

## Chapter XIV - Deportment

Richard left us on the very next evening to begin his new career, and committed Ada to my charge with great love for her and great trust in me. It touched me then to reflect, and it touches me now, more nearly, to remember (having what I have to tell) how they both thought of me, even at that engrossing time. I was a part of all their plans, for the present and the future. I was to write Richard once a week, making my faithful report of Ada, who was to write to him every alternate day. I was to be informed, under his own hand, of all his labours and successes; I was to observe how resolute and persevering he would be; I was to be Ada's bridesmaid when they were married; I was to live with them afterwards; I was to keep all the keys of their house; I was to be made happy for ever and a day.

'And if the suit SHOULD make us rich, Esther--which it may, you know!' said Richard to crown all.

A shade crossed Ada's face.

'My dearest Ada,' asked Richard, 'why not?'

'It had better declare us poor at once,' said Ada.

'Oh! I don't know about that,' returned Richard, 'but at all events, it won't declare anything at once. It hasn't declared anything in heaven knows how many years.'

'Too true,' said Ada.

'Yes, but,' urged Richard, answering what her look suggested rather than her words, 'the longer it goes on, dear cousin, the nearer it must be to a settlement one way or other. Now, is not that reasonable?'

'You know best, Richard. But I am afraid if we trust to it, it will make us unhappy.'

'But, my Ada, we are not going to trust to it!' cried Richard gaily. 'We know it better than to trust to it. We only say that if it SHOULD make us rich, we have no constitutional objection to being rich. The court is, by solemn settlement of law, our grim old guardian, and we are to suppose that what it gives us (when it gives us anything) is our right. It is not necessary to quarrel with our right.'

'No,' said Ada, 'but it may be better to forget all about it.'

'Well, well,' cried Richard, 'then we will forget all about it! We consign the whole thing to oblivion. Dame Durden puts on her approving face, and it's done!'

'Dame Durden's approving face,' said I, looking out of the box in which I was packing his books, 'was not very visible when you called it by that name; but it does approve, and she thinks you can't do better.'

So, Richard said there was an end of it, and immediately began, on no other foundation, to build as many castles in the air as would man the Great Wall of China. He went away in high spirits. Ada and I, prepared to miss him very much, commenced our quieter career.

On our arrival in London, we had called with Mr Jarndyce at Mrs Jellyby's but had not been so fortunate as to find her at home. It appeared that she had gone somewhere to a tea-drinking and had taken Miss Jellyby with her. Besides the tea-drinking, there was to be some considerable speech-making and letter-writing on the general merits of the cultivation of coffee, conjointly with natives, at the Settlement of Borrioboola-Gha. All this involved, no doubt, sufficient active exercise of pen and ink to make her daughter's part in the proceedings anything but a holiday.

It being now beyond the time appointed for Mrs Jellyby's return, we called again. She was in town, but not at home, having gone to Mile End directly after breakfast on some Borrioboolan business, arising out of a society called the East London Branch Aid Ramification. As I had not seen Peepy on the occasion of our last call (when he was not to be found anywhere, and when the cook rather thought he must have strolled away with the dustman's cart), I now inquired for him again. The oyster shells he had been building a house with were still in the passage, but he was nowhere discoverable, and the cook supposed that he had 'gone after the sheep.' When we repeated, with some surprise, 'The sheep?' she said, Oh, yes, on market days he sometimes followed them quite out of town and came back in such a state as never was!

I was sitting at the window with my guardian on the following morning, and Ada was busy writing--of course to Richard--when Miss Jellyby was announced, and entered, leading the identical Peepy, whom she had made some endeavours to render presentable by wiping the dirt into corners of his face and hands and making his hair very wet and then violently frizzling it with her fingers. Everything the dear child wore was either too large for him or too small. Among his other contradictory decorations he had the hat of a bishop and the little gloves of a baby. His boots were, on a small scale, the boots of a ploughman, while his legs, so crossed and recrossed with scratches that they looked like maps, were bare below a very short pair of plaid

drawers finished off with two frills of perfectly different patterns. The deficient buttons on his plaid frock had evidently been supplied from one of Mr Jellyby's coats, they were so extremely brazen and so much too large. Most extraordinary specimens of needlework appeared on several parts of his dress, where it had been hastily mended, and I recognized the same hand on Miss Jellyby's. She was, however, unaccountably improved in her appearance and looked very pretty. She was conscious of poor little Peepy being but a failure after all her trouble, and she showed it as she came in by the way in which she glanced first at him and then at us.

'Oh, dear me!' said my guardian. 'Due east!'

Ada and I gave her a cordial welcome and presented her to Mr Jarndyce, to whom she said as she sat down, 'Ma's compliments, and she hopes you'll excuse her, because she's correcting proofs of the plan. She's going to put out five thousand new circulars, and she knows you'll be interested to hear that. I have brought one of them with me. Ma's compliments.' With which she presented it sulkily enough.

'Thank you,' said my guardian. 'I am much obliged to Mrs Jellyby. Oh, dear me! This is a very trying wind!'

We were busy with Peepy, taking off his clerical hat, asking him if he remembered us, and so on. Peepy retired behind his elbow at first, but relented at the sight of sponge-cake and allowed me to take him on my lap, where he sat munching quietly. Mr Jarndyce then withdrawing into the temporary growlery, Miss Jellyby opened a conversation with her usual abruptness.

'We are going on just as bad as ever in Thavies Inn,' said she. 'I have no peace of my life. Talk of Africa! I couldn't be worse off if I was a what's-his-name--man and a brother!'

I tried to say something soothing.

'Oh, it's of no use, Miss Summerson,' exclaimed Miss Jellyby, 'though I thank you for the kind intention all the same. I know how I am used, and I am not to be talked over. YOU wouldn't be talked over if you were used so. Peepy, go and play at Wild Beasts under the piano!'

'I shan't!' said Peepy.

'Very well, you ungrateful, naughty, hard-hearted boy!' returned Miss Jellyby with tears in her eyes. 'I'll never take pains to dress you any more.'

'Yes, I will go, Caddy!' cried Peepy, who was really a good child and who was so moved by his sister's vexation that he went at once.

'It seems a little thing to cry about,' said poor Miss Jellyby apologetically, 'but I am quite worn out. I was directing the new circulars till two this morning. I detest the whole thing so that that alone makes my head ache till I can't see out of my eyes. And look at that poor unfortunate child! Was there ever such a fright as he is!'

Peepy, happily unconscious of the defects in his appearance, sat on the carpet behind one of the legs of the piano, looking calmly out of his den at us while he ate his cake.

'I have sent him to the other end of the room,' observed Miss Jellyby, drawing her chair nearer ours, 'because I don't want him to hear the conversation. Those little things are so sharp! I was going to say, we really are going on worse than ever. Pa will be a bankrupt before long, and then I hope Ma will be satisfied. There'll be nobody but Ma to thank for it.'

We said we hoped Mr Jellyby's affairs were not in so bad a state as that.

'It's of no use hoping, though it's very kind of you,' returned Miss Jellyby, shaking her head. 'Pa told me only yesterday morning (and dreadfully unhappy he is) that he couldn't weather the storm. I should be surprised if he could. When all our tradesmen send into our house any stuff they like, and the servants do what they like with it, and I have no time to improve things if I knew how, and Ma don't care about anything, I should like to make out how Pa is to weather the storm. I declare if I was Pa, I'd run away.'

'My dear!' said I, smiling. 'Your papa, no doubt, considers his family.'

'Oh, yes, his family is all very fine, Miss Summerson,' replied Miss Jellyby; 'but what comfort is his family to him? His family is nothing but bills, dirt, waste, noise, tumbles downstairs, confusion, and wretchedness. His scrambling home, from week's end to week's end, is like one great washing-day--only nothing's washed!'

Miss Jellyby tapped her foot upon the floor and wiped her eyes.

'I am sure I pity Pa to that degree,' she said, 'and am so angry with Ma that I can't find words to express myself! However, I am not going to bear it, I am determined. I won't be a slave all my life, and I won't submit to be proposed to by Mr Quale. A pretty thing, indeed, to marry a philanthropist. As if I hadn't had enough of THAT!' said poor Miss Jellyby.

I must confess that I could not help feeling rather angry with Mrs Jellyby myself, seeing and hearing this neglected girl and knowing how much of bitterly satirical truth there was in what she said.

'If it wasn't that we had been intimate when you stopped at our house,' pursued Miss Jellyby, 'I should have been ashamed to come here to-day, for I know what a figure I must seem to you two. But as it is, I made up my mind to call, especially as I am not likely to see you again the next time you come to town.'

She said this with such great significance that Ada and I glanced at one another, foreseeing something more.

'No!' said Miss Jellyby, shaking her head. 'Not at all likely! I know I may trust you two. I am sure you won't betray me. I am engaged.'

'Without their knowledge at home?' said I.

'Why, good gracious me, Miss Summerson,' she returned, justifying herself in a fretful but not angry manner, 'how can it be otherwise? You know what Ma is--and I needn't make poor Pa more miserable by telling HIM.'

'But would it not be adding to his unhappiness to marry without his knowledge or consent, my dear?' said I.

'No,' said Miss Jellyby, softening. 'I hope not. I should try to make him happy and comfortable when he came to see me, and Peepy and the others should take it in turns to come and stay with me, and they should have some care taken of them then.'

There was a good deal of affection in poor Caddy. She softened more and more while saying this and cried so much over the unwonted little home-picture she had raised in her mind that Peepy, in his cave under the piano, was touched, and turned himself over on his back with loud lamentations. It was not until I had brought him to kiss his sister, and had restored him to his place on my lap, and had shown him that Caddy was laughing (she laughed expressly for the purpose), that we could recall his peace of mind; even then it was for some time conditional on his taking us in turns by the chin and smoothing our faces all over with his hand. At last, as his spirits were not equal to the piano, we put him on a chair to look out of window; and Miss Jellyby, holding him by one leg, resumed her confidence.

'It began in your coming to our house,' she said.

We naturally asked how.

'I felt I was so awkward,' she replied, 'that I made up my mind to be improved in that respect at all events and to learn to dance. I told Ma I was ashamed of myself, and I must be taught to dance. Ma looked at me in that provoking way of hers as if I wasn't in sight, but I was quite determined to be taught to dance, and so I went to Mr Turveydrop's Academy in Newman Street.'

'And was it there, my dear--' I began.

'Yes, it was there,' said Caddy, 'and I am engaged to Mr Turveydrop. There are two Mr Turveydrops, father and son. My Mr Turveydrop is the son, of course. I only wish I had been better brought up and was likely to make him a better wife, for I am very fond of him.'

'I am sorry to hear this,' said I, 'I must confess.'

'I don't know why you should be sorry,' she retorted a little anxiously, 'but I am engaged to Mr Turveydrop, whether or no, and he is very fond of me. It's a secret as yet, even on his side, because old Mr Turveydrop has a share in the connexion and it might break his heart or give him some other shock if he was told of it abruptly. Old Mr Turveydrop is a very gentlemanly man indeed--very gentlemanly.'

'Does his wife know of it?' asked Ada.

'Old Mr Turveydrop's wife, Miss Clare?' returned Miss Jellyby, opening her eyes. 'There's no such person. He is a widower.'

We were here interrupted by Peepy, whose leg had undergone so much on account of his sister's unconsciously jerking it like a bell- rope whenever she was emphatic that the afflicted child now bemoaned his sufferings with a very low-spirited noise. As he appealed to me for compassion, and as I was only a listener, I undertook to hold him. Miss Jellyby proceeded, after begging Peepy's pardon with a kiss and assuring him that she hadn't meant to do it.

'That's the state of the case,' said Caddy. 'If I ever blame myself, I still think it's Ma's fault. We are to be married whenever we can, and then I shall go to Pa at the office and write to Ma. It won't much agitate Ma; I am only pen and ink to HER. One great comfort is,' said Caddy with a sob, 'that I shall never hear of Africa after I am married. Young Mr Turveydrop hates it for my sake, and if old Mr Turveydrop knows there is such a place, it's as much as he does.'

'It was he who was very gentlemanly, I think!' said I.

'Very gentlemanly indeed,' said Caddy. 'He is celebrated almost everywhere for his deportment.'

'Does he teach?' asked Ada.

'No, he don't teach anything in particular,' replied Caddy. 'But his deportment is beautiful.'

Caddy went on to say with considerable hesitation and reluctance that there was one thing more she wished us to know, and felt we ought to know, and which she hoped would not offend us. It was that she had improved her acquaintance with Miss Flite, the little crazy old lady, and that she frequently went there early in the morning and met her lover for a few minutes before breakfast--only for a few minutes. 'I go there at other times,' said Caddy, 'but Prince does not come then. Young Mr Turveydrop's name is Prince; I wish it wasn't, because it sounds like a dog, but of course he didn't christen himself. Old Mr Turveydrop had him christened Prince in remembrance of the Prince Regent. Old Mr Turveydrop adored the Prince Regent on account of his deportment. I hope you won't think the worse of me for having made these little appointments at Miss Flite's, where I first went with you, because I like the poor thing for her own sake and I believe she likes me. If you could see young Mr Turveydrop, I am sure you would think well of him--at least, I am sure you couldn't possibly think any ill of him. I am going there now for my lesson. I couldn't ask you to go with me, Miss Summerson; but if you would,' said Caddy, who had said all this earnestly and tremblingly, 'I should be very glad--very glad.'

It happened that we had arranged with my guardian to go to Miss Flite's that day. We had told him of our former visit, and our account had interested him; but something had always happened to prevent our going there again. As I trusted that I might have sufficient influence with Miss Jellyby to prevent her taking any very rash step if I fully accepted the confidence she was so willing to place in me, poor girl, I proposed that she and I and Peepy should go to the academy and afterwards meet my guardian and Ada at Miss Flite's, whose name I now learnt for the first time. This was on condition that Miss Jellyby and Peepy should come back with us to dinner. The last article of the agreement being joyfully acceded to by both, we smartened Peepy up a little with the assistance of a few pins, some soap and water, and a hair- brush, and went out, bending our steps towards Newman Street, which was very near.

I found the academy established in a sufficiently dingy house at the corner of an archway, with busts in all the staircase windows. In the same house there were also established, as I gathered from the plates on the door, a drawing-master, a coal-merchant (there was, certainly, no room for his coals), and a lithographic artist. On the plate which, in size and situation, took precedence of all the rest, I read, MR TURVEYDROP. The door was open, and the hall was blocked up by a grand piano, a harp, and several other musical instruments in cases,

all in progress of removal, and all looking rakish in the daylight. Miss Jellyby informed me that the academy had been lent, last night, for a concert.

We went upstairs--it had been quite a fine house once, when it was anybody's business to keep it clean and fresh, and nobody's business to smoke in it all day--and into Mr Turveydrop's great room, which was built out into a mews at the back and was lighted by a skylight. It was a bare, resounding room smelling of stables, with cane forms along the walls, and the walls ornamented at regular intervals with painted lyres and little cut-glass branches for candles, which seemed to be shedding their old-fashioned drops as other branches might shed autumn leaves. Several young lady pupils, ranging from thirteen or fourteen years of age to two or three and twenty, were assembled; and I was looking among them for their instructor when Caddy, pinching my arm, repeated the ceremony of introduction. 'Miss Summerson, Mr Prince Turveydrop!'

I curtsied to a little blue-eyed fair man of youthful appearance with flaxen hair parted in the middle and curling at the ends all round his head. He had a little fiddle, which we used to call at school a kit, under his left arm, and its little bow in the same hand. His little dancing-shoes were particularly diminutive, and he had a little innocent, feminine manner which not only appealed to me in an amiable way, but made this singular effect upon me, that I received the impression that he was like his mother and that his mother had not been much considered or well used. 'I am very happy to see Miss Jellyby's friend,' he said, bowing low to me. 'I began to fear,' with timid tenderness, 'as it was past the usual time, that Miss Jellyby was not coming.'

'I beg you will have the goodness to attribute that to me, who have detained her, and to receive my excuses, sir,' said I.

'Oh, dear!' said he.

'And pray,' I entreated, 'do not allow me to be the cause of any more delay.'

With that apology I withdrew to a seat between Peepy (who, being well used to it, had already climbed into a corner place) and an old lady of a censorious countenance whose two nieces were in the class and who was very indignant with Peepy's boots. Prince Turveydrop then tinkled the strings of his kit with his fingers, and the young ladies stood up to dance. Just then there appeared from a side-door old Mr Turveydrop, in the full lustre of his department.



He was a fat old gentleman with a false complexion, false teeth, false whiskers, and a wig. He had a fur collar, and he had a padded breast to his coat, which only wanted a star or a broad blue ribbon to be complete. He was pinched in, and swelled out, and got up, and strapped down, as much as he could possibly bear. He had such a neckcloth on (puffing his very eyes out of their natural shape), and his chin and even his ears so sunk into it, that it seemed as though he must inevitably double up if it were cast loose. He had under his arm a hat of great size and weight, shelving downward from the crown to the brim, and in his hand a pair of white gloves with which he flapped it as he stood poised on one leg in a high-shouldered, round-elbowed state of elegance not to be surpassed. He had a cane, he had an eye-glass, he had a snuff-box, he had rings, he had wristbands, he had everything but any touch of nature; he was not like youth, he was not like age, he was not like anything in the world but a model of deportment.

‘Father! A visitor. Miss Jellyby's friend, Miss Summerson.’

‘Distinguished,’ said Mr Turveydrop, ‘by Miss Summerson's presence.’ As he bowed to me in that tight state, I almost believe I saw creases come into the whites of his eyes.

‘My father,’ said the son, aside, to me with quite an affecting belief in him, ‘is a celebrated character. My father is greatly admired.’

‘Go on, Prince! Go on!’ said Mr Turveydrop, standing with his back to the fire and waving his gloves condescendingly. ‘Go on, my son!’

At this command, or by this gracious permission, the lesson went on. Prince Turveydrop sometimes played the kit, dancing; sometimes played the piano, standing; sometimes hummed the tune with what little breath he could spare, while he set a pupil right; always conscientiously moved with the least proficient through every step and every part of the figure; and never rested for an instant. His distinguished father did nothing whatever but stand before the fire, a model of deportment.

‘And he never does anything else,’ said the old lady of the censorious countenance. ‘Yet would you believe that it's HIS name on the door-plate?’

‘His son's name is the same, you know,’ said I.

‘He wouldn't let his son have any name if he could take it from him,’ returned the old lady. ‘Look at the son's dress!’ It certainly was plain--threadbare--almost shabby. ‘Yet the father must be garnished and

tricked out,' said the old lady, 'because of his deportment. I'd deport him! Transport him would be better!'

I felt curious to know more concerning this person. I asked, 'Does he give lessons in deportment now?'

'Now!' returned the old lady shortly. 'Never did.'

After a moment's consideration, I suggested that perhaps fencing had been his accomplishment.

'I don't believe he can fence at all, ma'am,' said the old lady.

I looked surprised and inquisitive. The old lady, becoming more and more incensed against the master of deportment as she dwelt upon the subject, gave me some particulars of his career, with strong assurances that they were mildly stated.

He had married a meek little dancing-mistress, with a tolerable connexion (having never in his life before done anything but deport himself), and had worked her to death, or had, at the best, suffered her to work herself to death, to maintain him in those expenses which were indispensable to his position. At once to exhibit his deportment to the best models and to keep the best models constantly before himself, he had found it necessary to frequent all public places of fashionable and lounging resort, to be seen at Brighton and elsewhere at fashionable times, and to lead an idle life in the very best clothes. To enable him to do this, the affectionate little dancing-mistress had toiled and laboured and would have toiled and laboured to that hour if her strength had lasted so long. For the mainspring of the story was that in spite of the man's absorbing selfishness, his wife (overpowered by his deportment) had, to the last, believed in him and had, on her death-bed, in the most moving terms, confided him to their son as one who had an inextinguishable claim upon him and whom he could never regard with too much pride and deference. The son, inheriting his mother's belief, and having the deportment always before him, had lived and grown in the same faith, and now, at thirty years of age, worked for his father twelve hours a day and looked up to him with veneration on the old imaginary pinnacle.

'The airs the fellow gives himself!' said my informant, shaking her head at old Mr Turveydrop with speechless indignation as he drew on his tight gloves, of course unconscious of the homage she was rendering. 'He fully believes he is one of the aristocracy! And he is so condescending to the son he so egregiously deludes that you might suppose him the most virtuous of parents. Oh!' said the old lady, apostrophizing him with infinite vehemence. 'I could bite you!'

I could not help being amused, though I heard the old lady out with feelings of real concern. It was difficult to doubt her with the father and son before me. What I might have thought of them without the old lady's account, or what I might have thought of the old lady's account without them, I cannot say. There was a fitness of things in the whole that carried conviction with it.

My eyes were yet wandering, from young Mr Turveydrop working so hard, to old Mr Turveydrop deporting himself so beautifully, when the latter came ambling up to me and entered into conversation.

He asked me, first of all, whether I conferred a charm and a distinction on London by residing in it? I did not think it necessary to reply that I was perfectly aware I should not do that, in any case, but merely told him where I did reside.

'A lady so graceful and accomplished,' he said, kissing his right glove and afterwards extending it towards the pupils, 'will look leniently on the deficiencies here. We do our best to polish-- polish--polish!'

He sat down beside me, taking some pains to sit on the form, I thought, in imitation of the print of his illustrious model on the sofa. And really he did look very like it.

'To polish--polish--polish!' he repeated, taking a pinch of snuff and gently fluttering his fingers. 'But we are not, if I may say so to one formed to be graceful both by Nature and Art--' with the high-shouldered bow, which it seemed impossible for him to make without lifting up his eyebrows and shutting his eyes '--we are not what we used to be in point of deportment.'

'Are we not, sir?' said I.

'We have degenerated,' he returned, shaking his head, which he could do to a very limited extent in his cravat. 'A levelling age is not favourable to deportment. It develops vulgarity. Perhaps I speak with some little partiality. It may not be for me to say that I have been called, for some years now, Gentleman Turveydrop, or that his Royal Highness the Prince Regent did me the honour to inquire, on my removing my hat as he drove out of the Pavilion at Brighton (that fine building), 'Who is he? Who the devil is he? Why don't I know him? Why hasn't he thirty thousand a year?' But these are little matters of anecdote--the general property, ma'am-- still repeated occasionally among the upper classes.'

'Indeed?' said I.

He replied with the high-shouldered bow. 'Where what is left among us of deportment,' he added, 'still lingers. England--alas, my country!--has degenerated very much, and is degenerating every day. She has not many gentlemen left. We are few. I see nothing to succeed us but a race of weavers.'

'One might hope that the race of gentlemen would be perpetuated here,' said I.

'You are very good.' He smiled with a high-shouldered bow again. 'You flatter me. But, no--no! I have never been able to imbue my poor boy with that part of his art. Heaven forbid that I should disparage my dear child, but he has--no deportment.'

'He appears to be an excellent master,' I observed.

'Understand me, my dear madam, he IS an excellent master. All that can be acquired, he has acquired. All that can be imparted, he can impart. But there ARE things--' He took another pinch of snuff and made the bow again, as if to add, 'This kind of thing, for instance.'

I glanced towards the centre of the room, where Miss Jellyby's lover, now engaged with single pupils, was undergoing greater drudgery than ever.

'My amiable child,' murmured Mr Turveydrop, adjusting his cravat.

'Your son is indefatigable,' said I.

'It is my reward,' said Mr Turveydrop, 'to hear you say so. In some respects, he treads in the footsteps of his sainted mother. She was a devoted creature. But wooman, lovely wooman,' said Mr Turveydrop with very disagreeable gallantry, 'what a sex you are!'

I rose and joined Miss Jellyby, who was by this time putting on her bonnet. The time allotted to a lesson having fully elapsed, there was a general putting on of bonnets. When Miss Jellyby and the unfortunate Prince found an opportunity to become betrothed I don't know, but they certainly found none on this occasion to exchange a dozen words.

'My dear,' said Mr Turveydrop benignly to his son, 'do you know the hour?'

'No, father.' The son had no watch. The father had a handsome gold one, which he pulled out with an air that was an example to mankind.

'My son,' said he, 'it's two o'clock. Recollect your school at Kensington at three.'

'That's time enough for me, father,' said Prince. 'I can take a morsel of dinner standing and be off.'

'My dear boy,' returned his father, 'you must be very quick. You will find the cold mutton on the table.'

'Thank you, father. Are YOU off now, father?'

'Yes, my dear. I suppose,' said Mr Turveydrop, shutting his eyes and lifting up his shoulders with modest consciousness, 'that I must show myself, as usual, about town.'

'You had better dine out comfortably somewhere,' said his son.

'My dear child, I intend to. I shall take my little meal, I think, at the French house, in the Opera Colonnade.'

'That's right. Good-bye, father!' said Prince, shaking hands.

'Good-bye, my son. Bless you!'

Mr Turveydrop said this in quite a pious manner, and it seemed to do his son good, who, in parting from him, was so pleased with him, so dutiful to him, and so proud of him that I almost felt as if it were an unkindness to the younger man not to be able to believe implicitly in the elder. The few moments that were occupied by Prince in taking leave of us (and particularly of one of us, as I saw, being in the secret), enhanced my favourable impression of his almost childish character. I felt a liking for him and a compassion for him as he put his little kit in his pocket--and with it his desire to stay a little while with Caddy--and went away good-humouredly to his cold mutton and his school at Kensington, that made me scarcely less irate with his father than the censorious old lady.

The father opened the room door for us and bowed us out in a manner, I must acknowledge, worthy of his shining original. In the same style he presently passed us on the other side of the street, on his way to the aristocratic part of the town, where he was going to show himself among the few other gentlemen left. For some moments, I was so lost in reconsidering what I had heard and seen in Newman Street that I was quite unable to talk to Caddy or even to fix my attention on what she said to me, especially when I began to inquire in my mind whether there were, or ever had been, any other gentlemen, not in the dancing profession, who lived and founded a reputation entirely on their deportment. This became so bewildering and suggested the possibility of so many Mr Turveydrops that I said, 'Esther, you must make up your mind to abandon this subject

altogether and attend to Caddy.' I accordingly did so, and we chatted all the rest of the way to Lincoln's Inn.

Caddy told me that her lover's education had been so neglected that it was not always easy to read his notes. She said if he were not so anxious about his spelling and took less pains to make it clear, he would do better; but he put so many unnecessary letters into short words that they sometimes quite lost their English appearance. 'He does it with the best intention,' observed Caddy, 'but it hasn't the effect he means, poor fellow!' Caddy then went on to reason, how could he be expected to be a scholar when he had passed his whole life in the dancing-school and had done nothing but teach and fag, fag and teach, morning, noon, and night! And what did it matter? She could write letters enough for both, as she knew to her cost, and it was far better for him to be amiable than learned. 'Besides, it's not as if I was an accomplished girl who had any right to give herself airs,' said Caddy. 'I know little enough, I am sure, thanks to Ma!

'There's another thing I want to tell you, now we are alone,' continued Caddy, 'which I should not have liked to mention unless you had seen Prince, Miss Summerson. You know what a house ours is. It's of no use my trying to learn anything that it would be useful for Prince's wife to know in OUR house. We live in such a state of muddle that it's impossible, and I have only been more disheartened whenever I have tried. So I get a little practice with--who do you think? Poor Miss Flite! Early in the morning I help her to tidy her room and clean her birds, and I make her cup of coffee for her (of course she taught me), and I have learnt to make it so well that Prince says it's the very best coffee he ever tasted, and would quite delight old Mr Turveydrop, who is very particular indeed about his coffee. I can make little puddings too; and I know how to buy neck of mutton, and tea, and sugar, and butter, and a good many housekeeping things. I am not clever at my needle, yet,' said Caddy, glancing at the repairs on Peepy's frock, 'but perhaps I shall improve, and since I have been engaged to Prince and have been doing all this, I have felt better-tempered, I hope, and more forgiving to Ma. It rather put me out at first this morning to see you and Miss Clare looking so neat and pretty and to feel ashamed of Peepy and myself too, but on the whole I hope I am better-tempered than I was and more forgiving to Ma.'

The poor girl, trying so hard, said it from her heart, and touched mine. 'Caddy, my love,' I replied, 'I begin to have a great affection for you, and I hope we shall become friends.'

'Oh, do you?' cried Caddy. 'How happy that would make me!'

'My dear Caddy,' said I, 'let us be friends from this time, and let us often have a chat about these matters and try to find the right way

through them.' Caddy was overjoyed. I said everything I could in my old-fashioned way to comfort and encourage her, and I would not have objected to old Mr Turveydrop that day for any smaller consideration than a settlement on his daughter-in-law.

By this time we were come to Mr Krook's, whose private door stood open. There was a bill, pasted on the door-post, announcing a room to let on the second floor. It reminded Caddy to tell me as we proceeded upstairs that there had been a sudden death there and an inquest and that our little friend had been ill of the fright. The door and window of the vacant room being open, we looked in. It was the room with the dark door to which Miss Flite had secretly directed my attention when I was last in the house. A sad and desolate place it was, a gloomy, sorrowful place that gave me a strange sensation of mournfulness and even dread. 'You look pale,' said Caddy when we came out, 'and cold!' I felt as if the room had chilled me.

We had walked slowly while we were talking, and my guardian and Ada were here before us. We found them in Miss Flite's garret. They were looking at the birds, while a medical gentleman who was so good as to attend Miss Flite with much solicitude and compassion spoke with her cheerfully by the fire.

'I have finished my professional visit,' he said, coming forward. 'Miss Flite is much better and may appear in court (as her mind is set upon it) to-morrow. She has been greatly missed there, I understand.'

Miss Flite received the compliment with complacency and dropped a general curtsy to us.

'Honoured, indeed,' said she, 'by another visit from the wards in Jarndyce! Ve-ry happy to receive Jarndyce of Bleak House beneath my humble roof!' with a special curtsy. 'Fitz-Jarndyce, my dear'-- she had bestowed that name on Caddy, it appeared, and always called her by it--'a double welcome!'

'Has she been very ill?' asked Mr Jarndyce of the gentleman whom we had found in attendance on her. She answered for herself directly, though he had put the question in a whisper.

'Oh, decidedly unwell! Oh, very unwell indeed,' she said confidentially. 'Not pain, you know--trouble. Not bodily so much as nervous, nervous! The truth is,' in a subdued voice and trembling, 'we have had death here. There was poison in the house. I am very susceptible to such horrid things. It frightened me. Only Mr Woodcourt knows how much. My physician, Mr Woodcourt!' with great stateliness. 'The wards in Jarndyce--Jarndyce of Bleak House--Fitz-Jarndyce!'

'Miss Flite,' said Mr Woodcourt in a grave kind of voice, as if he were appealing to her while speaking to us, and laying his hand gently on her arm, 'Miss Flite describes her illness with her usual accuracy. She was alarmed by an occurrence in the house which might have alarmed a stronger person, and was made ill by the distress and agitation. She brought me here in the first hurry of the discovery, though too late for me to be of any use to the unfortunate man. I have compensated myself for that disappointment by coming here since and being of some small use to her.'

'The kindest physician in the college,' whispered Miss Flite to me. 'I expect a judgment. On the day of judgment. And shall then confer estates.'

'She will be as well in a day or two,' said Mr Woodcourt, looking at her with an observant smile, 'as she ever will be. In other words, quite well of course. Have you heard of her good fortune?'

'Most extraordinary!' said Miss Flite, smiling brightly. 'You never heard of such a thing, my dear! Every Saturday, Conversation Kenge or Guppy (clerk to Conversation K.) places in my hand a paper of shillings. Shillings. I assure you! Always the same number in the paper. Always one for every day in the week. Now you know, really! So well-timed, is it not? Ye-es! From whence do these papers come, you say? That is the great question. Naturally. Shall I tell you what I think? I think,' said Miss Flite, drawing herself back with a very shrewd look and shaking her right forefinger in a most significant manner, 'that the Lord Chancellor, aware of the length of time during which the Great Seal has been open (for it has been open a long time!), forwards them. Until the judgment I expect is given. Now that's very creditable, you know. To confess in that way that he IS a little slow for human life. So delicate! Attending court the other day--I attend it regularly, with my documents--I taxed him with it, and he almost confessed. That is, I smiled at him from my bench, and HE smiled at me from his bench. But it's great good fortune, is it not? And Fitz-Jarndyce lays the money out for me to great advantage. Oh, I assure you to the greatest advantage!'

I congratulated her (as she addressed herself to me) upon this fortunate addition to her income and wished her a long continuance of it. I did not speculate upon the source from which it came or wonder whose humanity was so considerate. My guardian stood before me, contemplating the birds, and I had no need to look beyond him.

'And what do you call these little fellows, ma'am?' said he in his pleasant voice. 'Have they any names?'



'I can answer for Miss Flite that they have,' said I, 'for she promised to tell us what they were. Ada remembers?'

Ada remembered very well.

'Did I?' said Miss Flite. 'Who's that at my door? What are you listening at my door for, Krook?'

The old man of the house, pushing it open before him, appeared there with his fur cap in his hand and his cat at his heels.

'I warn't listening, Miss Flite,' he said, 'I was going to give a rap with my knuckles, only you're so quick!'

'Make your cat go down. Drive her away!' the old lady angrily exclaimed.

'Bah, bah! There ain't no danger, gentlefolks,' said Mr Krook, looking slowly and sharply from one to another until he had looked at all of us; 'she'd never offer at the birds when I was here unless I told her to it.'

'You will excuse my landlord,' said the old lady with a dignified air. 'M, quite M! What do you want, Krook, when I have company?'

'Hi!' said the old man. 'You know I am the Chancellor.'

'Well?' returned Miss Elite. 'What of that?'

'For the Chancellor,' said the old man with a chuckle, 'not to be acquainted with a Jarndyce is queer, ain't it, Miss Flite? Mightn't I take the liberty? Your servant, sir. I know Jarndyce and Jarndyce a'most as well as you do, sir. I knowed old Squire Tom, sir. I never to my knowledge see you afore though, not even in court. Yet, I go there a mortal sight of times in the course of the year, taking one day with another.'

'I never go there,' said Mr Jarndyce (which he never did on any consideration). 'I would sooner go--somewhere else.'

'Would you though?' returned Krook, grinning. 'You're bearing hard upon my noble and learned brother in your meaning, sir, though perhaps it is but nat'ral in a Jarndyce. The burnt child, sir! What, you're looking at my lodger's birds, Mr Jarndyce?' The old man had come by little and little into the room until he now touched my guardian with his elbow and looked close up into his face with his spectacled eyes. 'It's one of her strange ways that she'll never tell the names of these birds if she can help it, though she named 'em all.'

This was in a whisper. 'Shall I run 'em over, Flite?' he asked aloud, winking at us and pointing at her as she turned away, affecting to sweep the grate.

'If you like,' she answered hurriedly.

The old man, looking up at the cages after another look at us, went through the list.

'Hope, Joy, Youth, Peace, Rest, Life, Dust, Ashes, Waste, Want, Ruin, Despair, Madness, Death, Cunning, Folly, Words, Wigs, Rags, Sheepskin, Plunder, Precedent, Jargon, Gammon, and Spinach. That's the whole collection,' said the old man, 'all cooped up together, by my noble and learned brother.'

'This is a bitter wind!' muttered my guardian.

'When my noble and learned brother gives his judgment, they're to be let go free,' said Krook, winking at us again. 'And then,' he added, whispering and grinning, 'if that ever was to happen--which it won't--the birds that have never been caged would kill 'em.'

'If ever the wind was in the east,' said my guardian, pretending to look out of the window for a weathercock, 'I think it's there to-day!'

We found it very difficult to get away from the house. It was not Miss Flite who detained us; she was as reasonable a little creature in consulting the convenience of others as there possibly could be. It was Mr Krook. He seemed unable to detach himself from Mr Jarndyce. If he had been linked to him, he could hardly have attended him more closely. He proposed to show us his Court of Chancery and all the strange medley it contained; during the whole of our inspection (prolonged by himself) he kept close to Mr Jarndyce and sometimes detained him under one pretence or other until we had passed on, as if he were tormented by an inclination to enter upon some secret subject which he could not make up his mind to approach. I cannot imagine a countenance and manner more singularly expressive of caution and indecision, and a perpetual impulse to do something he could not resolve to venture on, than Mr Krook's was that day. His watchfulness of my guardian was incessant. He rarely removed his eyes from his face. If he went on beside him, he observed him with the slyness of an old white fox. If he went before, he looked back. When we stood still, he got opposite to him, and drawing his hand across and across his open mouth with a curious expression of a sense of power, and turning up his eyes, and lowering his grey eyebrows until they appeared to be shut, seemed to scan every lineament of his face.

At last, having been (always attended by the cat) all over the house and having seen the whole stock of miscellaneous lumber, which was certainly curious, we came into the back part of the shop. Here on the head of an empty barrel stood on end were an ink-bottle, some old stumps of pens, and some dirty playbills; and against the wall were pasted several large printed alphabets in several plain hands.

‘What are you doing here?’ asked my guardian.

‘Trying to learn myself to read and write,’ said Krook.

‘And how do you get on?’

‘Slow. Bad,’ returned the old man impatiently. ‘It's hard at my time of life.’

‘It would be easier to be taught by some one,’ said my guardian.

‘Aye, but they might teach me wrong!’ returned the old man with a wonderfully suspicious flash of his eye. ‘I don't know what I may have lost by not being learned afore. I wouldn't like to lose anything by being learned wrong now.’

‘Wrong?’ said my guardian with his good-humoured smile. ‘Who do you suppose would teach you wrong?’

‘I don't know, Mr Jarndyce of Bleak House!’ replied the old man, turning up his spectacles on his forehead and rubbing his hands. ‘I don't suppose as anybody would, but I'd rather trust my own self than another!’

These answers and his manner were strange enough to cause my guardian to inquire of Mr Woodcourt, as we all walked across Lincoln's Inn together, whether Mr Krook were really, as his lodger represented him, deranged. The young surgeon replied, no, he had seen no reason to think so. He was exceedingly distrustful, as ignorance usually was, and he was always more or less under the influence of raw gin, of which he drank great quantities and of which he and his back-shop, as we might have observed, smelt strongly; but he did not think him mad as yet.

On our way home, I so conciliated Peepy's affections by buying him a windmill and two flour-sacks that he would suffer nobody else to take off his hat and gloves and would sit nowhere at dinner but at my side. Caddy sat upon the other side of me, next to Ada, to whom we imparted the whole history of the engagement as soon as we got back. We made much of Caddy, and Peepy too; and Caddy brightened exceedingly; and my guardian was as merry as we were; and we were

all very happy indeed until Caddy went home at night in a hackney-coach, with Peepy fast asleep, but holding tight to the windmill.

I have forgotten to mention--at least I have not mentioned--that Mr Woodcourt was the same dark young surgeon whom we had met at Mr Badger's. Or that Mr Jarndyce invited him to dinner that day. Or that he came. Or that when they were all gone and I said to Ada, 'Now, my darling, let us have a little talk about Richard!' Ada laughed and said--

But I don't think it matters what my darling said. She was always merry.