

New-York Tribune.

BY HORACE GREELEY.

"I desire you to understand the true principles of the Government. I wish them carried out—I ask nothing more."—HARRISON.

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CHAPTER VI.

Beyond all measure astonished by the strange occurrences which had passed with so much violence and rapidity, the locksmith gazed upon the shuddering figure in the chair like one half stupefied, and would have gazed much longer had not his tongue been loosened by compassion and humanity.

"You are ill," said Gabriel. "Let me call some neighbor in."

"Not for the world," she rejoined, motioning to him with her trembling hand, and still holding her face averted. "It is enough that you have been by to see this."

"Nay, more than enough—or less," said Gabriel. "Be it so," she returned. "As you like. Ask me no more questions, I entreat you."

"Neighbor," said the locksmith, after a pause, "is this fair, or reasonable, or just to yourself? Is it like you, who have known me so long and sought my advice in all matters—like you, who from a girl have had a strong mind and a staunch heart?"

"I have had need of them," she replied. "I am growing old, both in years and care. Perhaps that, and too much trial, have made them weaker than they used to be. Do not speak to me."

"How can I see what I have seen, and hold my peace?" returned the locksmith. "Who was that man? and why has his coming made this change in you?"

She was silent, but clung to the chair as though to save herself from falling to the ground.

"I take the license of an old acquaintance, Mary," said the locksmith, "who has ever had a warm regard for you, and may be have tried to prove it when he could. Who is this ill-favored man, and what has he to do with you? Who is this ghost, that is only seen in the black nights and bad weather? How does he know and why does he haunt this house, whispering through chinks and crevices, as if there was that between him and you which neither durst so much as speak aloud of? Who is he?"

"You do well to say he haunts this house," returned the widow faintly. "His shadow has been upon it and me, in light and darkness, at noonday and midnight. And now, at last, he has come in the body!"

"But he would not have come in the body," returned the locksmith, "with some irritation, if you had left my arms and legs at liberty. What riddle is this?"

"It is one," she answered, rising as she spoke, "that must remain for ever as it is. I dare not say more than that."

"Dare not?" repeated the wondering locksmith.

"Do not press me," she replied. "I am sick and faint, and every faculty of life seems dead within me. No—do not touch me, either."

Gabriel, who had stepped forward to render his assistance, fell back as she made this hasty exclamation, and regarded her in silent wonder.

"Let me go my way alone," she said, in a low voice, "and let the hands of no honest man touch mine to-night. When she had tottered to the door she turned, and added with a stronger effort: "This is a secret, which, of necessity, I trust to you. You are a true man. As you have ever been kind to me, keep it. If any noise was heard above, make some excuse—say anything but what you really saw, and never let a word or look between us recall this circumstance. I trust to you. Mind, I trust to you. How much I trust, you never can conceive."

Fixing her eyes upon him for an instant, she withdrew and left him there alone.

Gabriel, not knowing what to think, stood staring at the door with a countenance full of surprise and dismay. The more he pondered on what had passed, the less able he was to give it any favorable interpretation. To find this widow woman, whose life for so many years had been supposed to be one of solitude and retirement, and who, in her quiet, suffering character, had gained the good opinion and respect of all who knew her—to find her linked mysteriously with an ill-omened man, alarmed at his appearance, and yet favoring his escape, was a discovery that pointed as much as it startled him. Her reliance on his secrecy, and his tacit acquiescence, increased his distress of mind. If he had spoken boldly, increased his distress of mind. If he had spoken boldly, increased his distress of mind. If he had spoken boldly, increased his distress of mind.

He took his wig off outright as he made this reflection, and warming his handkerchief at the fire, began to rub and polish his bald head with it, until it glistened again.

"And yet," said the locksmith, softening under this soothing process, and stopping to smile, "it may be nothing. Any drunken brawler, trying to make his way into the house, would have alarmed a quiet soul like her. But then—how comes he to have this influence over her!—how came she to favor his getting away from me!—and, more than all, how came she not to say it was a sudden fright, and nothing more? It is a sad thing to have, in one minute, reason to mistrust a person I have known so long, and an old sweetheart into the bargain; but what else can I do, with all this upon my mind? Is that Barnaby outside there?"

"Ah!" cried he, looking in and nodding. "Sure enough it is Barnaby—how did you guess?"

"By your shadow," said the locksmith.

"Oh!" cried Barnaby, glancing over his shoulder. "He's a merry fellow, that shadow, and keeps close to me, though I am silly. We have such pranks, such walks, such runs, such gambols on the grass. Sometimes he'll be half as tall as a church steeple, and sometimes no bigger than a dwarf. Now he goes on before, and now behind, and anon he'll be stealing slyly on, on this side, or on that, stopping whenever I stop, and thinking I can't see him, though I have my eye on him sharp enough. Oh! he's a merry fellow. Tell me—is he silly too? I think he is."

"Why?" asked Gabriel.

"Because he never tires of mocking me, but does it all day long. Why do you come?"

"Where?"

"Up stairs. He wants you. Stay—where's his shadow? Come. You're a wise man; tell me that."

"Beside him, Barnaby; beside him, I suppose," returned the locksmith.

"No!" he replied, shaking his head. "Guess again."

"Gone out a walking, maybe?"

"He has changed shadows with a woman," the idiot whispered in his ear, and then fell back with a look of triumph.

"Her shadow's always with him, and his with her. That's sport I think, eh?"

"Barnaby," said the locksmith with a grave look; "come hither, lad."

"I know what you want to say. I know," he replied, keeping away from him. "But I'm cunning, I'm silent. I only say so much to you—are you ready?" As he spoke, he caught up the light, and waved it with a wild laugh above his head.

"Softly—gently," said the locksmith, exerting all his influence to keep him calm and quiet. "I thought you had been asleep."

"So I have been asleep," he rejoined with widely-opened eyes. "There have been great faces coming and going—close to my face and then a mile away—low places to creep through, whether I would or no—high churches to fall down from—strange creatures crowded up together neck and heels, to sit upon the bed—that's sleep, eh?"

"Dreams, Barnaby, dreams," said the locksmith.

"Dreams!" he echoed softly, drawing close to him. "Those are not dreams."

"What are," replied the locksmith, "if they are not?"

"I dreamed," said Barnaby, passing his arm through Vardon's and peering close into his face as he answered in a whisper. "I dreamed just now that something—it was in the shape of a man—followed me—came softly after me—would let me be—but was always hiding and crouching, like a cat in dark corners, waiting till I should pass; when it crept out and came softly after me—Did you ever see me run?"

"Many a time, you know."

"You never saw me run as I did in this dream. Still it came creeping on to worry me. Nearer, nearer, nearer—I ran faster—leaped—sprang out of bed, and to the window—there, in the street below—but he was waiting for us. Are you coming?"

"What's in the street below, dear Barnaby?" said Vardon, imagining that he traced some connection between this vision and what had actually occurred.

Barnaby looked into his face, muttered incoherently, waved the light above his head again, laughed and drawing the locksmith's arm more tightly through his own, led him up the stairs in silence.

They entered a homely bed-chamber, garnished in a scanty way with chairs whose spindles-shanks bespoke their age; and other furniture of very little worth; but clean and neatly kept. Reclining in an easy chair before the fire, pale and weak from loss of blood, was Edward Chester, the young gentleman that had been the first to quit the Maypole on the previous night, who, extending his hand to the locksmith, welcomed him as his preserver and friend.

"Say no more, sir, say no more," said Gabriel. "I hope I would have done at least as much for any man in such a strait, and most of all for you, sir. A certain young lady," he added, with some hesitation, "has done us many a kind turn, and we naturally feel—I hope I give you no offence in saying this, sir."

The young man smiled and shook his head; at the same time moving in his chair as if in pain.

"It's no great matter," he said, in answering to the locksmith's sympathizing look, "a mere uneasiness arising at least as much from being cooped up here, as from the slight wound I have, or from the loss of blood. Be seated, Mr. Vardon."

"If I may make so bold, Mr. Edward, as to lean upon your chair," returned the locksmith, accommodating his action to his speech, and bending over him. "I'll stand here for the convenience of speaking low. Barnaby is not in his quietest humor to-night, and at such times talking never does him good."

They both glanced at the subject of this remark, who had taken a seat on the other side of the fire, and smiling, vacantly, was making puzzles on his fingers with a skein of string.

"Pray, tell me, sir," said Vardon, dropping his voice still lower, "exactly what happened last night. I have my reason for inquiring. You left the Maypole, alone?"

"And walked home alone until I had nearly reached the place where you found me when I heard the gallop of a horse."

"Behind you?" said the locksmith.

"Indeed, yes—behind me. It was a single rider, who soon overtook me, and checking his horse, inquired the way to London."

"You were on the alert, sir, knowing how many highwaymen there are, scouring the roads in all directions?" said Vardon.

"I was, but I had only a stick, having imprudently left my pistols in their holster-case with the landlord's son. I directed him as he desired. Before the words had passed my lips, he rode upon me furiously, as if bent on trampling me down beneath his horse's hoofs. In starting aside I slipped and fell. You found me with this stab and an ugly bruise or two, and without my purse—in which he found little enough for his pains. And now, Mr. Vardon," he added shaking the locksmith by the hand, "saving the extent of my gratitude to you, you know as much as I."

"Except," said Gabriel, bending down yet more, and looking cautiously toward their silent neighbor, "except in respect of the robber himself. What like was he, sir? Speak low, if you please. Barnaby means no harm, but I have watched him often than you, and I know, little as you would think it, that he's listening now."

It required a strong confidence in the locksmith's veracity to lead any one to this belief, for every sense and faculty that Barnaby possessed, seemed to be fixed upon his game, to the exclusion of all other things. Something in the young man's face expressed this opinion, for Gabriel repeated what he had just said, more earnestly than before, and with another glance toward Barnaby, asked what like the man was.

"The night was so dark," said Edward, "the attack so sudden, and he so wrapped and muffled up, that I can hardly say. It seems that—"

"Do not mention his name, sir," returned the locksmith, following his look toward Barnaby; "I know he saw him. I want to know what you saw."

"All I remember is," said Edward, "that as he checked his horse his hat was blown off. He caught it and replaced it on his head, which I observed with a dark handkerchief. A stranger entered the Maypole while I was there, whom I had not seen, for I sat apart for reasons of my own, and when I rose to leave the room and glanced round, he was in the shadow of the chimney and hidden from my sight. But if he and the robber were two different persons, their voices were strangely and most remarkably alike; for directly the man addressed me in the road, I recognised his speech again."

"It is as I feared. The very man was here to-night," thought the locksmith, changing color. "What dark history is this?"

"Halloa!" cried a horse voice in his ear. "Halloa, halloa! Bow, wow, wow! What's the matter here! Halloa!"

The speaker, who made the locksmith start, as if he had seen some supernatural agent—was a large raven; who had perched upon the top of the easy chair, unseen by him and Edward, and listened with a polite attention and a most extraordinary appearance of comprehending every word, to all they had said up to this point; turning his head from one to the other, as if his office were too judge between them, and it were of the very last importance that he should not lose a word.

"Look at him!" said Vardon, divided between admiration of the bird and a kind of fear of him. "Was there ever such a knowing imp as that! Oh he's a dreadful fellow!"

The raven, with his head very much on one side, and his bright eye shining like a diamond, preserved a thoughtful silence for a few seconds, and then replied in a voice so hoarse and distant, that it seemed to come through his thick feathers rather than out of his mouth.

"Halloa, halloa, halloa! What's the matter here! Keep up your spirits. Never say die. Bow, wow, wow. I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil. Hurrah!" And then, as if exulting in his infernal character, he began to whistle.

"I more than half believe he speaks the truth. Upon my word I do," said Vardon. "Do you see how he looks at me, as if he knew what I was saying?"

To which the bird, balancing himself on tiptoe, as it were, and moving his body up and down in a sort of grave dance, rejoined, "I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil," and flapped his wings against his sides as if he were bursting with laughter. Barnaby clapped his hands, and fairly rolled upon the ground in an ecstasy of delight.

"Strange companions, sir," said the locksmith, shaking his head and looking from one to the other. "The bird has all the wit."

"Strange indeed!" said Edward, holding out his forefinger to the raven, who, in acknowledgement of the attention, made a dive at it immediately with his iron bill. "Is he old?"

"A more boy, sir," replied the locksmith. "A hundred and twenty, or thereabouts. Call him down, Barnaby, my man."

"Call him echoed Barnaby, sitting upright upon the floor, and staring vacantly at Gabriel, as he thrust his chair back from his face. "But who can make him come! He calls me, and makes me go where he will. He goes on before, and I follow. He's the master, and I'm the man. Is that the truth, Grip?"

The raven gave a short, comfortable, confidential kind of croak;—a most expressive croak, which seemed to say: "You need not let those fellows into our secrets. We understand each other. It's all right."

"I make him come!" cried Barnaby, pointing to the bird. "Him, who never goes to sleep, or so much as winks!—Why, any time of night, you may see his eyes in my dark room, shining like two sparks. And every night, and all night too, he's a broad awake, talking to himself, thinking what he shall do tomorrow, where he shall go, and what he shall steal, and hide, and bury. I make him come! Ha, ha, ha!"

On second thoughts the bird appeared disposed to come of himself. After a short survey of the ground, and a few side-long looks at the ceiling, and at every body present in turn, he fluttered to the floor, and went to Barnaby—not in a hop, or walk, or run, but in a space like that of a very particular gentleman with exceedingly tight boots on, trying to walk fast over loose pebbles. Then, stepping into his extended hand, and descending to be held out at arm's length, he gave vent to a succession of sounds, not unlike the drawing of some eight or ten dozen of long corks, and again asserted his lineage to birth and parentage with great distinctness.

The locksmith shook his head—perhaps in some doubt of the creature's being really nothing but a bird—perhaps in pity for Barnaby, who by this time had him in his arms, and was rolling about with him on the ground. As he raised his eyes from the poor fellow he encountered those of his mother, who had entered the room and was looking on in silence.

She was quite white in the face, even on her lips, but had wholly subdued her emotion, and wore her usual quiet look. Vardon fancied as he glanced at her that she shrunk from his eye; and that she busied herself about the wounded gentleman to avoid him the better.

It was time he went to bed, she said. He was to be removed to his own home on the morrow, and he had already exceeded his time for sitting up, by a full hour. Acting on this hint, the locksmith prepared to take his leave.

"By the bye," said Edward, as he shook him by the hand, and looked from him to Mrs. Rudge and back again, "what noise was that below? I heard your voice in the midst of it, and should have inquired before, but our other conversation drove it from my memory. What was it?"

The locksmith looked toward her and bit his lip. She leant against the chair, and bent her eyes upon the ground. Barnaby too—was listening.

"Some mad or drunken fellow, sir," Vardon at length made answer, looking steadily at the window as he spoke. "He mistook the house, and tried to force an entrance."

She breathed more freely, but stood quite motionless. As the locksmith said "Good night," and Barnaby caught up the candle to light him down the stairs, she took it from him, and charged him—with more haste and earnestness than so slight an occasion appeared to warrant—not to stir. The raven followed them to satisfy himself that all was right below, and when they reached the street door stood on the bottom stair drawing corks out of number.

With a trembling hand she unfastened the chain and bolts, and turned the key. As she had her hand upon the latch, the locksmith said in a low tone.

"I have told a lie to-night, for your sake, Mary, and for the sake of by-gone times and old acquaintances, when I would scorn to do so for my own. I hope I may have done no harm; or led to none. I can't help the suspicions you have forced upon me, and I am loath, I tell you plainly, to leave Mr. Edward here. Take care he comes to no hurt. I doubt the safety of this roof, and am glad he leaves it so soon. Now, let me go."

For a moment she hid her face in her hands and wept; but resisting the strong impulse which evidently moved her to reply, opened the door—no wider than was sufficient for the passage of his body—and motioned him away. As the locksmith stood upon the step it was chained and locked behind him, and the raven, in furtherance of these precautions, barked like a lusty house-dog.

"In league with that ill-looking figure that might have fallen from a gibbet!—he listening and hiding here—Barnaby first upon the spot last night—can she who has always borne so fair a name be guilty of such crimes in secret?" said the locksmith, musing. "Heaven forgive me if I am wrong, and send me just thoughts; but she is poor, the temptation may be great, and we daily hear of things as strange.—Ay, bark away, my friend. If there's any wickedness going on, that raven's in it. I'll be sworn."

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Vardon was a lady of what is commonly called an uncertain temper—a phrase which being interpreted signifies a temper tolerably certain to make every body more or less uncomfortable. This it generally happened, that when other people were merry, Mrs. Vardon was dull; and that when other people were dull, Mrs. Vardon was disposed to be amazingly cheerful. Indeed, the worthy housewife was of such a capricious nature, that she not only attained a higher pitch of genius than Macbeth, in respect of her ability to be wise, amazed, temperate and furious, loyal and neutral in an instant, but would sometimes ring the changes backward and forward on all possible moods and fancies in one short quarter of an hour; performing, as it were, a kind of triple-bow major on the peal of instruments in the female belfry, with a skillfulness and rapidity of execution that astonished all who heard her.

It has been observed in this good lady (who did not want for personal attractions, being plump and buxom to look at, though like her fair daughter, somewhat short in stature), that this uncertainty of disposition strengthened and increased with her temporal prosperity; and divers wise men and matrons, on friendly terms with the locksmith and his family, even went so far as to assert, that a tumble down some half-dozen rounds in the world's ladder—such as the breaking of the bank in which her husband kept his money, or some little fall of that kind—would be the making of her, and could hardly fail to render her one of the most agreeable companions in existence. Whether they were right or wrong in this conjecture, certain it is that minds, like bodies, will often fall into a pimpled, ill-conditioned state from mere excess of comfort, and like them, are often successfully cured by remedies in themselves very nauseous and unpalatable.

Mrs. Vardon's chief aider and abettor, and at the same time her principal victim and object of wrath, was her single domestic servant, one Miss Miggs; or as she was called, in conformity with those prejudices of society which lop and top from poor housemaids all such genteel excrescences—Miggs. This Miggs was a tall young lady, very much addicted to patterns in private life; slender and shrewish; of a rather uncomfortable figure, and though not absolutely ill-looking, of a sharp and acid visage. As a general principle and abstract proposition, Miggs held the male sex to be utterly contemptible and unworthy of notice; to be knick, false, base, sottish, inclined to perjury, and wholly unendearing. When most exterminated against them (which, slender said, was when Sam Tappertit slighted her most), she was accustomed to wish with great emphasis, that the whole race of women could but die off, in order that the men might be brought to know the real value of the blessings by

which they set so little store; nay, her feeling for her order ran so high, that she sometimes declared, if she could only have good security for a fair, round number—say ten thousand—of young virgins following her example, she would, to spite mankind, hang, drown, stab, or poison herself, with a joy past all expression.

It was the voice of Miggs that greeted the locksmith, when he knocked at his own house, with a shrill cry of "Who's there?"

"Me, girl, me," returned Gabriel.

"What, already, sir?" said Miggs, opening the door with a look of surprise. "We are just getting on our nightgowns to sit up—me and mistress. Oh, she has been so bad!"

Miggs said this with an air of uncommon candor and concern; but the parlor door was standing open, and as Gabriel very well knew for whose ears it was designed, he regarded her with any thing but an approving look as he passed in.

"Master's come home, m'm," cried Miggs, running before him into the parlor. "You are wrong, m'm, and I was right. I thought he wouldn't keep us up so late, two nights running, m'm. Master's always considerate so far. I'm so glad, m'm, on your account. I'm a little"—here Miggs simpered—"a little sleepy myself; I'll own it now, m'm, though I said I wasn't when you asked me. It ain't of no consequence, m'm, of course."

"You had better," said the locksmith, who most devoutly wished that Barnaby's raven was at Miggs' ankles, "you had better get to bed at once, then!"

"Thanking you kindly, sir," returned Miggs, "I couldn't take my rest in peace, nor fix my thoughts upon my prayers, otherways than that I knew mistress was comfortable in her bed this night; by rights she should have been there, hours ago."

"You're talkative, mistress," said Vardon, pulling off his great-coat, and looking at her askew.

"Talking the hint, sir," cried Miggs, with a flushed face, "and thanking you for it most kindly, I will make bold to say, that if I give offence by having consideration for my mistress, I do not ask your pardon, but am content to get myself into trouble, and to be in suffering."

Here, Mrs. Vardon, who with her countenance shrouded in a large night-cap, had been all this time intent upon the Protestant Manual, looked round, and acknowledged Miggs' companionship by commanding her to hold her tongue.

Every little bone in Miggs' throat and neck developed itself with a spitefulness quite alarming, as she replied, "Yes, m'm, I will."

"How do you find yourself now, my dear?" said the locksmith, taking a chair near his wife (who had resumed her book), and rubbing his knees hard as he made the inquiry.

"You're very anxious to know, a't you?" returned Mrs. Vardon, with her eyes upon the print. "You, that have not been near me a day, and wouldn't have been if I was dying!"

"My dear Martha," said Gabriel.

Mrs. Vardon turned over the next page; then went back again to the bottom line over the leaf to be quite sure of the last words; and then went on reading with an appearance of the deepest interest and study.

"My dear Martha," said the locksmith, "how can you say such things, when you know you don't mean them? If you were dying? Why, if there were any thing serious the matter with you, Martha, should I be in constant attendance upon you?"

"Yes," cried Mrs. Vardon, bursting into tears, "yes, you would. I don't doubt it, Vardon. Certainly you would. That's as much as to tell me that you would be hovering round me like a vulture, waiting till the breath was out of my body, that you might go and marry somebody else."

Miggs groaned in sympathy—a little short groan, checked in its birth, and changed into a cough. It seemed to say, "I can't help it. It's wrong from me to be the dreadful brutality of that monster master."

"But you'll break my heart one of these days," added Mrs. Vardon, with more resignation, "and then we shall both be happy. My only desire is to see Dolly comfortably settled, and when she is in you may settle me as soon as you like."

"Ah!" cried Miggs—and coughed again.

Poor Gabriel twisted his wig about in silence for a long time, and then said mildly, "Has Dolly gone to bed?"

"Your master speaks to you," said Mrs. Vardon, looking sternly over her shoulder at Miss Miggs in waiting.

"No, my dear, I spoke to you," suggested the locksmith.

"Did you hear me, Miggs?" cried the obdurate lady, stamping her foot upon the ground. "You are beginning to despise me now, are you? But this is example!"

At this cruel rebuke, Miggs, whose tears were always ready, for large or small parties, on the shortest notice, and the most unreasonable terms, fell a crying violently; holding both her hands tight upon her heart meanwhile, as if nothing less would prevent its spitting into small fragments. Mrs. Vardon, who likewise possessed that faculty in high perfection, wept too, against Miggs; and with such effect that Miggs gave in after a time, and, except for an occasional sob, which seemed to threaten some remote intention of breaking out again, left her mistress in possession of the field. Her superiority being thoroughly asserted, that lady soon desired likewise, and fell into a quiet melancholy.

The relief was so great, and the fatiguing occurrences of last night so completely overpowered the locksmith, that he nodded in his chair, and would doubtless have slept there all night, but for the voice of Mrs. Vardon, which, after a pause of some five minutes, awoke him with a start.

"If I am ever," said Mrs. V., "not scolding, but in a sort of monotonous remonstrance—" in spirits, if I am over cheerful, if I am ever more than usually disposed to be talkative and comfortable, this is the way I am treated."

"Such spirits as you was in too, m'm, but half an hour ago!" cried Miggs. "I never see such company."

"Because," said Mrs. Vardon, "because I never interfere or interrupt; because I never question where anybody comes or goes; because my whole mind and soul is bent on saving where I can save, and laboring in this house;—therefore, they try me as they do."

"Martha," urged the locksmith, endeavoring to look as wretched as possible, "what is it you complain of? I really came home with every wish and desire to be happy. I did, indeed."

"What do I complain of?" retorted his wife. "Is it a chilling thing to have one's husband sulking and falling asleep directly he comes home—to have him freezing all one's warm-heartedness, and throwing cold water over the fire-side? Is it natural, when I know he went out upon a matter in which I am as much interested as any body can be, that I should wish to know all that has happened, or that he should tell me without my begging and praying him to do it? Is that natural, or is it not?"

"I am very sorry, Martha," said the good-natured locksmith. "I was really afraid you were not disposed to talk pleasantly; I'll tell you every thing; I shall only be too glad, my dear."

"No, Vardon," returned his wife, rising with dignity. "I dare say—thank you. I'm not a child to be corrected one minute and petted the next—I'm a little too old for that. Vardon, Miggs, carry the light. You can be cheerful, Miggs, at least."

Miggs, who to this moment, had been in the very depths of compassionate despondency, passed instantly into the liveliest state conceivable, and tossing her head as she glanced toward the locksmith, bore off her mistress and the light together.

"Now, who would think," thought Vardon, shrugging his shoulders and drawing his chair near to the fire, "that that woman could ever be pleasant or agreeable? And yet she can be. Well, well, all of us have our faults. I'll not be hard upon hers. We have been man and wife, too long for that."

He dozed again—not the less pleasantly, perhaps, for his heavy temper. While his eyes were closed, the door leading to the upper stairs was partially opened; and a head appeared, which, at sight of him, hastily drew back again.

"I wish," murmured Gabriel, waking at the noise, and looking round the room, "I wish somebody would marry Miggs. But that's impossible! I wonder whether there's any madman alive who would marry Miggs!"

This was such a vast speculation that he fell into a doze again, and slept until the fire was quite burnt out. At last he roused himself; and having double-locked the street-door according to custom, and put the key in his pocket, went off to bed.

He had not left the room in darkness many minutes, when the head again appeared, and Sam Tappertit entered, bearing in his hand a little lamp.

"What the devil business has he stop up so late!" muttered Sam, passing into the workshop, and setting it down upon the forge. "Here's half the night gone already.—There only one good that has ever come to me, out of this cursed old rusty mechanical trade, and that's this piece of ironmongery, upon my soul!"

As he spoke, he drew from the right hand, or rather right leg pocket of his smalls, a clumsy, large-sized key, which he inserted cautiously in the lock his master had secured, and softly opened the door. That done, he replaced