of Liverpool, whence he could be swiftly dispatched to any part of the world. But, caution being necessary in communicating with him—for there, was a greater danger every moment of his being suspected now, and nobody could be sure at heart but that Mr. Bounderby himself, in a bullying vein of public zeal, might play a Roman part—it was not consented that Sissy and Louisa should repair to the place in question, by a circuitous course, alone; and that the unhappy father, setting forth in an opposite direction, should get round to the same bourne by another and wider route. It was further agreed that he should not present himself to Mr. Sleary, lest his intentions should be mistrusted, or the intelligence of his arrival should cause his son to take flight anew; but, that the communication should be left to Sissy and Louisa to open; and that they should inform the cause of so much misery and disgrace, of his father's being at hand and of the purpose for which they had come.

When these arrangements had been well considered and were fully understood by all three, it was time to begin to carry them into execution. Early in the afternoon, Mr. Graefgrind walked direct from his own house into the country, to be taken up on the line by which he was to travel; and at night the remaining two set forth upon their different course, encouraged by not seeing any face they knew.

The two travelled all night, except when they were left, for odd numbers of minutes, at branch-places up illimitable flights of steps, or down wells—which was the only variety of those branches—and early in the morning, were turned out on a swamp, a mile or two from the town they sought. From this dismal spot they were rescued by a savage old postilion, who happened to be up early, kicking a horse in a fly; and so were smuggled into the town by all the back lanes where the pigs lived, although not a magnificent or even savoury approach, was, as is usual in such cases, the legitimate highway.

The first thing they saw on entering the town was the skeleton of Sleary's Circus. The company had departed for another town more than twenty miles off, and had opened there last night. The connection between the two places was by a hilly turnpike-road, and the travelling on that road was very slow. Though they took but a hasty breakfast, and no rest (which it would have been in vain to seek under such anxious circumstances), it was soon before they began to find the bills of Sleary's Horseriding on barns and walls, and one o'clock when they stopped in the market-place.

A Grand Morning Performance by the Riders, commencing at that very hour, was in course of announcement by the bellman as they set their feet upon the stones of the street. Sissy recommended that, to avoid making inquiries and attracting attention in the town, they should present themselves to pay at the door. If Mr. Sleary were taking the money, he would be sure to know her, and would proceed with discretion. If he were not, he would be sure to see them inside; and, knowing what he had done with the fugitive, would proceed with discretion still.

Therefore they repaired with fluttering hearts, to the well-remembered booth. The flag with the inscription Sleary's Horseriding, was there; and the Gothic niche was there; but Mr. Sleary was not there. Master Kidderminster, grown too maturely turfy to be received by the wildest credulity as Cupid any more, had yielded to the invincible force of circumstances (and his heard), and, in the capacity of a man who made himself generally useful, presided on this occasion over the exchequer—having also a drum in reserve, on which to expend his leisure moments and superfluous forces. In the extreme sharpness of his look-out for base coin, Mr. Kidderminster, as at present situated, never saw anything but money; so Sissy passed him unrecognized, and they went in.

The Emperor of Japan, on a steady old white horse stencilled with black spots, was twirling five wash-hand basins at once, as it is the favorite recreation of that monarch to do. Sissy, though well acquainted with his Royal line, had no personal knowledge of the present Emperor, and his reign was peaceful; Miss Josephine Sleary in her celebrated
graceful Equestrian Tyrolean Flower-Act, was then announced by a new clown (who humorously said Cauliflower Act), and Mr. Sleary appeared, leading her in.

Mr. Sleary had only made one cut at the Clown with his long whip-lash, and the Clown had only said, “If you do it again, I’ll throw the horse at you!” when Sissy was recognised both by father and daughter. But they got through the Act with great self-possession; and Mr. Sleary, saving for the first instant, conveyed no more expression into his locomotive eye than into his fixed one. The performance seemed a little long to Sissy and Louisa, particularly when it stopped to afford the Clown an opportunity of telling Mr. Sleary (who said “Indeed, sir!” to all his observations in the calmest way, and with his eye on the house), about two legs sitting on three legs looking at one leg, when in came four legs, and laid hold of one leg, and up got two legs, caught hold of three legs, and threw them at four legs, who ran away with one leg. For, although an ingenious Allegory relating to a butcher, a three-legged stool, a dog, and a leg of mutton, this narrative consumed no more than a moment, related with great heartiness, and with a wonderful kind of innocence, considering what a bleary and brandy-and-watery old veteran he was. Afterwards he brought in Josephine, and E. W. B. Childers (rather deeply-lined in the jaws by daylight), and The Little Wonder of Scholastic Equitation, and, in a word, all the company. Amazing creatures they were in Louisa’s eyes, so white and pink of complexion, so scant of dress, and so demonstrative of leg; but it was very agreeable to see them crowding about Sissy, and very natural in Sissy to be unable to refrain from tears.

“There! Now Theophilia hath kith’d all the children, and hugged all the women, and taken handth all round with all the men, clear, every one of you, and ring in the band for the thecond part!” said Sleary.

As soon as they were gone, he continued in a low tone. “Now, Theophilia, I don’t athk to know any thecreth, but I thppoth I may contider thith to be Mith Thquire?”

“This is his sister. Yes.”

“And t’other one’y daughter. That’h what I mean. Hope I thee you well, mith. And I hope the Thquire’y well!”

“My father will be here soon,” said Louisa, anxious to bring him to the point.

“Is my brother safe?”

“He hath the Giant Killer — piefe of comic infant bithnith,” said Sleary.

“There’th a property-houthe, you thee, for Jack to hide in; there’th my Clown with a thanthepan-lid and a thpit, for Jack’th ter-vent; there’th little Jack himself in a twipendil thoot of armour; there’th two comic black thervath twithe ath big ath the houthe, to thtand by it and to bring it in and clear it; and the Giant (a very expensive bathket one), he an’t on yet. Now, do you thee ‘em all?”

“Yes,” they both said.

“Look at ‘em again,” said Sleary, “look at
Never mind the look of him, at long at performanth, and you.thall find your brother, knowin it, you couldn't put your finger on ith one o' them black thervanth."

your father hath hith. I don't want to on ; "I have my opinionth, and the Thquire Now, mith ;" he put a form for them to sit whant undreth him, nor yet wath hith paint off. Let the Thquire come here after the performanth, or come here yourself after the performanth, and you thall find your brother, and have the whole plathe to talk to him in. Never mind the lookth of him, ath long ath he'th well hid."

Louisa, with many thanks and with a lightened load, detained Mr. Sleary no longer then. She left her love for her brother, with her eyes full of tears; and she and Sissy went away until later in the afternoon.

Mr. Gradgrind arrived within an hour afterwards. He too had encountered no one whom he knew; and was now sauguirne, with Sleary's assistance, of getting his disgraced son to Liverpool in the night. As neither of the three could be his companion without almost identifying him under any disguise, he prepared a letter to a correspondent whom he could trust, beseeching him to ship the whelp in his comic livery, Mr. Gradgrind turned with Sleary, to whom he submitted the question, How to get this deplorable object away ?

"Your thervant, Thquire," was his cautious salutation as they passed in. "If you want me you'll find me here. You muthn't mind your thon having a comic livery on."

They all three went in; and Mr. Gradgrind sat down, forlorn, on the Clown's per- forming chair in the middle of the ring. On one of the back benches, remote in the sub- dued light and the strangeness of the place, sat the villainous whelp, sulky to the last, whom he had the misery to call his son.

In a preposterous coat, like a beadle's, with cuffs and flaps exaggerated to an unspeakable extent; in an immense waistcoat, knee-breeches, buckled shoes, and a mad cocked hat; with nothing fitting him, and everything of coarse material, moth-eaten; and full of holes; with seams in his black face, where fear and heat had started through the greasy composition daubed all over it; anything so

grimly, detestably, ridiculously shameful as the whelp in his comic livery, Mr. Gradgrind never could by any other means have believed in, weighable and measurable fact though it was. And one of his model children had come to this!

At first the whelp would not draw any nearer, but persisted in remaining up there by himself. Yielding at length, if any concession so sullenly made can be called yielding, to the entreaties of Sissy—for Louisa he disowned altogether—he came down, bench by bench, until he stood in the sawdust, on the verge of the circle, as far as possible, within its limits from where his father sat.

"How was this done?" asked the father.

"How was what done?" moodyly answered the son.

"This robbery," said the father, raising his voice upon the word.

"I forced the safe myself over night, and shut it up ajar before I went away. I had had the key that was found, made long before. I dropped it that morning, that it might be supposed to have been used. I didn't take the money all at once. I pretended to put my balance away every night, but I didn't. Now you know all about it!"

"If a thunderbolt had fallen on me," said the father, "it would have shocked me less than this!"

"I don't see why," grumbled the son. "So many people are employed in situations of trust; so many people, out of so many, will be dishonest. I have heard you talk, a hundred times, of its being a law. How can I help laws? You have comforted others with such things, father. Comfort yourself!"

The father buried his face in his hands, and the son stood in his disgraceful grotesqueness, biting straw: his hands, with the black partly worn away inside, looking like the hands of a monkey. The evening was fast closing in; and, from time to time, he turned the whites of his eyes restlessly and impatiently towards his father. They were the only parts of his face that showed any life or expression: the pigment upon it was so thick.

"You must be got to Liverpool, and sent abroad."

"I suppose I must. I can't be more miserable anywhere," whimpered the whelp, "than I have been here, ever since I can re- member. That's one thing."

Mr. Gradgrind went to the door, and re- turned with Sleary, to whom he submitted the question, How to get this deplorable object away?

"Why, I've been thinking of it, Thquire. There'th not muth time to lothe, tho you muth thy yeth or no. Ith over twenty mileth to the rail. Thereth a coath in half an hour, that goeth to the rail, 'purpothe to cath the mail train. That train will take him right to Liverpool."
"But look at him," groaned Mr. Gradgrind. "Will any coach—?"

"I don't mean that he should go in the comic livery," said Sleary. "They the word, and I'll make a Jothkin of him, out of the wardrobe, in five minutes."

"I don't understand," said Mr. Gradgrind.

"A Jothkin—a Carter. Make up your mind quick, Thquire. There'll be beer to fetch. I've never met with nothing but beer ath'll ever clean a comic blackamoor."

Mr. Gradgrind rapidly assented; Mr. Sleary rapidly turned out from a box, a smock and recoiled.

"Now," said Sleary, "come along to the coath, and jump up behind; I'll go with you there, and they'll thuppote you one of my people. They farewell to your family, and tharp'th the word!" With which he deliberately retired.

"Here is your letter," said Mr. Gradgrind. "All necessary means will be provided for you. Atone, by repentance and better conduct, for the shocking action you have committed, and the dreadful consequences to which it has led. Give me your hand, my poor boy, and may God forgive you as I do!"

But, when Louisa opened her arms, he repulsed her afresh.

"Not you. I don't want to have anything to say to you!"

"O Tom, Tom, do we end so, after all my love?"

"After all your love!" he returned, obdurately. "Pretty love! Leaving old Bounderby to himself, and packing my best friend Mr. Harthouse off, and going home, just when I was in the greatest danger. Pretty love that! Coming out with every word about our having gone to that place, when you saw the net was gathering round me. Pretty love that! You have regularly given me up. You never cared for me."

"Tharp'th the word!" said Sleary at the door.

They all confusedly went out: Louisa crying to him that she forgave him, and loved him still, and that he would one day be sorry to have left her so, and glad to think of these her last words, far away; when some one ran against them. Mr. Gradgrind rapidly brought beer, and washed him white again.

"The circulation, sir," returned Bitzer, smiling at the oddity of the question, "couldn't be carried on without one. No man, sir, acquainted with the facts established by Harvey relating to the circulation of the blood, can doubt that I have a heart."

"Is it accessible," cried Mr. Gradgrind, "to any compassionate influence?"

"It is accessible to Reason, sir," returned the excellent young man. "And to nothing else."

They stood looking at each other; Mr. Gradgrind's face as white as the pursuer's.

"What motive—even what motive in reason—can you have for preventing the escape of this wretched youth," said Mr. Gradgrind, "and crushing your miserable father? See his sister here. Pity us!"

"Sir," returned Bitzer, in a very businesslike and logical manner, "since you ask me what motive I have in reason, for taking young Mr. Tom back to Coketown, it is only reasonable to let you know. I have suspected young Mr. Tom of this bank-robbery from the first. I had had my eye upon him before that time, for I knew his ways. I have kept my observations to myself, but I have made them; and I have got ample proofs against him now, besides his running away, and besides his own confession, which I was just in time to overhear. I had the pleasure of watching your house yesterday morning, and following you here. I am going to take young Mr. Tom back to Coketown, in order to deliver him over to Mr. Bounderby. Sir, I have no doubt whatever that Mr. Bounderby will then promote me to young Mr. Tom's situation. And I wish to have his situation, sir, for it will be a rise to me and will do me good."

"If this is solely a question of self-interest with you—" Mr. Gradgrind began.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, sir," returned Bitzer; "but I am sure you know that the whole social system is a question of self-interest. What you must always stopped since the night, now long ago, when he had run them down before.

"I'm sorry to interfere with your plans," said Bitzer, shaking his head, "but I can't allow myself to be done by horseriders. I must have young Mr. Tom; he mustn't be got away by horseriders; here he is in a smock frock, and I must have him!"

By the collar, too, it seemed. For, so he took possession of him.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

They went back into the booth, Sleary shutting the door to keep intruders out. Bitzer, still holding the paralysed culprit by the collar, stood in the Ring, blinking at his old patron through the darkness of the twilight.

"Bitzer," said Mr. Gradgrind, broken down, and miserably submissive to him, "have you a heart?"

"The circulation, sir," returned Bitzer, "is accessible!"

"But look at him," groaned Mr. Gradgrind. "Will any coach—?"

"I don't mean that he should go in the comic livery," said Sleary. "They the word, and I'll make a Jothkin of him, out of the wardrobe, in five minutes."

"I don't understand," said Mr. Gradgrind.

"A Jothkin—a Carter. Make up your mind quick, Thquire. There'll be beer to fetch. I've never met with nothing but beer ath'll ever clean a comic blackamoor."

Mr. Gradgrind rapidly assented; Mr. Sleary rapidly turned out from a box, a smock and recoiled.

"Now," said Sleary, "come along to the coath, and jump up behind; I'll go with you there, and they'll thuppote you one of my people. They farewell to your family, and tharp'th the word!" With which he deliberately retired.

"Here is your letter," said Mr. Gradgrind. "All necessary means will be provided for you. Atone, by repentance and better conduct, for the shocking action you have committed, and the dreadful consequences to which it has led. Give me your hand, my poor boy, and may God forgive you as I do!"

But, when Louisa opened her arms, he repulsed her afresh.

"Not you. I don't want to have anything to say to you!"

"O Tom, Tom, do we end so, after all my love?"

"After all your love!" he returned, obdurately. "Pretty love! Leaving old Bounderby to himself, and packing my best friend Mr. Harthouse off, and going home, just when I was in the greatest danger. Pretty love that! Coming out with every word about our having gone to that place, when you saw the net was gathering round me. Pretty love that! You have regularly given me up. You never cared for me."

"Tharp'th the word!" said Sleary at the door.

They all confusedly went out: Louisa crying to him that she forgave him, and loved him still, and that he would one day be sorry to have left her so, and glad to think of these her last words, far away; when some one ran against them. Mr. Gradgrind rapidly brought beer, and washed him white again.

"The circulation, sir," returned Bitzer, smiling at the oddity of the question, "couldn't be carried on without one. No man, sir, acquainted with the facts established by Harvey relating to the circulation of the blood, can doubt that I have a heart."

"Is it accessible," cried Mr. Gradgrind, "to any compassionate influence?"

"It is accessible to Reason, sir," returned the excellent young man. "And to nothing else."

They stood looking at each other; Mr. Gradgrind's face as white as the pursuer's.

"What motive—even what motive in reason—can you have for preventing the escape of this wretched youth," said Mr. Gradgrind, "and crushing your miserable father? See his sister here. Pity us!"

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"If this is solely a question of self-interest with you—" Mr. Gradgrind began.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, sir," returned Bitzer; "but I am sure you know that the whole social system is a question of self-interest. What you must always
apology to, is a person's self-interest. It's your only hold. We are so constituted. I was brought up in that_catechism when I was very young, sir, as you are aware.

"What sum of money," said Mr. Gradgrind, "will you set against your expected promotion?"

"Thank you, sir," returned Bitzer, "for hinting at the proposal; but I will not set any sum against it. Knowing that your clear head would propose that alternative, I have gone over the calculations in my mind; and I find that to compound a felony, even on very high terms indeed, would not be as safe and good for me as my improved prospects in the Bank."

"Bitzer," said Mr. Gradgrind, stretching out his hands as though he would have said, See how miserable I am! "Bitzer, I have but one chance left to soften you. You were many years at my school. If, in remembrance of the pains bestowed upon you there, you can persuade yourself in any degree to disregard your present interest and release my son, I entreat and pray you to give him the benefit of that remembrance."

"I really wonder, sir," rejoined the old pupil in an argumentative manner, "to find you taking a position so untenable. My schooling was paid for; it was a bargain; and when I came away, the bargain ended."

It was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy, that everything was to be regarded as a bargain across a counter. And if we didn't get to Heaven that way, it was not a politico-economical place, and we had no business there.

"I don't deny," added Bitzer, "that my schooling was cheap. But that comes right, sir. I was made in the cheapest market, and have to dispose of myself in the dearest."

He was a little troubled here, by Louisa and Sissy crying.

"Pray don't do that," said he, "it's of no use doing that: it only worries. You seem to think that I have some animosity against young Mr. Tom; whereas I have none at all. I am only going, on the reasonable grounds I have mentioned, to take him back to Coketown. If he was to resist, I should set up the cry of Stop Thief! But, he won't resist, you may depend upon it."

Mr. Sleary, who, with his mouth open and his rolling eye as immovably jammed in his head as his fixed one, had listened to these doctrines with profound attention, here stepped forward.

"Thquire, you know perfectly well, and your daughter knowth perfectly well (better than you, becauseth I thod it to her), that I didn't know what your thon had done, and that I didn't want to know—I thod it wath better not, though I only thought, then, it wath thome thkylarking. However, thith young man having made it known to be a robbery of a bank, why, that's a theriouth thing; muth too theriouth a thing for me to compound, ath thith young man hath very properly called it. Consequently, Thquire, you muthn't quarrel with me if I take thith young man thith tide, and thay thhe thright and theriouth a thing for me to compound, that remembrance."
time. Childerth took him off, an hour and a half after we left here, last night. The horthe danted the Polka till he wath dead beat (he would have walthed, if he hadn't been in harneth), and then I gave him the word and he went to thieper comfortable. When that prethiouth young Ratheal thed he' go for'ard afoot, the dog hung on to hitth neck-lankerecher with all four legit in the air and pulled him down and rolled him over. Tho he come back into the drag, and there he thhat, 'till he turned the hornth head, at halfpast thirth thirth morning.'

Mr. Gradgrind overwhelmed him with thanks, of course; and hinted as delicately as he could, at a handsome remuneration in money.

"I don't want money myself, Thquire; but Childerth ith a family man, and if you wath to like to offer him a five-pound money, I should like one parting word with you." He had already called for a glass, and now called for another. "If you wouldn't think it going too far, Thquire, to make a little thpread for the company at halfpast thirth thirth morning."

Mr. Gradgrind looked out of window, and made no reply. Mr. Sleary emptied his glass, and then he came to me, and threw bithself up behind, and thtood on hitth two fore-legs, weak ath he wath, and then he wagged hitth tail and died. Thquire, that dog wath Merrylegh.

"Sissy's father's dog!"

"Thethilia's father's old dog. Now, Thquire, I can take my oath, from my knowledge of that dog, that that man wath dead—and buried—before that dog come back to me. Joth'phine and Childerth and me talked it over a long time, whether I should write or not. But we agreed, 'No. There's nothing comfortable to tell, why unthettle her mind, and make her unhappy!' Too, whether her father batheth detherted her; or whether he broke hitth own heart alone, rather than pull her down along with him, never will be known, now, Thquire, till—no, not till we know how the dogth findth uth out!"

"She keeps the bottle that he sent her for, to this hour; and she will believe in his affection to the last moment of her life," said Mr. Gradgrind.

"It theemth to prethent two thingth to a perthon, don't it, Thquire?" said Mr. Sleary, musing as he looked down into the depths of his brandy and water: "one, that there ith a love in the world, not all Thelf-interetht after all, but thomething very different; the other, that it hath a way of ith own of calculating or not calculating, whith thome-how or another ith at leathth ath hard to give a name to, ath the wayth of the dogth ith!"

Mr. Gradgrind looked out of window, and recalled the ladies.

"Thethilia, my dear, kith me and good bye! Mith Thquire, to thee you treating of her like a thither, and a thither that you thutch and honor with all your heart and more, ith a very pretty thight to me. I hope your brother may live to be better detherving of honor with all your heart and more, ith a greater comfort to you. Thquire, I can take my oath, from my know-

"I'm blest if I know what to call it," repeated Sleary, shaking his head, "but I have had dogth find me, Thquire, in a way that made me think whether that dog hadn't gone to another dog, and thed. You don't happen to know a perthon of the name of Thleary, do you? Perthon of the name of Thleary, in the Horthe-Ridilng way—thout man-game eye? And whether that dog mightn't have thed, 'Well, I can't thay I know him myththelf, but I know a dog that I think would be likely to be acquainted with him.' And whether that dog mightn't have thought it over, and thed, 'Thleary, Thleary! O yeth,
a learning, nor yet they can't be alwayth a working; they an't made for it. You must
have uth, Thquire. Do the withe thing and
the kind thing too, and make the betth of
uth; not the wirthth!

"And I never thought before," said Mr.
Sleary, putting his head in at the door
again to say it, "that I wath the muth of a
Cackler!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

It is a dangerous thing to see anything in
the sphere of a vain blusterer, before the
vain blusterer sees it himself. Mr. Bounderby
felt that Mrs. Sparsit had audaciously
anticipated him, and presumed to be wiser
than he. Inapppositely inguind with her
for her triumphant discovery of Mrs. Pegler,
he turned this presumption, on the part of a
woman in her dependent position, over and
over in his mind, until it accumulated with
turning like a great snowball. At last he
made the discovery that to discharge this
highly-connected female—to have it in his
power to say, "She was a woman of family,
highly-connected female—to have it in his
power to say, 'that I wath tho muth of a
Cackler!'"

Mrs. Sparsit, putting her head in at the
door, said, "Mr. Bounderby, sir!"

"Allow me to open the door, ma'am."

"Thank you, sir; I can do it for myself."

"You had better allow me, ma'am," said
Bounderby, passing her, and getting his hand
upon the lock; "because I can take the
opportunity of saying a word to you, before
you go. Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am, I rather think
you are cramped here, do you know? It
appears to me, that, under my humble roof,
there's hardly opening enough for a lady of
your genius in other people's affairs."

Mrs. Sparsit gave him a look of the dark-
est scorn, and said with great politeness,
"Really, sir?"

"I have been thinking it over, you see,
since the late affairs have happened, ma'am," said Bounderby; "and it appears to my poor
judgment—"

"Oh! Pray, sir," Mrs. Sparsit interposed,
with sprightly cheerfulness, "don't disparage
your judgment. Everybody knows how uner-
ning Mr. Bounderby's judgment is. Every-
body has had proofs of it. It must be the
theme of general conversation. Disparage
anything in yourself but your judgment, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, laughing.

Mr. Bounderby, very red and uncomfortable,
resumed:

"It appears to me, ma'am, I say, that a
different sort of establishment altogether,
would bring out a lady of your powers. Such
an establishment as your relation, Lady Scad-
gers's, now. Don't you think you might
find some affairs there, ma'am, to interfere
with?"

"It never occurred to me before, sir," re-
turned Mrs. Sparsit; "but now you mention
it, I should think it highly probable."

"Then suppose you try, ma'am," said Boun-
derby, laying an envelope with a cheque in
it, in her little basket. "You can take your
own time for going, ma'am; but perhaps in
the meanwhile, it will be more agreeable to
a lady of your powers of mind, to eat her
meals by herself, and not to be intruded
upon. I really ought to apologise to you—
being only Josiah Bounderby of Coketown—
for having stood in your light so long."

"Pray don't name it, sir," returned Mrs.
Sparsit. "If that portrait could speak, sir—but it has the advantage over the original
of not possessing the power of committing
itself and disgusting others,—it would
testify, that a long period has elapsed since
I first habitually addressed it as the pic-

bullied. A female may be highly connected,
but she can't be permitted to bother and
badger a man in my position, and I am not
going to put up with it." (Mr. Bounderby felt
it necessary to get on; foreseeing that if he
allowed of details, he would be beaten).

Mrs. Sparsit first elevated, then knitted,
her Corolianian eyebrows; gathered up her
work into its proper basket; and rose.

"Sir," said she, majestically. "It is appa-
rent to me that I am in your way at present.
I will retire to my own apartment."

"Allow me to open the door, ma'am."

"Thank you, sir; I can do it for myself."

"You had better allow me, ma'am," said
Bounderby, passing her, and getting his hand
upon the lock; "because I can take the
opportunity of saying a word to you, before
you go. Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am, I rather think
you are cramped here, do you know? It
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itself and disgusting others,—it would
testify, that a long period has elapsed since
I first habitually addressed it as the pic-
By five-and-twenty Humbugs past five the theories to appointed circumstances; making see? Did he see, himself, a white-haired portrait was to see it all out.

plunder, false pretences, vile example, little be supported out of a Bounderby estate, and sleep under a Bounderby chaplain, for ever lodge in Bounderby Buildings, for ever the name, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, away? Did he see any faint reflection of his of Bitzer to strangers, as the rising young grind that Heavenly trio in his dusty little service and much law. Probably not. Yet perhaps of the Present. So, Stephen Blackpool's tombstone, with her father's record of his death, was almost of the Present, for she knew it was to be. These things she could plainly see. But, how much of the Future?

A working woman, christened Rachel, after a long illness once again appearing at the ringing of the Factory bell, and passing to and fro at the set hours, among the Coketown Hands; a woman of a pensive beauty, always dressed in black, but sweet-tempered and serene, and even cheerful; who, of all the people in the place, alone appeared to have compassion on a degraded, drunken wretch of her own sex, who was sometimes seen in the town secretly begging of her, and crying to her; a woman working, ever working, but content to do it, and never offering to do it as her natural lot, until she should be too old to labor any more? Did Louisa see this? Such a thing was to be.

A lonely brother, many thousands of miles away, writing, on paper blotted with tears, that her words had too soon come true, and that all the treasures in the world would be cheaply bartered for a sight of her dear face? At length this brother coming nearer home, with hope of seeing her, and being delayed by illness; and then a letter in a strange hand, saying, "he died in hospital, of fever, such a day, and died in penitence and love of you: his last word being your name?" Did Louisa see these things? Such things were to be.

Herself again a wife—a mother—lovingly watchful of her children, ever careful that they should have a childhood of the mind no less than a childhood of the body, as knowing it to be even a more beautiful thing, and a possession, any hoarded scrap of which, is a blessing and happiness to the wisest? Did Louisa see this? Such a thing was never to be.

But, happy Sissy's happy children loving her; all children loving her; she, grown learned in childish lore; thinking no innocent and pretty fancy ever to be despised; trying hard to know her humbler fellow-creatures, and to beautify their lives of machinery and reality with those imaginative graces and delights, without which the heart
of infancy will wither up, the sturdiest phsyical manhood will be morally stark death, and the plainest national prosperity figures can show, will be the Writing on the Wall,—she holding this course as part of no fantastic vow, or bond, or brotherhood, or sisterhood, or pledge, or covenant, or fancy dress or fancy fair; but, simply as a duty to be done,—did Louisa see these things of herself? These things were to be.

Dear reader! It rests with you and me, whether, in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not! Let them be! We shall sit with lighter bosoms on the heath, to see the ashes of our fires turn gray and cold.

THE END.

THE ROVING ENGLISHMAN.
THE SEA CAPTAIN AND HIS SHIP.

The compliments are over—there have been a good many of them—and the sailor sits curled up beside me on a most uncomprising little sofa in his narrow low cabin. Twisting myself round as nearly as possible, I front him fairly, and we examine each other with much benevolence. So much, indeed, that the forehead of my friend quite shines with it. He is about fifty, a spare man, with a slight stoop. His trousers are short. If he were to mount on a donkey with them be would have the sort of appearance which usually occasions enthusiastic delight to a musical manhood will be morally stark death, of infancy will wither up, the sturdiest phy-sical manhood will be morally stark death, and the plainest national prosperity figures can show, will be the Writing on the Wall,—she holding this course as part of no fantastic vow, or bond, or brotherhood, or sisterhood, or pledge, or covenant, or fancy dress or fancy fair; but, simply as a duty to be done,—did Louisa see these things of herself? These things were to be.

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